

EXPLORING SMALL GROUP TEACHING IN THE SENIOR PHASE: A CASE STUDY IN
KENTANI EDUCATION DISTRICT

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore small group teaching in the senior phase with the aim of identifying suitable approach of managing small group teaching. This study was triggered by persistent misunderstanding of small group teaching that continued to hover Kentani Education District due to poor performance of learners in the classroom. To understand all these challenges experienced by teachers this study employed qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews to collect and analyse data from participants in order to get a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study. A sampling procedure was used to select respondents from two junior secondary schools of deep rural areas. The two schools were purposefully sampled. Fifteen participants participated in this study from two sampled junior secondary schools. The data were presented, analysed and discussed. A lot of themes emerged from what the participants reported and similar experiences were noted as well as different experiences. The study sought to : (a) Explore teachers 'understanding of small group teaching. (b) Find out different approaches of small group teaching. (c) Investigate challenges faced by teachers when employing small group teaching. (d) Explore what promotes effective facilitation of small group teaching. (e) Suggest a proposed teaching model that will assist senior phase teachers in enhancing the way they perform their small group teaching. Central to what this study ascertained is the relationship between the teachers and Subject Advisors .From the findings of this study, it can be ascertained that for any teacher to succeed and understand deeply the requirements of his \her profession, he \she needs to have a positive attitude towards his\her career, being guided, mentored, nurtured, monitored and supported by SMTs and Subject Advisors.

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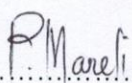
I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following people for their persistent support, contribution and indispensable help in the completion of this project.

- Firstly, Almighty God who gave me the strength, protection, dedication, passion, and wisdom to undertake and complete this project without hesitation.
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- They did an excellent and sterling job of encouraging me at all times, having constructive comments, best advices and outstanding mentorship during moments of difficulties within and outside of this study. They played a very illustrious role during this period.
- Not to forget their explanatory skills and provided me with solid educational research foundation to build on and for their constant encouragement.
- My appreciation also goes to the principals, teachers and learners of the two schools where the research project was undertaken.

DECLARATION

I, Pumza Maneli, solemnly declare that this dissertation entitled " Exploring small group teaching in the senior phase: A case study in Kentani Education District", is my personal effort through the professional guidance of my supervisors, Prof. N. Wadesango and Prof. E.O. Adu. All the sources have been duly acknowledged in the text.

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DECLARATION ON PLAGIARISM

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DEDICATION

- I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father, Mbuzeli, posthumously. May his soul rest in peace.
- My mother, Dinah (Matshezi), for giving moral support and acting a dual parental role because she filled successfully the void left by the departure of my father.
- I give a special dedication to my husband, Khayaletu (Ntlane), who gave me energy to walk an extra mile in my life. His persistent tolerance, motivation, unfailing support, unwavering motivation, and sacrifices he made even when I needed most. I am very proud to have such a caring partner.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NCS –National Curriculum Statement

OBE –Outcomes Based Education

RNCS –Revised National Curriculum Statement

SGT –Small Group Teaching

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAPS –Curriculum and Assessment Policy System

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1. 0 Introduction of the study

Small group teaching is a learner-centred approach that is very popular at the moment, since the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). This popularity stems from our political commitment to democratic participation and our educational understanding that learners learn best when they are actively involved in their learning (Criticos, 2005). Researchers have shown both from international and national perspective that this experimentation and learner interaction with teachers and other learners enables learners to construct their own understanding of concepts. According to Criticos (2005) small group teaching makes it possible for teachers to divide the whole class into smaller groups, while enabling more talks and critical thinking. Furthermore, the teacher during small group teaching can provide each group with problems that evoke discussion.

Internationally small group teaching is viewed in different ways. According to Baines (2002) in the United States of America (USA) grouping of pupils in classroom is associated with co-operation and collaboration which is at the heart of socio-cognitive development. This translates that groups of pupils are used in a range of learning tasks, without (consistent) cognitive development support. The majority of studies have taken place in secondary schools because it is believed that young children in the senior phase (grade 7-9) are not able to display the required social and communicative skills needed in small group teaching (Battistich & Watson, 2003). In small group teaching, the teacher becomes central in facilitating the smooth running of the process. This becomes a problem when teachers do not have the skill to facilitate group work because a lot of time can be wasted with no learning taking place. In the context of this study, senior phase learners are middle aged learners that need close supervision during group work, and due to their level of intelligence, teachers face many challenges in facilitating group work.

In Nigeria, other studies designed to promote collaboration among children focus on communication skills needed by the groups of students who undertake curriculum-

based problems (Mercer, Wegeriff, & Daves, 1999). These collaborative studies often provide some form of pupil 'training' in communication skills in order to promote effective group work. However, in Nigeria much focus is given on student training and improvement of their communication skills without training teachers how best to facilitate group work. Another study that was conducted by Light and Littleton (1994) revealed that the quality of relationship among pupils to work in groups depended on the quality of the teacher. However, pupil's relationships are usually studied in relation to friendship rather than to group working (Azmitia & Montgomery, 1993). In friendship studies, a rational (with lack of threat among peers) is associated with effective sharing of cognitive perspectives and joint approaches to challenging problems. Howes and Ritchie (2002) argue that enhanced learning in groups of children is apparent when there are close relationships that support and encourage the learning process. Close relationships are characterised with by a sense of trust and interdependence. It is the teachers' responsibility teachers to develop an element of trust among students and between the teacher and learners in order to be successful in managing group work.

In South Africa, the use of small group teaching has been common since the introduction of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in 1999(DoBE, 2010). The use of small group teaching is recommended by the new education system in South Africa because it allows learners to talk more than in whole class situations, and this encourages less confident learners to contribute their ideas. Secondly, it allows teachers to individualise their tuition better than in a whole class situation (Criticos, 2005). By grouping weaker learners in one or two groups, teachers are able to work closely on their learning difficulties without holding up faster learners. According to Criticos (2005) these faster learners will be given more advanced work which they can do while the teacher attends to learners having a problem.

Thirdly, grouping also provides an opportunity for learners to be used as peers(Mercer, Wegeriff, & Daves, 1999). The more gifted learners can be used to facilitate learning in groups and possibly clarify issues that a teacher has not been able to. Fourthly, according to Criticos(2005) a well-managed small group creates a learning culture which teaches learners how to listen to others, share ideas, and model other learners' ways of thinking and doing things.

Small group work that requires hands on activities provides an opportunity for active learning. In addition, the process of group work will develop many of the skills that future citizens need. For example, learners who frequently learn in groups over a long period develop strong interpersonal skills, develop strong co-operative and collaborative working skills and they also develop strong problem solving and critical thinking skills. However, despite the importance of group work outlined above, teachers in Kentani District appear to be experiencing difficulties in managing their group work and this resulted in many problems such as poor quality education and high failure rate.

1.1 The practices of small-group teaching

In group work, lessons can be wasted in a lot of time, rearranging furniture. Space can also be a problem in a crowded and noisy classroom, especially with the hyperactive learners found in senior phase. Nevertheless planning can assist teachers avoid some of these problems. According to Criticos (2005:13), the following should be taken into consideration when planning a small group teaching:

1.1.1 Teachers should think of quick ways to form groups with as little fuss as possible: for instance, by asking every second pair of learners to simply turn around and face the pair in front of or behind them. This will allow a teacher to form 90% of the class into groups very quickly.

1.1.2 What is going to be taught should be planned before the lesson and then give the learners' instruction as they enter the class: each should be given a slip of paper to inform them of the group they will work in and where they should sit. Desks should be arranged and marked so that learners can quickly see where they need to go. This technique can be used to inform learners of what will happen, even if the work is to be used later on in the lesson.

1.1.3 A group organisation that suits your purpose should be chosen. Depending on the desired kind of activity and outcomes, pair groups, random groups, ability groups or mixed groups should be used. While there might be practical constraints, always first think of what kind of group best suits your purpose.

1.1.4 Groups should be kept small in order to keep the noise down: if working in a crowded classroom, small groups should be used since they prevent learners from raising their voices thus keeping the noise low. Management of noise during discussions is one of the challenges that teachers are facing during small group teaching. When learners are told not to make noise, they claim that they make noise because they are discussing the given topic. In some instances, some learners even discuss irrelevant things that are not even related to the given topic, and this becomes a challenge to teachers because at the end of the day learners do not learn anything.

1.1.5 The classroom should be structured in permanent group formation: if possible learners either remain in the same group for a period before changing groups, instruct learners through a slip of paper at the door that they should change composition for the day

However, despite all the steps to follow for successful small group teaching, many researchers such as Leanne (2005) regard having four or five learners as the ideal size for groups. They argue that larger groups can be unmanageable and are likely to limit participation by less confident learners, and those learners seated at the far edges of the group. However, groups of two or three often don't generate a range of ideas.

However, all groups, but particularly groups that include more than two learners, will function better if learners are taught how to work in groups and assigned meaningful roles within the group (Criticos, 2005).

1.2 Statement of the research problem

Since the introduction of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE), small group teaching is encouraged. Small group teaching enables learners to be more involved in their learning (learner-centred) through discussions. This is a paradigm shift from traditional methods which are teacher-centred and promote rote learning. Researchers have shown that small-group teaching encourage learner interaction with teachers and other learners, through the opportunity to talk.

It enables learners to construct their own understanding of concepts, remember them better, and use them in real-life situations. Criticos, Long, Moletsana and Mthiyane (2002) argue that small group teaching allows learners to talk for longer lengths of time than in a whole class situation. Theories like Vygotsky's (1962) of social learning suggest that learning takes place through the interactions students have with their peers, teachers and other experts. According to the workshops that the researcher has conducted with teachers on facilitation of learning in Kentani District, it appears some of the teachers have a problem of managing group work and this results in poor quality teaching. Furthermore, the researcher has observed that teachers in Kentani District are experiencing a problem of managing small-group teaching.

Even though teachers were trained during such workshops about the use of small group teaching, it appears that some of the teachers in this district under the study still rely on traditional methods as reflected in the workshop evaluation reports. Therefore, the study sought to come up with the best approach of managing small group teaching.

Wadesango and Machingambi (2010) in their study on challenges facing higher education postulate that there seems to be a gap between primary, secondary and higher education and the question which they posed probably for further research was "how to close it?" They, therefore, further assert that the quality of education needs to be increased at primary level so that it prepares individuals for the tasks which they will receive in higher education. If this increase in quality in education occurs at an early stage, higher education will produce professional individuals who can contribute to society in positive ways and therefore directly impact on the economy as well as international relations. This has prompted this study in order to investigate the extent to which teachers in the senior phase under the study are employing small group teaching in an endeavour to close the above mentioned gap.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore small group teaching in the senior phase in Kentani District with the aim of identifying a suitable approach of managing small-group teaching. Moreover, the study would encourage teachers to use different teaching strategies during the facilitation of small group teaching. Lastly, the study would recommend a suitable facilitation model that would assist teachers on how to manage small group teaching in the senior phase context.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 The main research question of this study is:

How is small group teaching employed by teachers in the senior phase in Kentani District?

1.4.2 The sub-research questions of the study are:

- What are the teachers' understandings of the practice of small group teaching?
- How do teachers approach small group teaching in the classroom?
- What are the challenges faced by teachers when employing small group teaching?
- What measures can be put in place in order to promote effective use of small group teaching?
- What suitable model could be recommended to assist senior phase teachers in enhancing the way they perform their small group teaching?

1.5 The objectives of the study are to:

- Explore teachers' understanding of small group teaching.
- Find out different approaches of small-group teaching.
- Investigate challenges faced by teachers when implementing small group teaching.
- To explore measures that can be put in place in order to promote effective facilitation of small group teaching.
- Suggest a proposed teaching model that will assist senior phase teachers in enhancing the way they perform their small group teaching.

1.6 Significance of the study

One of the teaching strategies that the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is recommending is small group teaching. The study will therefore contribute in suggesting some best ways that small group teaching can be carried out. Furthermore, the study will design the tentative facilitation model of small group teaching.

Therefore, the study will contribute towards a quality teaching that will result to improved results.

1.7 Rationale of the study

Since the introduction of new education system, small group teaching has been common. However, teachers' training on how to facilitate small group teaching appears not to be sufficient to enable them to carry out their teaching. In order to carry out effective teaching and learning in a CAPS approach, it is important to facilitate small group teaching in an effective way. The study will therefore suggest the best ways on how small group teaching can be applied. Practically the study will contribute to the smooth running of small group teaching in the circuit by suggesting different teaching strategies that can be utilised. The study will provide solutions to some of the challenges which might be facing the Eastern Cape Province.

1.8 Delimitation of the study

Kentani District consists of 5 Circuits, but the study was conducted in Circuit 1 and only two schools were sampled. Teachers that participated in this study were senior phase teachers and only 5 learners. Teachers and learners were to be asked questions on small group teaching.

1.9 Definition of terms

1.9.1 Small group teaching

Small group teaching is a learner-centred approach whereby a teacher divides the whole class into smaller groups, thus enabling more talking. In small group teaching, the teacher provides each group with problems that evoke discussion (Criticos, Long, Moletsane, Mthiyane, 2005). In the context of this study, small group teaching is when teachers facilitate teaching and learning by giving instruction and guidance on how learners should learn.

1.9.2 Learner-centred

Learner-centred is a learning which involves learners working together and being responsible for their own learning. During learner-centred the teacher becomes a facilitator rather than a source of all information (Curriculum 2005 in a Nutshell, 2001). In the context of this study, learner-centred is understood to be a situation where more responsibility is vested on learners than the teachers.

1.9.3 Facilitation

This is a process where the teacher assists learners to learn through discussion of problem by giving advice rather than telling them what to do (Barr, 1995). A teacher assists the group as they work towards achieving a common goal. Learners become responsible for their own learning. In the context of this study, facilitation is a process whereby a teacher directs and guides learners towards the attainment of a set goal.

1.9.4 Outcomes Based Education

This is the former South African education approach that provided equity in terms of educational provision and promoted a more balanced view by developing the learners' critical thinking powers and problem solving abilities (Curriculum 2005 in a Nutshell, 2001). OBE in the context of this study is understood as a new education system that was introduced to replace the old education system. Its emphasis was on learner centred approach.

1.9.5 CAPS

A National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement is a single, comprehensive, and concise policy document, which will replace the current Subject and Learning Area Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R - 12. In the context of this study, CAPS is understood as a recent education system that replaced National Curriculum Statement from grade R-12.

1.9.6 Teaching Strategy

A teaching strategy can be defined as a broad plan of action for teaching activities with a view of achieving an aim. It must be emphasised that a strategy includes only the broad actions of teaching and learning and that refinement of these actions takes place at another level of curriculum development, namely: lesson planning (Curriculum 2005 in a Nutshell, 2001). In the context of this study, teaching strategy is understood to be an approach that a teacher uses to teach learners.

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 contains the background of the study and the research problem is also stated in this chapter. The chapter introduces the reader to terms such as small group teaching.

Chapter 2

The purpose of this section is to discuss what the relevant literature says about the small group teaching. This chapter will bring highlight on how small group teaching is practised both internationally and nationally.

Chapter 3

This chapter focuses on the research method that has been selected to undertake the study, which is qualitative approach. This includes the research approach, the research strategy, data analysis, the role of literature and data collection techniques used in this study and the credibility of this study.

Chapter 4

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. Themes are identified and discussed in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 5

This chapter makes conclusion and recommendation or designs the suitable model that will help to solve the researched problem.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter gave introduction of the study by outlining the background and introduction of the study; the purpose of the study; research questions; objective and significance of the study; rationale and delimitation of the study. Clarifying the above aspects gave a clear picture of what the study is all about. A literature review is an evaluative report of information found in the literature related to the area of study. The review should describe, summarise, evaluate and clarify this research. It is also aimed at contributing towards clear understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem that has been identified (Fouche & De Vos, 1988: 64). As such the literature review stresses the impact of theory in every stage of the study from the problem statement through to data collection, analysis and interpretation, (Le Compte and Preissle, 1993: 151).

The purpose of this section in this study is to discuss what the relevant literature says about small group teaching. In reviewing these studies, the researcher will examine how these studies were carried out, where they were conducted and the similarities and differences with the present study. According to Taylor (2008:66), a literature review is an account of what has been published on a particular topic by scholars and researchers. In this literature review, the small group teaching concept will be explained.

2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.2.1 Understanding of the practice of small group teaching.

Small group learning is the learning that takes place when students work together usually in groups of 10 or less. However, some groups may work effectively with a smaller number of participants. What matters is that the group shows three characteristics (Peter, 2003:16).

- **Active participation:** A key feature of small group work is that interaction should take place among all present.
- **A specific task:** There should be a clearly defined task and objectives which should be understood by all members of the group.

- **Reflection:** In small group learning, it is important to learn from an experience and to modify behaviour accordingly. Deep learning is a key feature of small group work: reflection is a key feature of deep learning.

Small group teaching is a learner-centred approach that is very popular at the moment. It is therefore practised differently by countries. The common understanding of small group teaching is that it encourages learners' engagement. Researchers have shown us that this experimentation and learner interaction with teachers and other learners, through the opportunity to talk, enables learners to construct their own understanding of concepts, remember them better, and use them in real life situations (Criticos, 2002).

2.2.1.1.Small group teaching makes this possible by(Peter,2003):

- Dividing whole classes into smaller groups, thus enabling more talk;
- Providing each group with a problem that evokes discussion.

A lot of group work consists of clarification exercises and exchanging ideas or skills already learnt in a critical way. The aim of discussion during small-group teaching is to reinforce the concepts and making sure that learners fully understand the concepts learnt. One of the important types of small group teaching is problem-based. This kind of group work according to Criticos (2002) relies on discussion. The approach is that groups are given a problem or experience and engage until the solution to the problem has been discovered. Teachers follow this experiential group activities with a debriefing session in which they organise and clarify the ideas learners have discovered. This form of group work reverses the process of learning. Learners work inductively whereby they make discoveries alone and then, with the teachers, organise these into coherent concepts and principles.

According to Kapler (2000) this kind of group work allows learners to interact with one another, learning the dynamic formation of new patterns.

In this approach learners work in small groups with a facilitator, to learn to explore, choose ,question, disagree, explain ,understand the connections, dynamic patterns and processes involved in a particular problem (Reger & Norman,1996).In this form of group work, learners encounter a problem followed by a systematic inquiry and reflection process. The problem comes first to stimulate and focus students' curiosity leading to an exploration and activation of pre-existing knowledge.

Being a facilitator in this approach, guided discovery assist learners to identify the edge of their knowledge, a zone between what they know and what they need to know.

In this form of small group work discussion, self-directed learning, elaboration, timely feedback and reflection are processes, characteristics of small group teaching. Factual knowledge is acquired in the context that it will be ultimately used for. General principles and concepts are learned in such a way so as to facilitate and transfer to new similar problems (Schmidt, 1993). According to Norman and Schmidt (1992) in this problem-based small group teaching, prior examples must be acquired so that they can be used for problem solutions on the basis of similarity or pattern recognition. This kind of small group teaching which is problem based was initially promoted as an approach to developing overall problem-solving skills, however, subsequent research has shown that problem-solving skills and expertise are highly content and context dependent and do not generalize across subject domains.

This problem-based small group teaching is regarded by learners as more challenging, satisfying and motivating (Dolman, 2005). The group work begins when learners encounter a realistic problem or situation that cannot be fully explained or understood by the group members at the level of their current knowledge. Problems are designed specifically to arouse and focus curiosity and to create a need to know upon which learners act collaboratively and individually. The problem stimulates learners to activate what they already know, focus and facilitate sense making (Schmidt, 1993) and the necessity to activate prior knowledge but not sufficient for learning. Effective problems in a small group teaching which is problem based arouse learners to make connections with other problems they have already studied and to promote the application of new knowledge in a wide variety of situations. The present study about problem-based in small group teaching will clarify, give the detailed description and more understanding of the practice of small group teaching.

According to Slavin (1995) in small group teaching there is also a widely recognised, pedagogical practice which is cooperative group work that promotes learning and socialisation across a range of curriculum areas from primary school to tertiary level. This type of group work assists learners to clarify their attitudes and ideas about the subject matter, as they test their own ideas and attitudes against those of others (Fisher,1994).

In this kind of group work learners work cooperatively together, they learn to give and receive help, share their ideas and listen to other learners' perspectives.

Learners then become able to seek new ways of clarifying differences, resolving problems, and constructing new understanding and knowledge.

This results in learners attaining higher academic outcomes and becoming more motivated to achieve than they would if they worked alone. By engaging learners in this type of group work, it encourages them towards a self directed and independent learning, providing more opportunities for peer learning and sharing responsibility for learning(Jaques,2004). This cooperative group work has been used successfully to help delinquent youth, develop social communication skills, achieve and enhance self -esteem. This form of group work functions effectively if it is well structured so that students understand how they are expected to work together so that the potential for cooperation and learning is maximised (Denis & Christine, 2012).

In this kind of small group teaching, cooperative group work, learners are taught to realise that they are linked together in such a way that no one can succeed unless they all participate and actively coordinate their efforts to facilitate each other's learning (Slavin, 1995).In so doing, the learners develop a sense of psychological interdependence and group identification which creates a feeling of personal responsibility to contribute to the group. This cooperative group work needs to be well structured and experience is of utmost importance. Learning is therefore enhanced when learners are taught the social skills needed to promote a sharing and caring attitude towards others (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).Moreover, not only should the learners be taught these social skills, but also be given the opportunity to use them .Furthermore, if they are to perceive they are personally liked, supported and accepted by others and in turn perceive that other learners care about how much they learn.

According to Fung (2014) positive relationships develop among learners within the group. Moreover, these positive relationships generalise to post-instructional and free-time situations. In this cooperative group work, the social skills that learners have been taught facilitate communication by listening to each during group discussion. In this form of group work learners acknowledge others' ideas and consider their perspectives on issues, state ideas freely, resolve conflicts democratically, share task equitably and allocate resources fairly to group members. In a statement Pownall (2012) argues that learners must have modicum of these skills if they are to work together productively.

Positive goal interdependence must be structured explicitly within groups and ensure that learners are well trained in social skills required to promote group interaction which appears to be critical for successful cooperative group work. In this kind of small group teaching, cooperative group work, one of the most important influential perspectives was developed by Vygotsky (1978) who proposed that learners' knowledge, ideas, attitudes and values develop through interactions with others. Learners also interact with adults or with more able peers thus learning is mediated or scaffolded so that they can often complete tasks they would not be able to do by themselves.

When learners work together in cooperative group work, members often provide information prompts and cues, reminders and encouragement in response to other learners' requests for help or their perceived need for help (Lou et al., 1996). In cooperative group work, learners are often more aware of what other learners do not understand than their teachers. This can direct their peers' focus to the relevant features of the problem and they can often explain it to other learners in a way that can be readily understood. According to Soliman (1999) learners in cooperative group work learn through explicit and implicit instruction from their peers. Furthermore, the conditions under which they learn are also important and affect the learning that occurs. Studies conducted by Lou et al. (1996) on cooperative small group teaching discovered that not only learners achieve more when they work together in small groups than as a whole class, but also found that these benefits were contingent on group size and its composition, type of small group instruction and the training teachers received to implement small group work.

The success of cooperative group work depends entirely on the task interdependence which should be established in the groups so that each member contributes to the group task. Individual accountability is to be established so that all members understand the necessity to report on their own contributions (Dolmans, 2005). Learners actively promote each other's learning when they are trained in the interpersonal and small group skills needed to facilitate group work. These skills include actively listening to each other, providing each other with constructive feedback, suggestions and ideas, encouraging everyone to contribute to the group effort, sharing tasks and resources fairly, trying to understand another person's perspective, monitoring and evaluating the group's progress. Teachers need to teach learners the appropriate communication, leadership, trust building, decision-making and conflict-management skills and to provide the motivation to use these skills in order for groups to function effectively (Gillies, 2003).

To ensure that the cooperative group work functions well, group processing is another important aspect. This, according to Soliman (1999) means giving pupils time and procedures to analyse how well their groups are functioning by using the necessary skills.

This group processing assists all group members to achieve while maintaining effective working relationships among members. Feedback from the teacher or learner observers on how well they observed the groups working may help processing effectiveness (Dolmans et al., 2005). This reflection identifies group strengths and goals. Face to face interaction must be ensured during group work so physical proximity is needed for effective communication. This supports thinking skills by more active involvement with the task and greater discussion. Oral summarising, giving and receiving explanations and elaborating are important types of verbal interchanges. The interaction among learners working in effective groups attests to potential development that can take place within meaningful and participative contexts. The main aim of this study is to assist teachers in understanding small group teaching (Pownall, 2012).

2.2.1.2.The advantages of small group teaching (Pownall, 2012)

The potential of teaching in small groups is immense. To be with a group of 6 -10 learners per hour on a regular basis provides enough unbroken time to achieve a great deal. According to Fisher & Ellis (1994) emphasise that most of the definitions of a group indicate the sharing element among members as the key factor which defines the existence of a group. The sharing can be around perceptions, motivation or goals, as well as around tasks, such as in a scenario group session. This sharing element can be greatly influenced by the group dynamic or climate of the group.

Small group work (also known as cooperative or collaborative learning) involves a higher degree of interaction. The effectiveness of learning groups is determined by the extent to which the interaction enables members to clarify their own understanding, build upon each other's contributions, sift out meanings, ask and answer questions. According to Jaques (2004) argues that the purposes and benefits of small group teaching coincide closely with the goals of education in general. There are benefits of small group teaching which are as follows:

- Learners can learn rigorous academic discourse.

- The group can get to know each other, as this would be more difficult in a large lecture theatre. This means that staff and learners can be more than two dimensional beings to each other.
- It is possible for learners to interact with the teacher and each other on a sustained basis.
- They can work in teams thus developing the key skills of teamwork and co-operation.
- The smaller group can be mobile and not need to be confined to a single location, nor to a set timetable period as with lectures. The group can move to a laboratory or computer room, the library, or to any suitable location as needed.
- The small group can be used to develop specific research skills, such as questionnaire design, or more general transferrable skills like oral fluency.
- Learners are being provided the opportunity for more active involvement.
- Using small groups that assist learners to clarify their attitudes to and about ideas about the subject matter, as they test their own ideas and attitudes against those of others.
- The tutors provide opportunities for learners to receive more immediate feedback on their learning.
- The small groups encourage learners towards self-directed and independent learning.
- By engaging the learners in small groups, that assist them in getting more opportunities for peer learning and sharing responsibility for learning.
- Learners start to gain more awareness of their emotional reactions easily when they are in small groups.
- Small groups provide more opportunity for learners to develop skills in communication (listening, responding, interacting) and interpersonal relations.
- Learners can negotiate the agenda far more easily so that they can deal with the particular difficulties within the curriculum or with the tasks they have been given.
- The tutors of small groups can have a pastoral role.

- Learners may feel more comfortable participating in smaller groups.
- Small group work gives learners an opportunity to develop higher –level intellectual skills such as analysis, synthesis, interpretation, judgement and problem-solving
- Small group allows learners to discover and engage with a wide range of perspectives, ideas and backgrounds.
- Finally, the personal contact implicit in the tutorial structure can open the way for the tutorial to have an inspirational role, with the tutor modelling how to be a genuinely enthusing learner.

2.2.2. The approach of small group teaching in the classroom

When approaching small group teaching it is of great importance to use social - psychological forces to enhance and maximize the conditions under which learning occurs. According to Doyle (1986) conditions necessary to learn include a learning climate that provides emotional support to learners, opportunity for learners to practise an analytical attitude through controlled observation, opportunity for experimentation with new concepts and opportunity for learners to obtain feedback concerning others' reactions to newly developed ideas. These conditions can be best provided within the context of small group teaching which possesses a common goal for learning, a reasonable degree of cohesiveness and norms conducive to effective training designs having sufficient flexibility built into them so that judgements can be made easily without serious trauma to the plan.

The approach rests on the view that small group teaching has to be considered in the wider context of the whole classroom, with the first theme concerning the classroom context within which groups will operate; these include classroom and class size, seating arrangements in the classroom, the size and number of groups, and the composition of groups. According to Lou et al. (1996) the teacher is the key role in organising these latter dimensions in a strategic way for effective group work.

The teacher first provides the supportive classroom ethos to encourage small group teaching and opportunities for team-building.

Learners activate and explore their pre-existing knowledge using a systematic process of discussion and exchange in the context of the problem (Schmidt, 1993).

This is necessary for developing inter-personal skills as part of the planned programme for small group teaching. The main aim of this study is to find out different approaches of small group teaching.

The teacher is often described as being the guide on the side (Jolliffe, 2007) who plays an important role in small group teaching.

2.2.2.1. Role of the teacher

- Plans lessons that decide on objectives, size of groups, how to form groups, group roles, class seating arrangement and resources needed.
- Explains the task and the cooperative skills with criteria for the success of both.
- Monitors and intervenes with groups where necessary.
- Evaluates the quality and quantity of achievement and ensures that groups reflect on their achievement and effectiveness as a group and set goals for improvement. Celebrates achievement (Mennin, 2007).

According to Criticos (2002) during small group teaching the teacher overcomes the big time-wasting problem of learners, having to move desks into groups by simply deciding that they would be created by every second row of learners turning around and facing those behind them. By so doing, the teacher makes a good decision about group size. During small group teaching the teacher prepares the resources required in each group and places them on the appropriate desks prior to the lesson. In this kind of group work the teacher assigns meaningful roles to all group members. The teacher also teaches the learners about group dynamics and rules.

During small group teaching, the teacher is regarded as an active mediator of learning even though this is a learner centred approach .The teacher manages the lesson efficiently but also mediates thoughtfully throughout the lesson. According to Mennin (2007) the teacher starts the lesson with a quick consolidation of learning from the last lesson, and then links the new work to this.

The teacher instructs learners clearly about what they must do and how they should go about their activities. The lesson is operated diagnostically throughout, with the teacher, intervening during the discussion by occasional teaching. The teacher manages the lesson educationally and actively by dealing with the problems that arise during small group teaching.

In small group teaching the teacher conducts a debriefing period of synthesizing ideas, making links to other learning, organizing bits of information into larger concepts and dealing with difficulties that seem to be common to all learners. During small group teaching the teacher always manages the time well and teaches learners about the importance of time management (Criticos, 2002).

2.2.2.2. Forming groups

According to Jolliffe (2007) the formation of groups during small group teaching is a key part of the teacher's role. Furthermore, Jolliffe (2007) says there are three major ways of forming groups in the classroom, which are random selection, pupil selection and teacher selection.

- **Random selection:** This is useful at the beginning of the school year, to help learners get to know each other. This can be done by numbering everyone in the class (1-4) and then asking all the 1s to form a group, 2s a group, 3s a group and 4s a group. The teacher must ensure that each group comprises a maximum of five pupils.
- **Pupil selection:** This type of selection can cause difficulties, reinforce social cliques in the classroom and result in "off task" behaviour if pupils choose according to friendship. At times it is better for learners to do selection using other criterion other than friends, for example they write a favourite pop group and then form a group with those with similar taste.
- **Teacher selection:** Generally this is the best way of forming groups to ensure the greatest effectiveness of small group teaching. The main aim for this is to mix abilities, gender and skills, which make heterogeneous groupings.

2.2.2.3. Size of the group

According to Jolliffe (2007) the size of the group is another important aspect in the small group teaching.

Most research on grouping examines composition rather than size (Webb, Baxter, & Thompson, 1997), although Lou et al.'s (1996) review suggests the latter variable may be the important factor for effective small group teaching.

There is some evidence that larger class sizes result in larger class groups, though smaller groups are preferable, especially with primary aged learners and those not used to group work (Blatchford et al., 1999; Lou et al., 1996). Group size, like other contextual features, does need to be considered in relation to classroom processes as a whole. The size of the group needs to be appropriate to the age and experience of the learners, the purpose of group-work and the task at hand. There are limitations in research that seek to isolate the benefits of one group size over another.

Groups should be kept small and the rule of thumb is "four and no more" (Jolliffe, 2007). A small collaborative group may be successful when taken in isolation but unsuccessful from the whole class perspective, as it may be too demanding on the teacher's time. It is perfectly alright to have "groups of threes" or sometimes "groups of fives". The problem comes when groups get to six as here groups tend to subdivide into two and lose cohesion. A sensible starting point is to have pupils work in pairs for a short time to develop skills and then join other pairs for a longer time. The duration of groups' work can also vary, but researchers recommend five to six weeks as ideal.

According to Kutnick et al. (2002) there are likely to be connections with other dimensions such as, between group size and the sex mix of groups. Group size and the ability mix of groups can also be connected. One surprising finding is the predominant use of same ability level within groups in schools, even in the case of the youngest learners in the school. This may work to the disadvantage of low ability learners who are especially boys. Low ability learners, according to Howe and Tolmie (2003) tend to work as individuals or in small groupings. However, when undertaking tasks in small groups, low ability learners rarely have the range of cognitive insight to challenge others' ideas or elaborate on their own ideas.

Additionally, Kutnick et al. (2002) discovered that low ability learners who were assigned individual tasks had an adult present but in half these cases the adult was not a teacher. In contrast, when an adult worked with high ability learners, there was a much greater likelihood that the adult was a teacher. The idea about the use of classroom assistants is brought into question, to release teachers from supporting the low ability groupings. The present study will assist teachers on how to determine the size of the group during small group teaching.

2.2.2.4. Roles in groups

There are many roles that can be assigned to children according to Criticos (2007) depending on the task to be undertaken.

At its simplest being the resource manager, a scribe, or a reporter, for a pair or a group, might be the starting point, as it devolves responsibility at a simple level. When children first begin to work in pairs or groups they may be unsure about what they have to do. Giving them a specific role within the group or pair will help them to take on the responsibility for their own actions.

During small group teaching the learners are assigned some roles to play which can help them to foster positive interdependence where everyone plays the part if the group is to succeed.

Assigning roles to learners help them develop teamwork where teachers can introduce skills and functions needed in a group through the use of assigned roles for specific tasks (Jolliffe, 2007). When roles are being assigned to learners that moves the responsibility to the group, and away from the teacher. The type of role the teacher chooses to assign to the learners will be dependent upon the age, the learners' level of and the task to be undertaken. Roles can be introduced one at a time so that the learners become accustomed to the way they operate and the teacher can judge the effectiveness of each role. Learners can be observed and chosen to act as good role models. The first roles will be the maintenance roles, designed to facilitate the smooth functioning of the group.

According to Jolliffe (2007) during small group teaching the roles should be taught in the same way as other cooperative skills. Explicit modelling by the teacher and constructing joint definitions with the class would be very beneficial. The teacher uses role cards given to learners to identify them and act as cue cards.

The allocation of roles can be teacher directed or at random, depending once again on how accustomed learners are to working in this way. Assigning roles to learners, encourages them to become more involved in the work and can help them with the management of large numbers in overcrowded classrooms.

2.2.2.5. Class seating arrangement.

During small group teaching, class seating arrangement is one of the key aspects to be considered in order for learners to work together cooperatively. There has been a tradition of research that has studied the effect of different seating patterns.

Typically rows versus on learner attention but these are short term interventions, involving practice type tasks and do not bear directly on classroom organisation in relation to group work. Seating arrangements are important in supporting working arrangements. Flexible use of furniture and seating can make a big difference, and using the physical layout and space to encourage learner interaction in different working situations is important.

Seating patterns need to be consistent with learning aims; learners seated in rows may be fine for teacher presentation but would not be conducive to group work (MacQuarrie, 2013).

According to Jolliffe (2007) the physical seating arrangement gives clear messages about the teacher's values and expectations for the behaviour. Desks in rows give a different message from desks in small groups or in a horseshoe arrangement. Classroom design has been shown by research to affect learner achievement, time on task and acoustics. The layout impacts on opportunities for interaction for example the lecture room arrangement encourages learners to sit passively listening to the lecturer and not engage in meaningful interaction with peers to support the learning. In small group teaching well designed classrooms define learning patterns and support transitions from one type of activity to another, for example whole class work with learners seated in front of the teacher in a large space and groups of tables and chairs for group and independent work.

Before a group can successfully work together in small group teaching, it is vitally important to allocate time to team-building activities. Whilst it may seem that in a busy and overcrowded curriculum there is no time for such activities, research has shown that this is time well spent.

The first step towards creating good teams is by creating class cohesion (Jolliffe, 2007). It is of good importance in this particular section of small group teaching for the teacher to get to know the pupils and their needs. A detrimental effect for the whole class can ensue if some pupils are socially isolated or have particular difficulties.

One way of obtaining an overview of the pupils and their feelings towards each other is to ask them to note who they get along with and who they do not know well, and then to analyse these for particular problems.

According to Denis and Christine (2012) this can be done by giving each child a list of all the names in the class. The teacher asks them to circle the names of those that are their special friends in green. The learners are told by the teacher to circle those they would like to know in orange and then circle in red those they do not know at all. Analysis of this information can help support mechanisms and create possible classroom buddies. Once having established an overview of the children in the class, it will form an important start to any school year to ensure that children get to know each other and learn how to be friends.

During small group teaching the teacher gives the learners a question sheet to fill in for themselves and they must find someone else who shares the same answer. This sheet has to circulate around the class and be completed with learners moving in clockwise direction around the tables in the classroom. The teacher has to thoroughly know the activities to be engaged to the learners (Jolliffe, 2007). For example class building activities, learning about friendship, published stories are also effective ways of helping the learners see the value of friendship and how to avoid problems that fictional characters may have.

According to Blatchford et al. (2004) when this approach is used during small group teaching it draws upon cognitive and social development theories and focuses on the development of supportive relationships and has been successfully initiated by Kutnick and Manson (1998) in their study revealed that this approach is modelled on the development of close relationships within which trust and interpersonal security establish the bases for further communicative and joint problem solving relationships. In this kind of group work Howe and Tolmie (2004) further identified another important factor to work with when approaching small group teaching which is developing team building skills.

This is a vital stage to ensure success and should not be omitted. Blatchford (2004) identified five purposes for team-building, the first one getting being acquainted with team identity, mutual support, valuing differences and developing synergy. Team-building develops in sequential stages that need to be considered. In small group teaching, teachers should be able to resolve conflict as it is inevitable in any group. (Jolliffe, 2007). Develop a positive attitude of helping learners to resolve the conflict by understanding the dynamics, by following the procedures for conflict resolution.

Teaching the necessary skills during small group teaching assists in developing group work learning in the classroom.

Group work learning requires the prerequisites of class and team cohesion and the teacher's ability to plan suitable activities and use appropriate structures. When developing interpersonal and communication skills to learners it is of vital importance to teach them teamwork skills making sure that they help and encourage each other, everyone is participating, appreciation is shown by other group members, agreement is reached at a certain level of discussion. In Blatchford's study (2004) the focus was on the integration of activities and methodology, so that teachers would implement their developed skills on a longitudinal basis.

This study argues that despite engaging in forms of interaction, involving the renegotiation or reconciliation of ideas, group work was productive rather than disruptive, and should help to dismiss such fears.

Furthermore, in small group teaching there are levels to be developed skills, described as forming the basic skills needed for managing the group's activities to complete the task and maintain group relationships (Slavin, 1995). During small group teaching the skills are needed to build a deeper understanding of the material and the topic being studied. Learners activate and explore their pre-existing knowledge using a systematic process of discussion and exchange in the context of the problem (Schmidt, 1993). Learners identify areas that are not clear to them and those they need to understand better. This study will motivate the teachers and enable them to have a better understanding of different approaches to be explored during small group teaching.

2.2.3. Teachers' challenges during small group teaching.

According to Criticos (2002) teachers face a serious challenge during small group teaching, like whole class teaching, it has both strengths and weaknesses. If small group teaching is used alone and thoughtlessly, it can be less educational, useful than a boring lecture or poor textbook. This small group teaching is also a difficult approach to use well. Small group teaching methods, as well as with all other teaching methods should be used only if they assist learners to achieve the lesson's outcomes.

Poor management of group work by the teachers is the major difficulty in small group teaching. Teachers use their time inefficiently by underestimating how much time learners need to do particular tasks, or are persuaded during the lesson that groups should be given more time. This leads to ad hoc time planning, with the result that lessons are often not concluded well, or that important issues are not adequately covered (Layne, Jules, Kutnick & Layne, 2006).

Teachers manage group work poorly by assuming learners know how to work in groups, without training, it is likely that the strongest learners or those most confident will dominate and weaker learners will not participate (Slavin, 1995). This leads to unhappiness and weaker learners or less confident learners learning less and less. In some cases nasty arguments cause these groups to simply fall apart.

During small group teaching a good learning dynamic is more likely if groups are not too large or too small, teachers organise physical space inappropriately (Slavin,1995).Discussion is often difficult in groups larger than about five learners. Learners on the far edges find it difficult to hear discussions and to read shared documents. This can lead to learners withdrawing from participation and thus from learning. Teachers mediate learning poorly during small group teaching as they think that small group work is learner-centred so they have very little role to play (Cohen,1994).

Enough planning is not carefully done by teachers as a result learners work without any clear idea of the educational purpose of their activities. This leads to learners withdrawing from participation and this from learning. Teachers mediate learning poorly during small group teaching as they think that small group work is learner-centred so they have very little role to play (Cohen, 1995).

This, allied with learners' unfamiliarity with group work, leads to group work turning into a confused attempt to guess the purpose of the activity. In some cases, the planning problem is more basic, teachers do not even think about re-arranging furniture so learners spend their time doing this rather than learning.

According to Criticos (2002) teachers do not design task and activities that encourage discussion or small group work. Instead they design tasks that often test basic comprehension and could as well be done individually.

Group work tasks should be designed to make use of group work's learning strengths, enabling discussion, critical thinking or problem solving and not content recall.

Teachers also seldom design follow-up activities to insert into group discussions when it seems a group has resolved a problem too quickly. Teachers should not plan the all-important conclusion to group work lessons (Gillies, 2003). One of the most important characteristics of group work is that it encourages different ideas and debate. Small group work also emphasises the need for teachers to pull these ideas together for learners, either through explanation or good whole questioning and explanation.

During small group teaching teachers underestimate learner resistance. Teachers tend to think that learners will like this kind of teaching but then find that learners are resistant to small group teaching (Cohen, 1999). Consequently, the teachers underestimate the challenges they may face. Learners particularly resist strongly if they feel threatened, feel it is a waste of time or if they do not know why it is being introduced. The skills of working together cooperatively are not explicitly taught by teachers.

It is vital that learners are taught these skills if they are to succeed to the next level of learning (Slavin, 1995). Teachers do not give support learners with social and emotional skills and in particular emotional intelligence especially in any learning situation where there might be learners who display particular difficulties. Learners do not have the necessary communication skills to work with others.

Cohen (1999) clearly identified that teachers were unable to plan and manage task effectively during small group work. Teachers do not understand the key elements of small group work and how to incorporate these elements into the lessons.

When implementing small group teaching, teachers lack support from colleagues, as this kind of group work requires cooperation amongst the staff as well as amongst learners (Gillies, 2003). There may be a lack of a whole – school vision that sees small group teaching as being at the very heart of improving learning and teaching (Slavin, 1995). In many cases teachers' desire to allow learners to work alone, leads to them being neglected by teachers.

2.2.3.1. Small group teaching has many advantages to offer the learner (Palinscar, 1998: 52).

- **Self-direction and active learning:** Small group work encourages students to self-direct their own learning. It encourages reflection upon and control of learning activities and development of self-regulatory skills conducive to lifelong learning.
- **Self-motivation:** Small group work, by encouraging the students' involvement in the learning process leads to increased motivation and more efficient learning.
- **Exploration of issues:** Small group work allows students to test their thinking, to explore issues together and to test out hypotheses in a way that is not possible in a lecture for example.
- **Deep learning:** Small group work encourages deep learning and higher-order activities such as analysis, evaluation and synthesis.
- **An adult style of learning:** Acceptance of personal responsibility for their own progress and direction of learning is important in professional education. This is encouraged by small group teaching methods.
- **Transferable skills:** Transferable skills, such as leadership, teamwork, organization, and prioritization, encouragement to others, problem solving, and time management skills are encouraged through group work.

2.2.4. Measures to be put in place in order to promote small group teaching.

According to Criticos (2007) thorough planning is always critical to successful small group teaching, but when a teacher uses a method where the pace and path of learning is driven by learners, new planning challenges emerge. The teacher needs to guess learner responses. In a lesson where the teacher dictates the pace such as whole class question and answer session or an explanation, the teacher can clarify misunderstandings, and steer the lesson as the lesson is progressively taught. During small group teaching the teacher should ensure that the designed activities achieve the learning outcomes and identify the problems within the lesson. Learning during group work is designed to occur by learners talking, debating, making mistakes, and slowly moving to new understandings (Denis & Christine, 2012). In this kind of group work it is important that teachers think carefully of when and how to intervene in group processes.

Groups should be allowed to debate alone and make mistakes (Criticos, 2007). Learners should avoid the temptation to constantly intrude into and disrupt discussions. While learners are trying to work, the teacher should not keep on talking even if he notices that learners are not approaching an issue in the way it is supposed to be. These issues need to be explained and noted and be referred to learners later in the final debriefing. Teachers are supposed to be good mediators are able to recognise when a group is struggling too much, or where a discussion has lost direction entirely, and then the teacher can intervene. Teachers must design activities that motivate discussion and resource these activities appropriately.

Small group work is a teaching method that is strongest when it gets learners to share ideas, encourages conversation and debate and develops taught problem-solving or thinking skills (Slavin, 1995). Learners have to be taught how to work in groups, without assuming that the learners to structure group dynamics so that different group roles are played effectively.

In order for small group work to be effectively operating, a teacher needs to build learner trust in them and in others. Group members must be able to relax and work well with each other.

Learners need to know and rely on their classmates to do their part. When learners attempt to answer some questions, there should be no laughing at each other but instead they should get the help they need (Slavin, 1995). Creation of a climate of a common purpose by the teacher. Everyone in a small group work is working towards the same goal.

Clear assessment criteria are clearly spelt out before the lesson begins and worksheets are provided with clear task instruction. The more the learners know what is expected of them, the more confident they are to start the task.

The following checklists have been generated for running small group work (Soliman, 1999: 207).

2.2.4.1. Prior to the small group activity:

- **Consider the objectives of the session:** Carefully consider carefully the objectives of the session or the course to be run and whether other teaching methods, like lectures, independent learning, may be more appropriate.

- **Determine your available physical resources:** Accommodation availability may be a limiting factor. Small groups require suitable accommodation, which allows chairs to be set out in a circle to maximize interaction among the students, and space for appropriate audio-visual materials.
- **Determine the manpower availability:** Small group teaching requires the participation of a larger number of teaching staff. Carefully consider how many teachers are available and their expertise as small group facilitators.
- **Does a facilitator have to be an expert?** For small groups to function most effectively, the facilitator should have expertise in the content area and in small group facilitation.
- **Can different facilitators be used with the one group?** Continuity of the facilitator is desirable. The facilitator can be considered as a member of the group and changing the composition of the group may disrupt the group dynamics.
- **Can a teacher facilitate several groups?** A floating facilitator can be assigned responsibility for maintaining the task and function of more than one group. Success varies, frequently depending on the dynamics of the groups and the skill of the facilitator.
- **Can a student facilitate his or her own group?** A student can successfully facilitate a peer group. This depends on the group's dynamics, on the student's ability and on the briefing given to the student.
- **Determine the group membership:** Groups may be self-selected, strategically determined, randomized, or selected alphabetically. It may be appropriate to change the membership of a group after a designated period of time, e.g. semester or year. Groups will work less productively if constantly changed, as they are less likely to reach a productive stage.
- **Ensure that the staff is prepared for the session:** Staff must be given detailed briefings for the small group work. They should have prior opportunities to see small group work in action and to attend staff development sessions.
- **Select the most appropriate small group method:** The educational objectives should determine the choice of small group method.

- **Develop stimulus material:** Stimulus material might include problem-based scenarios, video clips, a set of questions, key articles for exploration, a real or simulated patient. The stimulus material required will be determined by the small group method adopted.
- **Inform students about the role of the small group work:** Students should be informed why small group work is being adopted and how it relates to other activities and to the learning outcomes for the course.

2.2.4.2. During the Small Group Activity (Smuck, 2001)

- **Allow adequate introductions - use ice-breakers if necessary:** Ice-breakers are a brief activity that relaxes and introduces the members of the group. Establish ground rules to help students to feel secure in the educational climate.
- **Ensure that the students understand what to do,** why they are doing it and how they should achieve it.
- **Facilitate learning:** The facilitator's objective is to help the student become more self-reliant and independent by establishing a climate that is open, trustful and supportive. An educational facilitator's role has two distinct areas: maintaining the functioning of the group and ensuring that the task is completed. Facilitators must understand the changing dynamics of a group through four stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing.
- **Debrief the group on the activity:** Debriefing summarizes or clarifies what has been learnt and may take as long as the activity itself. During debriefing, constructive feedback may be given.

2.2.4.3. After the Small Group Activity (Gillies, 2003)

- **Evaluate the success of the session:** There are two aspects - achievement and quality. Have the objectives been achieved? Was the educational experience of a high standard? Students may be asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire. Alternatively, the session can be peer reviewed. Teachers should consciously self-evaluate the session.

- **Reflect on the experience:** Evaluation, formal or informal, is pointless if no change in practice results.

According Gillies (2003) small group methods have a valuable role to play in schools. The student-centred focus and active participation enhance the likelihood of deep rather than surface learning. Decisions to be made are how much time to schedule for small group work, and what kind of small group work to adopt. If small groups are used, they must be valued and must not be seen as isolated from other aspects of the curriculum.

Staff and students must fully appreciate the process of small group work - including its aims and intended outcomes, therefore staff development is important. Success of small group learning depends on good planning, effective facilitation and a movement away from teacher-centred learning. For a real and sustained shift in education, students must be encouraged to learn rather than merely catch the output of teachers.

2.2.4.4. Group Seating facilitates Small Group Teaching

The strategy of teachers working with groups of children within a class was strongly endorsed by the Plowden Committee (Johnson, 1999). By spending time with groups of children, the Committee reasoned that teachers could adjust their teaching to the needs of the individuals within the group to a greater extent than when working with the class as a whole, while also ensuring that all children have a reasonable amount of direct contact with their teacher - albeit shared with others in their group. MacQuarrie (2013) mentioned that if a teacher is to work with groups of children and to move between these groups, it makes sense that children should be seated together as groups and also apart from other groups.

In this context, there is an evident consistency between what the teacher is trying to do, what the pupils are to do, the kind of interaction that is intended and the configuration of the furniture. So, group seating seems to be a good idea for small group teaching and the extent that primary teachers make use of small group teaching, would be a good way to organize classrooms.

Returning to the claim that group seating is valuable because it supports small group teaching, we have to conclude that, while this may well be true, the limited proportion of teachers and especially of children's time that small group teaching accounts for means that it cannot (alone) justify group seating as the standard seating arrangement in primary classrooms.

2.2.4.5. Group Seating facilitates Collaborative Learning (Webb, 1995)

A second argument for arranging classroom furniture in groups is that the layout supports collaboration between groups of children. As with small group teaching, the essence of the argument here is that the physical context should support the teaching and learning method.

We have no dispute with this proposition. When children are to collaborate in learning, they need to interact, share resources, and so a group seating arrangement clearly fits the bill (Webb, 1995). Again, however, while the case in principle is sound, we need to enquire about practice. Howe and Tilmie (2003) mentioned that we know that children do sit in groups and that the intention to stimulate and support learning through collaboration is a good reason to arrange classrooms this way, but are these intentions realised? How much group collaboration in learning takes place in our primary classrooms?

The same body of classroom observation studies is helpful here in establishing how frequently children are asked to and, in practice, how much they work together as groups. The emphasis is important, as collaboration does not have to involve a group: it can happen in pairs as well as in groups of three or more. Indeed, there is a mountain of literature and plenty of evidence on the power of pairs working together, in peer tutoring.

In summary, the situation is that collaboration in learning has increased in use and that it happens mostly through pairs of children working together. Collaboration within a group of more than two is rare in most classrooms, as are tasks in which teachers specifically intend a group to work together.

While children sit in groups they are infrequently asked to work as groups. When they are required or choose to collaborate, it is usually in pairs - which do not require group seating. As with the argument from small group teaching, collaboration in learning within a group is a sound reason for a group seating arrangement. Nevertheless, the method is hardly used and therefore cannot justify groups as the standard seating arrangement.

2.2.4.6. Group Seating facilitates Ability Grouping

A third reason proffered for using group seating is that it facilitates 'ability grouping'. This is an interesting but different type of reason from the two already considered. Whereas the first two arguments are sound in principle, but inconsistent with the actual balance of activities in classrooms, the claim that group seating supports 'ability grouping' is just muddled.

Teachers differ in the criteria they use to arrange seating groups. Some create mixed ability or mixed gender groups; others go for homogeneity. Some focus on friendship clusters and just about every teacher will modify seating arrangements if behaviour becomes an issue. In parallel with seating groups, teachers generally also plan and teach on the basis of what are commonly, though unfortunately, called 'ability groups'. These two forms of grouping - physically in the configuration of seating arrangements and pedagogically through differentiation of learning activities by 'setting' - can produce coincident allocations whereby children in the same set sit together. However, this is not a necessary outcome. Indeed, in many classrooms seating arrangements are deliberately planned so that children from different 'ability groups' sit together (Mennin, 2003).

2.2.4.7. Matching classroom organization and learning

Of the four arguments considered, only the two relating to small group teaching and to group collaboration in learning are pedagogical and coherent. Both reflect the proposition that the configuration of furniture should support the interactions and the types of attention that a teaching strategy requires. Fung (2014) mentioned that the problem is not in the case they make for group seating for small group teaching and for collaborative group work, but in the suggestion that this is a reason for group seating being the standard organization when these two teaching strategies feature so infrequently in classrooms. We need to ask whether group seating arrangements are suitable for the types of teaching and learning activities that feature most in primary children's experience as well as for these two infrequently used strategies.

2.2.5. Models that promote small group teaching

Figure 1.A continuum of strategies model of Small Group Teaching (Huddleson &Unwin, 1997).



Active teaching and learning involves the use of strategies which maximise opportunities for interaction. Indeed, some literature (especially in the field of IT and computer-based learning) makes reference to 'interactive' rather than active approaches.

Our main focus here is on the kinds of strategies that are frequently put in opposition to so-called transmission methods. By transmission methods, I mean formal, didactic, expository and teacher-centred approaches, such as the fifty minute lecture that most of us in higher education are so familiar with. In contrast, active teaching and learning offers opportunities for interaction between teachers and students, amongst the students themselves, as well as between students, the materials and the topic itself or the academic discipline.

Typically, the kinds of strategies we would employ in order to promote active learning are small group work, research based projects, case studies, discussions, role play, field trips and so on. Above in 2.7 Figure 1 is a diagram of a continuum of strategies model of Small Group Teaching which I have borrowed from Huddleston & Unwin (1997) and adapted slightly.

According to this model, the learner may start at any point in the cycle (depending on their preferred learning style) but all four stages are necessary for the completion of meaningful learning. So, for example, students might undertake a field trip (as a concrete experience) and be asked to keep a log or diary of the trip (as reflective observation); once back at college, they might debate with each other what the findings mean and undertake some further reading before drawing conclusions (abstract conceptualisation). Lastly, they might embark on another field trip to a different location in order to test a new hypothesis (active experimentation) and so begin the learning cycle again.

This model effectively emphasises the importance of reflection to the process of learning; it sees reflection as the basis of learning. The activity (or concrete experience) is of little use by itself; the field trip must be accompanied by diary-keeping, the simulation must be followed by the de-briefing. Active teaching and learning strategies will provide opportunities for relating learning to previous experience but the teacher's role is critical in ensuring that reflection occurs (Pownall, 2012).

2.2.5.1.Small group instruction: theory and practice (Kozulin & Presseisen, 1995)

The use of small groups for instructional purposes is widely practiced in a variety of contexts, ranging from conventional educational institutions to the armed forces and training within business and industry. However, despite this wide usage, concrete information and practical guidance concerning instructional methods suitable for use with small groups have been difficult or impossible to find. The purpose of this volume is to provide such information and guidance.

2.2.5.2. The Small Group Rationale (Kagan, 1994).

The fundamental goal of every instructor is to create a conducive learning environment. Small-group methods of instruction are one approach to the creation of such an environment. Regardless of the particular method used, the rationale for small group instruction rests upon the premise that learning is partly a function of attitudes, and education or training is a matter of overcoming resistance to change. This can be accomplished by discussing issues or problems and, in some instances, arriving at decisions about how they might be handled.

Because the group resolves problems with each student participating, members are committed to solutions through the functioning of group norms endorsing the new ideas or behaviours. Under this rationale, two purposes are assumed to be accomplished: (a) students get new insights into problems by hearing different viewpoints and by having their ideas critiqued, and (b) they learn and commit to new behaviours from group discussion and decision.

For maximum learning to occur, a group must possess a common goal for learning, a reasonable degree of cohesiveness, norms conducive to learning, and patterns of effective communication - in effect, a learning culture. In permanently structured groups, these ingredients may already be present. However, in most instructional situations, where students usually meet for short periods spread over weeks or months, instructors must create and develop the required structure and processes of the group. The various methods used in small-group instruction are devices for accomplishing these purposes.

2.2.5.3. The use of small-group methods

For certain objectives, small-group methods are the techniques of choice. In other instances, they are valuable options that can provide an educational system with needed flexibility. When used properly, the methods are invaluable for increasing student motivation through greater involvement and participation. Under certain conditions, they even make it possible to ease the loads of overburdened instructors by reducing the time required to prepare formal presentations (Rubin & Babbie,2001).

In general, it is feasible to use small-group methods in courses to:

- Increase understanding and grasp of course content.
- Enhance motivation and generate greater student involvement.
- Develop positive attitudes toward later use of presented material.
- Develop problem-solving skills specific to the course content.
- Provide practice in the application of concepts and information to practical problems.
- Generate ideas among students concerning ways of applying acquired knowledge.
- Develop student commitment to recommended ways of handling problems.

- Emphasize an important issue.

Proceed with instruction when content experts are scarce or not available (Dolman, 2005).

Despite these benefits, small-group methods are not always used in the best possible ways. One reason may be that their flexibility and relative ease of administration can lead to the belief that the methods are fool proof. Like all instructional methods, the success of small-group techniques depends largely upon the care with which they are designed and used. For this reason, it is important to state several important cautions with regard to the most effective use of the methods (Baines & Galton, 2003). Firstly, it is essential that methods be selected and used with the instructional objective clearly in mind. Thus, the time, effort, and thought expended in accurate definition of objectives, in selection of proper methods, and in use of the methods appropriate to the objectives will usually be well-repaid in the quality of learning that is achieved (Fall & Webb, 2000).

Secondly, although small-group methods are effective for certain purposes when used alone, they are most successful when students are also equipped with background information concerning the topics or problems under study. The foundation for small-group methods is discussion, but instructive discussion cannot be accomplished unless students have some informational basis from which to talk (Blatchford, 2003).

Finally, groups in which members work together over periods of time are, in general, likely to be more efficient and effective vehicles for learning. Therefore, where small-group methods are used repeatedly throughout the duration of a course, it is usually advisable to assign students permanently to groups and allow them to remain together whenever group sessions are considered desirable. An exception is the case where a stated objective is the stimulation of students through exposure to a wide range of ideas and viewpoints. With such an objective, periodic realigning of groups may be advisable (Howe & Tolmie, 2003).

In small groups learners can discuss content, share ideas, and solve problems. They present their own ideas as well as consider ideas put forth by others. In this way, they can be exposed to a variety of viewpoints on a given subject. There are many small group formats that encourage and provide opportunities for interaction (Taylor, 2008).

The discussion group allows learners to reflect on a subject under discussion and present their views. Discussion within the small group is often on high intellectual levels - specifically analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Guided design encourages interaction in small groups. Here the focus is on developing the learners' decision-making skills as well as in teaching specific concepts and principles. Participants work to solve open-ended problems which require outside class work to gather information. This format encourages learners to think logically, communicate ideas, and apply steps in a decision-making process. Learners are also required to apply the information they have learned, exchange ideas, and reflect on suggested solutions. The instructor's role is to act as a consultant to the groups (Smuck & Smuck, 2001).

Role playing is another format available for use with small groups and involves recreating a situation relating to a real-world problem in which participants act out various roles. This promotes an understanding of other people's positions and their attitudes as well as the procedures that might be used for diagnosing and solving problems. Role playing can be used to simulate real-life group work situations and can help learners gain a fuller understanding of a problem or situation (Dolman, 2005).

Games requiring two or more groups to compete while attempting to meet a set of objectives are another form of small group learning. The game follows a set of rules and procedures and information which requires decision making is provided. Most instructional games reflect typical real-life situations. The rules, procedures and objectives of the game should be clear and concise (Kutnick & Layne, 2006).

Online learning environments offer several distinct benefits for small group work. Firstly, they allow small groups to work independently while still having access to the instructor. In some cases where it is difficult for all members of an online class to meet synchronously, small groups can be organized according to their time zones, making it possible to find a convenient time to meet synchronously. Larger groups can benefit by communicating asynchronously via conferencing programs. A second benefit of online environments for group work is that they equalize control among participants. Factors such as geography, gender, or disabilities do not disadvantage learners in this environment. Finally, the instructor is able to respond directly to questions and needs of particular groups without taking the time of other groups (Babbie, 2007).

2.3. Conclusion

The chapter reviewed different literatures about the use of small group teaching. During the review process different view were presented and how they are related to the present study. Both advantages and disadvantages of small group teaching were reviewed together with challenges that teachers experience during facilitating small group teaching. The next chapter will be based on research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher presents the research methodology to be used in this study and how the research process is to be unfolded. In this section all the technological aspects that will guide this research will be discussed. These include:

The research paradigm,
Research approach,
Research design,
Population sample and sampling techniques,
Data collection,
Instruments,
Reliability trustworthiness,
Data analysis and
Ethical considerations

Gough (2001) refers to methodology as a theory and analysis of how the research should proceed. Research methodology can also be described as the explanation of the plan of how the researcher intends conducting the research (Hood, 2008) and specifies how researchers may go about practically studying whatever they believe in (Vapid, 2007). Cohen and Manion (as cited in Maponya, (2010) research methodology means the range of approaches used in the educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction.

3.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVISM

Interpretive paradigm is adopted for this study because this paradigm allows the researcher to focus on contextual meaning making. Interpretivism was established as a viable alternative to positivism based on ideas of German philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey and Husserl (Mertens, 2010). Researchers in the interpretive tradition realise that social sciences is different from natural sciences and this argue that reality cannot be investigated in the same way.

Interpretive researchers believe that there exist multiple truths (Cohen & Manion, 2005). Interpretivists stress that social reality is interpreted by the individual based on the ideological inclination that the individual possesses. Therefore, reality is influenced by personal experiences of the actors in relation to the political and social climate at the time the research is done (Muijis, 2004). Reality is socially constructed implying that truths differ across contexts and places and time for participants in a particular setting (Babbie, 2005). Interpretive researchers often favour meaning as opposed to measurements oriented methods of inquiry, because they argue that it is difficult to generalise how one experiences as phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, Mertens, 2010).

Littlejohn (2000) adds that the interpretive paradigm supports the belief that the reality is constructed by subjective perception, and predictions cannot be made and researchers who agree with this paradigm are interested in social construction of meaning and people have free will, purposes, goals and intentions so people should be studied as active agents.

Littlejohn (2000), further states that the basic premises of interpretive paradigm is that people make decisions and act in accordance with their subjective understanding of situations in which they find themselves. One of the reasons of adopting interpretive paradigm for this study is because Cohen , Manion and Morrison (2000) advocate that the world should be studied in its natural state, rather than in controlled laboratory type experiments and with minimum intervention by the researcher. This means that interpretive paradigm gives the interviewees freedom to express their views on the question without the intervention of the researcher (Babbie and Mouton 2001). For this study, this means that interpretive paradigm would allow the researcher to study the participants in the natural world and be able to understand how is small group teaching is employed by teachers in the senior phase in Kentani District.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH: QUALITATIVE APPROACH

The research approach appears to be appropriate for this study is a qualitative approach. The purpose of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural states, taking into account the relevant context (Leedy, 2001:91). Qualitative research is predicated on the assumption that each individual, each culture and each setting is unique.

Qualitative research is an approach that utilizes methods that seek to discern the quality, as opposed to quantity, of its subject (Flainand, 2003). It is therefore, more concerned with explaining the “why” and “how” of a phenomenon rather than the “what”, “when” and “where” (Gough, 2001).

Furthermore, the qualitative research is an approach that explores the richness, depth and complexity of the phenomena, produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Neill, 2006). This suggests why in this study, the researcher used interviews to determine how many people have come up with a certain answer to the questions posed. Since this study made use of rich, descriptive interviews, Du Plooy as cited in Adan (2010), asserts that qualitative approach is appropriate when researchers intend examining the properties, values, needs or characteristics that distinguish individuals, groups, communities, organizations, events ,settings or messages. Mwanje as cited in Adan (2010) concurs by postulating that qualitative method is better suited to description, whether dealing with meanings or patterns of behaviour, as it intends to rely on a detailed and complex description of events or people. Such a thick description is necessary in order to convey complexity of events of the situation to provide the reader with enough detail to conclude for themselves whether the researcher’s interpretations of the phenomenon are relevant and justifiable for the circumstances.

Qualitative instrument such as document analysis had been employed in this study. Maree (2007) takes the definition further stating that a qualitative research approach is an umbrella term for a wide range of approaches intended at collecting rich, descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon with the aim of understanding a situation from the participant’s point of view. This was relevant to the study since the researcher used multiple methods of data collection (i.e. interviews and documents analysis). This was done in order to get rich information and understanding a situation in depth, as experienced and explained by the respondents. Qualitative research concerned with meanings, the way people understand things and a concern with patterns of behaviour (Adan, 2010). This suggests that although other research paradigms exist (Saunders, et al; 2003:125), they are automatically excluded from consideration for a study like this one because the knowledge interest of this study

was to understand how small group teaching is employed by teachers in the senior phase. Two reasons justify this choice. Firstly a qualitative approach allows the researcher to enter the participants' real life-world and study their lived-experiences (Brown & Schulze, 2001). This meant that the dynamic, holistic and individual aspects of the teachers, and learners' experiences were captured. This research was keen to capture this holistic aspect in entirety...within the context of the teachers who are experiencing it.

A qualitative researcher stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situation constraints that shape inquiry (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007). Furthermore, in doing their investigation qualitative researchers tend to be interested in the meanings attributed to events by the research participants themselves rather than with the identification of cause-effect relationships, nor work with variables that are defined by the researcher before the research process begins (Schwartz, 2009; Willig, 2001). Qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study because during field work, which was the central activity of this study, the researcher was afforded an opportunity to have direct contact with respondents. This was done in the respondents' own environments, getting close to people and situations being studied to personally understand the realities of the situation under study as experienced by participants (Partington, 2001; Patton, 2002).

One of the major strengths of the qualitative approach is the depth to which explorations are conducted and descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation (Neill, 2006). Participants have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with qualitative methods (Mack et al, 2005). In turn, the researchers have the opportunity to respond immediately to what participants say by tailoring subsequent questions to information the participant provides (Brown & Schulze, 2001).

Moreover, as the central activity of this study was to conduct interviews and analyse documents, this produced a qualitative data which consisted of quotations, observations and exceptions from analysed documents (Patton, 2002).

Then the qualitative data produced described, told a story of how small group teaching is employed by teachers in the senior phase.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: A CASE STUDY

The research design used in this study is a case study which according to Caiderhead (2006) allows for an in-depth examination of events, phenomena, or other observations within a real-time context for purposes of investigations, theory development and testing or simply as a tool for learning. Case study often employs documents, artefacts, interviews and observations during the course of the research. In the context of this study both one on one interviews and document analysis is used.

A research design is a plan structure and strategy so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems (Kumar, 2005; Trochim, 2006) and provides the glue that holds the research project together (Trochim, 2006). The plan is a complete scheme or program of the research. Leedy & Omrod (2001) warn that in planning a research design, it is very important to select a viable research problem but also consider the kind of data required and a feasible means of collecting and interpreting such data.

A case study is a qualitative research design in which in-depth data are gathered relatively to a single individual, program or event for the purpose of learning more of an unknown or poorly understood situation (Leedy & Omrod 2005). A case study refers to the study of a person, a small group, a single situation, or a specific case, which involves extensive research, including documented evidence of a particular issue or situation, and the conclusion reached following the study (Holetzky, 2010). In this study multiple sources of evidence used were interviews and document analysis and the area of interest is how small group teaching is employed by teachers in the senior phase, a case study in Kentani District.

Another reason why a case study design was used in this study is because its findings usually provide a rich and holistic description of the case and its context (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, a case study design is also flexible and involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process and is applicable to real-life contemporary, human situations (Patton, 2002; Soy, 1997)

Based on this particular study the case was 2 schools in Kentani District. A case study is also particularly useful when the researcher needs to understand particular people, problems or situations in great depth, and when information –rich cases can be found which provide great insight into the phenomenon in question (Trochim, 2006) which is the case in this particular study of how small group teaching is employed by teachers in the senior phase in Kentani District.

3.4 POPULATION

The researcher should first think critically about the parameters of the population and then choose the sample case accordingly. Clear identification and formulation of pre-selected criteria for the selection of the respondents is therefore, of cardinal importance (Maree, 2007:79). In a qualitative research the participants and sites are selected that can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem of the study.

In this case study the researcher could not use the whole population of that circuit, he/she only selected a certain part of circuit 1 in Kentani District. The whole circuit has 32 schools, only 2 schools in the Get Band were selected to participate in the research study. From both schools only 10 teachers in the senior phase who have a teaching experience of more than 10 years and a total of 5 learners, that is 3 learners from school A and 2 learners from school B.

3.5 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

The researcher could, of course not study the entire population of interest; instead he selected a subset of that population (Leedy & Omrod, 2005). However, the researcher would cause the results obtained from that sample to make generalizations about the entire population only if the sample is truly representative of the population.

The overall purpose of the use of the relevant sampling techniques in qualitative research is to collect the richest data. Rich data mean, ideally, a wide and diverse range of information collected over a relatively prolonged period of time. The search for data must be guided by processes that will provide rich detail to maximise the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context (Erlandson et al. 1993:33). Because the researcher had no way of forecasting or guaranteeing that each element of the population was going to be represented in the sample, the researcher decided to use a Non-Probability type of sampling called the purposive sampling.

A purposive sampling or selective sampling procedure was used because it identifies those people who have relevant information about and have experienced the process under consideration (Symon & Hornby, 1994). This purposive sampling used to select teachers with more teaching experience to participate in this study. This type of sampling is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher; in that the sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representatives or typical attributes of the population that serves the purpose of the study (De Vos, 2013: 232). Purposive sampling assisted the researcher to get rich information that is based on the experience of teachers. As the procedure is judgemental, it is more informed by my experiences and knowledge of the areas of study to select cases that are representative or typical (Fogelman, 2002).

3.5.1 PROCEDURE FOR SAMPLING SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method (Saunders, et al., 2003). In this sampling procedure the researcher is allowed to use his judgement and the aim was to select informants that are deemed information –rich (Saunders, et al., 2003). The researcher used this notion of information –richness to guide my decision regarding the schools. To establish the extent that is information –rich, the researcher visited the schools and had informal conversation with the school authorities. The researcher based the selection decision on this preliminary information. This was consistent with Yin's (1989) view that the guiding criteria for selecting sample purposively included cases which were critically and typically extreme or a mixture of these. The purposive sampling assisted the researcher to get rich information that was based on the experience of teachers.

Since the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) small group teaching is encouraged. According to the workshops that the researcher conducted on the facilitation of learning during small group teaching in Kentani District, it appeared that some of the teachers under study in the district were still relying on traditional methods as reflected in the workshop evaluation reports. In their study on challenges facing higher education Wadesango and Machingambi(2010) postulate that there seems to be a gap between primary, secondary and higher education and the question which they posed probably for further research was “how we close it? “This has prompted this study in order to investigate the extent to which teachers in the primary schools under study are employing small group teaching in an endeavour to close the gap mentioned above.

The research was conducted in two schools of Kentani District that are in the GET Band and only 10 teachers in the senior phase who have teaching experience of more than 10 years and a total of 5 learners from both schools were interviewed.

3.5.2 NEGOTIATION OF ENTRY TO THE RESPONDENTS

A letter of approval from the university to permit to carry out the research was presented to the participants. The researcher contacted 2 principals telephonically. The aim of phoning them was because the researcher was not sure how many participants (teachers, learners) would be willing to be part of the study in their respective schools.

To gain access to the research sites and participants, the researcher did not seek permission from the District Department of Education. The researcher only sought permission from the school principals. A letter was written to the schools to inform them about the research and to request permission to access the schools. Permission was granted for the research to be done.

At the school level, the school principal introduced the researcher to the educators and learners. Some educators and learners showed interest to participate in the study whereas a very few of them showed very little interest. In the process of soliciting permission to do the research, the purpose of the investigation was fully explained to all participants. The researcher visited the two schools for arrangement to conduct the interviews.

Research objectives were also explained in detail to ensure that the access to the site and research participants, as well as cooperation, was secured. This exercise ensured that the ground work for data collection was properly prepared and only after securing their permission was the field work mounted.

3.5.3 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH SITES

School A is a Junior Secondary School with an enrolment of 363 learners from grade R to 9, in a rural area of about 28 Km from Kentani town centre. School B is also a Junior Secondary school with an enrolment of 342 learners from grade R to 9. It is also located in the deep rural area of Kentani about 24 Km away from town. Both these schools have educators who have more than 10 years teaching experience and still facing the challenge of using small group teaching in the senior phase. Access to these two schools is via a very bad, marooned, gravel road and learners walk long distances to school. Their surrounding communities are largely illiterate and still backward. The researcher visited the two schools twice to meet the principals, together with the participants and made arrangements for the interviews.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

O'Leary (2004) defines the data collection methods as the techniques used to collect data. In addition, Bernard (2002) describes data collection as the steps that involve setting boundaries for the study, collecting information through observation, interviews, documents and visual materials and establishing the protocol for recording the information. According to Yin (2003), there are different types of data collection methods associated with case studies, which include document analysis, archival records, interviews, direct observation and others. For the purpose of this study, only two data collection methods were used, which were Semi- structured Interviews and Document Analysis.

3.6.1. RESEACHER AS AN INSTRUMENT

In this study, the researcher served as the data collection instrument by interviewing the participants.

The researcher gave close attention to the participants' own words and should maintain the awareness of where the researcher was situated according to the relevant dimensions of the participant's life-words (Sherrad, 1998:253). Moore (2010) asserts the researcher as the key in the research process for many qualitative researchers.

However being a research instrument has its disadvantages. The researcher needed to apply research ethics and be sensitive to participants' needs in order to provide a more relaxed atmosphere for the participants. The researcher perceived herself to be close to the participants socially and culturally which enabled a smooth interviewing process.

3.6.2. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The researcher used teachers and learners of the chosen schools in the Kentani District as gatekeeper (Sunders et al., 223). This was to ensure that access to the site and research participants were secured and the provisions in the Department research policy are adhered to (see DOE, 107: research in school policy).

To make arrangements for the interviews, the researcher visited the schools and explained the purpose of the research and requested permission to use a tape recorder. Some participants agreed to the use of the tape recorder while others did not want it to be used because of insecurity about their anonymity, despite being promised full confidentiality and anonymity. In one instance where the participants refused to be tape recorded, the researcher had to write down verbatim as the interview developed; only two participants did not want to be recorded so the note taking exercise was not burdensome. The researcher maintained a good atmosphere with the participants so they were able to feel free to talk.

Interviews with the participants were conducted at school. In some cases the principals gave some participants special permission to be interviewed during tuition time. The arrangements were based on the convenience of the participants. Each interview with the educators lasted for about 30 minutes. The interviews with each learner lasted for about 10 minutes. The interviews were mainly conducted in the English language. In cases where the interviews were recorded, the data was transcribed verbatim.

The interviewing style with educators and learners was semi-structured. The interview covered the following themes:-

- Teachers understanding of small group teaching
- Different approaches of small group teaching
- Challenges faced by teachers when implementing small group teaching
- Measures to be put in place in order to promote the facilitation of small group teaching
- Proposed teaching model assisting senior phase teachers

3.6.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

As mentioned earlier on data was collected through the use of semi- structured interviews and document analysis. The convenient time for the interviews was during break time and after school in order not to disrupt teaching and learning at the school. The office and the classroom were regarded as appropriate venues for the interviews since there would be no disruption of the interview process by learners as it would be break time and the learners were out of the class. This meant that the researcher had the opportunity to be alone with each participant without any disruption.

However interviews with teachers were conducted the office after school whilst the interviews for the learners were conducted in the classroom. This was an agreement amongst teachers, learners and the researcher. Conducting interviews after school was also aimed at not disrupting any day to day smooth running of the school. Each teacher interview lasted for about thirty minutes, and the teachers willingly gave as much information as possible.

There were two languages used during the interview process, namely: English and IsiXhosa. IsiXhosa was used because it is the mother tongue of the researcher as well as the respondents. On the other hand, English was used because it was the language used in the interview guide (see appendix C, D&E). The respondents were allowed to code switch between the two languages when responding to the questions. This was done so as to create a more relaxed atmosphere for the interview process code switching also helped respondents express themselves freely thus giving rich information.

This really helped a lot because the respondents could dwell as much as they could, in giving their responses, without being too cautious about making mistakes when using a foreign language. Furthermore, the document analysis was carried out in the principal's office in these two schools. The principals' offices were regarded as the convenient place for this exercise since it is where all the analysed documents could be found. Documents analysed included SMT minute book IQMS minute book and Supervision Minute book. This was done on a separate date from that of the interviews. Analysis of documents was carried out under the supervision of the principal of the school. In each school, the researcher took about thirty five minutes for document analysis process, which was also done after school hours.

3.6.4 PHASE OF DATA COLLECTION

- Phase 1 Pilot study
- Phase 2 Interviews
- Phase 3 Documentary Analysis

3.6.4.1 PHASE 1 PILOT STUDY

A researcher may sometimes need to do a brief exploratory investigation, or a pilot study, to try out particular procedures, measurement instruments or methods of analysis. A brief pilot study is an excellent way to determine the feasibility of the study (Leedy & Omrod, 2005).

A pilot study is defined as the new process whereby research designs for a prospective survey are tested (Strydom, 2007). Bless and Higson- Smith as cited in Strydom (2007) concur by defining a pilot study as a small study conducted prior to a larger piece of research to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate and appropriate.

3.6.4.2 LESSON FROM PILOT STUDY

In this research pilot study was conducted in two schools, which is not between the two schools sampled for the main research, but having the same characteristics as those of the main study. This was to make sure that the questions set are answerable and that the tools to be used actually worked (Shuttleworth, 2010). Pilot study involved four participants, that is one teacher and one learner from each of these two schools.

In addition to that, a pilot study allowed the research to conduct a preliminary analysis before committing to a full-blown study. This also helped the researcher to condition herself for the various kinds of reception she might get from people with different characters and personalities, who would participate in the main research. It also helped the researcher to think well in advance about the analysis of the results. Strydom as cited in Smit (2010) advocates that a pilot study can be viewed as a “dress rehearsal” for the main investigation.

This pilot study aimed at establishing whether the respondents are accessible, whether the sites are convenient, whether the techniques of data collection generate enough information, whether the plan is well adjusted and whether any changes or adjustments were needed. In a nutshell, the purpose of the pilot was to discover possible weaknesses, inadequacies, ambiguities and problems in all aspects of the research so that they could be corrected before the actual data collection took place. This phase was characterised by the piloting of instruments. According to Briggs and Colman (2002), all data collecting instruments have to be piloted; in this instance, only the interviews were piloted.

3.6.4.3 PHASE 2: INTERVIEWS

The second phase is about the actual study. The researcher employed interviews as an instrument for collecting data. The researcher had pre-written a list of questions. The open structure of the interviews ensured that unexpected facts could be pursued easily in order to emphasize the depth and richness of information from respondents. Hence Welman and Kruger (1999) understood the semi-structured interviews as a much more flexible version of the structured interview. There was much opportunity on the part of the researcher to probe and expand the respondent's responses.

The interviews were carried out with five teachers in each of the two schools, and five learners from both schools. The researcher ensured that all the interviews were conducted in the same way. The essential task of the researcher was to create a friendly but professional atmosphere when conducting the interviews.

These were face-to-face interviews with individual teachers which required some pleasant atmosphere. The initial step of the researcher was to negotiate the use of the tape recorder with the individual respondents, in order to record all the interview sessions. According to Maree (2007), tape recording of the interview session would produce the most complete record of what was said. The use of a tape recorder was also accompanied by the taking of the field notes. This was done in order to review the answers after finishing the interview.

During the interview session, the researcher read the guide question exactly as written. The questioning allowed room for the respondents to give out his/her thoughts and feelings about the topic in question. Where there was an incomplete or too brief response, the researcher would ask the respondent to explain a little more. The researcher was more attentive to the responses from the participants so that she could identify new emerging lines of enquiry that were directly related to the phenomenon being studied. These new emerging lines were explored and probed. The researcher kept on moving those who were reluctant to respond in some parts of questioning. Generally, the respondents were keen to respond to the interview questions because the questioning required their own opinions.

3.6.4.4 DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS

This phase was characterised by the analysis of documents. This usage of documentary analysis was negotiated by the researcher through the school principals. The researcher was interested in analysing documents such as SMT minute book, IQMS minute book and Supervision Minutes book. The documents were analysed to corroborate evidence received from teachers and learners investigated because they provided the context and culture of the institution. This assignment was carried out on two schools under study. According to Brown and Dawling (1988) documents are outcomes of everyday activity. Therefore, they provided the researcher with the sort of data that are most likely to be used in answering the questions posed by the topic.

The consent to analyse the documents from the schools was characterised by the strict monitoring not to page other areas of the documentary sources. These were regarded as containing sensitive matters which were confidential to the schools only.

Nevertheless, the researcher analysed these official communicating documents as they shed the light on the phenomenon being investigated. The SMT minute book was considered as the most vital document in the running of the day to day activities of the schools. It is for this reason that Sacks (2003) acknowledged the interpretation of events in this minute book as providing the meaning of how to explore small group teaching in the classroom. The information contained in the SMT minute book included agendas on how to run the school curriculum-wise and other written reports. Although shallow in content but they indicated the first –hand account of professional work such as assessment.

The use of the IQMS minute book was also vital for the study. This document indicated the different approaches of small group teaching. What was clear in the agendas, minutes and reports were democratic decisions aimed at developing the school concerning the understanding of small group, teaching in the senior phase. The use of the Supervision minute book was also of great importance for the study. This document indicated clearly how often they underwent supervision. There was correlation among the minute books that are SMT minute book IQMS minute book and Supervision minute book. Most of the records in these documents showed concern in the upliftment of the standard of the school concerning curriculum. All the analysed documents generally provided evidence that narrated the details about teachers' understanding of small group teaching in the senior phase.

3.6.4.5. ADMINISTRATION OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS.

This section aims at unpacking the journey taken by the researcher in using the research instruments. The instrument used belongs to qualitative method of approach. The instruments that were used are:

Interviews

Document Analysis

3.6.4.6 ADMINISTRATION OF INTERVIEWS

Interviews can yield a great deal of useful information, Silverman (1993). The researcher can ask questions related to anything like facts, people's beliefs, feelings, motives, present and past behaviours, and conscious reasons for behaving in a particular way.

The researcher had earlier negotiated the place and time to conduct the interviews with the participants. Some were comfortable with the school while others had no problem with their residential places. The researcher also negotiated the use of the tape recorder in recording the interviews whilst at the same time taking the field notes. These interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis between the researcher and the participant. The researcher made sure that the atmosphere was pleasant and welcoming before starting the interview process.

The researcher switched on the tape recorder immediately when starting the interview process. The researcher was also ready to take field notes at the same time. In the semi-structured interviews the researcher used an interview guide with specific questions that were organized by topics or as follow-up to the survey questionnaire. These questions were not necessarily asked in a specific order. The flow of the interview rather than the order in a guide, determined when and how a question was asked. Depending on the responses from the respondents which on many occasions required probing as the interview progressed, a question previously planned for later in the interview was sometimes asked earlier. The researcher noticed that respondents often answered a question before it was asked. This happened during questioning and / or probing. In such situations, the researcher skipped the already answered question.

The scheduled time for the interviews did not last according to the expected amount of time with single respondents. The variation of time taken depended on how the interviewees were able to express themselves and also probing from the researcher. During the process, the researcher maintained active listening and let more talking be done by the respondents. The researcher also noted that follow-up questions ended up being as important as the questions in the original interview guide. Where interviewees did not spontaneously cover areas in which the researcher was interested, I gradually introduced more specific prompts to ensure that such areas were covered.

The progress of the interviews was characterized by a positive atmosphere in which the respondents seemed relaxed and at ease sharing their experiences with the researcher. This might have been caused by the provision of an overview of the purpose of the interview by the researcher and also the fact that the researcher had earlier met the respondents during a survey questionnaire.

3.6.4.7 ADMINISTRATION OF DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

When using documents as a data gathering technique, there is a need to focus on all types of written communications that may shed light on the phenomenon being investigated Kobus (2007). The researcher conducted documentary analysis after finishing the interviews in each school. The documents analysed were SMT minute book, these documents were analysed because they are an outcome of everyday activities of teachers. The researcher was therefore interested to see if the documents would provide information that was likely to be used in answering the questions posed by the research topic.

To have access to the documents the researcher negotiates through the principals of the schools. All the principals believed that the researcher was a genuine student researcher because of the letters the researcher had earlier given them seeking permission to conduct the study from the university. In both schools there were some aspects of the minutes which the principals considered confidential, which were not made accessible to the researcher. In the true spirit of social research, the researcher respected the principals' wishes. On analysing the documents, the researcher found that the topics and subtopics under discussion were interesting and meaningful.

Generally the documents were of value to the activities although they did not provide an accurate picture of events. During the process the researcher recorded down all the information related to the study. On completion, the researcher highlighted what was recorded to the principal. These were the last stages of the study where the researcher thanked the principals who had allowed the teachers and learners to participate by giving full support and sharing of ideas during the research process.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is, first and foremost, a process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising which certainly is far removed from structured, mechanical and technical procedures to make inferences from empirical data of social life. This allows for an ambiguous, creative and fascinating process(Schwandt 2007:7).A variety of analytical strategies are used that involve interpreting the data by sorting, organising and reducing them to more manageable pieces and then exploring ways to reassemble them.

Qualitative data is information gathered in a non-numeric form such as interview transcripts, fields notes, documents , and others (Gibbs, Lewins & Taylor, 2005), which is what this study was all about. Therefore qualitative data analysis is a non- mathematical analytical procedure, essentially about making sense of the data in order to answer the research question (Hood, 2008).

According to Hollard and Ramazanoglu as cited in Hood (2008) data analysis is the process of envisioning patterns, making sense, giving shape and bringing quantities of material under control. Gibbs et al (2005) take the definition further by stating that qualitative data analysis is the range of processes and procedures whereby there is a movement from qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations being investigated. Terre Blanche et al (2002) concurs with this by maintaining that data analysis involves reading through the data repeatedly and engaging in activities of breaking down the data and building it up again in novel ways.

It is usually based on an interpretative philosophy and the idea is to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data (Gibbs et al; 2005). In a nutshell to analyse data is to give sense to the information that the researcher has collected from the respondents.

Analysis begins when data is first collected and is used to guide decisions related to further data collection (Neill, 2006; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). It is easy , when start qualitative data analysis , both to write and code in ways that are nothing more descriptive summaries of what participants have said or done (Gibbs et al, 2005). Given that interviews were one of the methods used to collect data, the method of data analysis used in this study was thematic content analysis (ICA) which is the most foundational of qualitative analytic procedures, and in some way informs all qualitative method (Anderson , 2007).

Thematic content Analysis is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data which may take the form of interview transcripts collected from research participants or other identified texts that reflect experientially on the topic of study (Ibid). In other words, in order to be satisfactory, the analysis of data should portray the thematic content of interview transcripts and documents analysed by identifying common themes and categorizing patterns in the texts provided for analysis (Anderson, 2007, Gibbs et al, 2005; Neill, 2006). This is because collecting and analysing qualitative data is time consuming, and finding themes and extracting meaning can be a daunting task since the researcher would be faced with volumes of material (Ereaut, 2007, Gibbs et al, 2005).

But, since this is a case study and multiple data collection methods were used, opportunities to triangulate data were used, in order to strengthen the research findings and conclusions. So, regardless of the amount of data the researcher was able to analyse it with less difficulty since he has identified, coded and knew his data well.

A validation check of themes would be conducted by my supervisor as another experienced qualitative researcher. The protocol for data analysis was given to an external data analysis to analyse the same data. The data from teachers and learners were analysed using the same procedure.

3.7.1. INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Interviews were analysed in order to interpret and understand the experiences and meaning attached to the data from the participants perspectives (Bailey, 2007). This interview analysis took place after the data was collected. The researcher transcribed the data from the tape recorder on the paper. The data from the tape recorder was then compared with the field notes taken during the interview process. This information was compiled to form one data which was then reduced and analysed in an attempt to identify trends and patterns of the data. The form of analysis used was a narrative analysis. According to Bryman (2004) narrative analysis is an approach to the elicitation and analysis of data that is sensitive to the sense of temporary sequence that people detect in their lives and surrounding episodes and inject into their accounts in elaboration under the narratives told to participants. Bailey (2007), the researcher then analysed the data in order to give a single story about responses from the participants.

3.7.2. SCHOOL DOCUMENTS ANALYSIS

The researcher analysed documents from each school such as, SMT minute book and IQMS minute book. The documents were analysed to get information that was likely to answer the questions posed by the research topic. The researcher had no challenge of accessibility to the documents with only restrictions to some pages of the documents which contained some school confidential information.

On reading the documents, the researcher took notes which she revisited after data collection. The researcher analysed the data to see if there was meaning and relationship required to answer the research questions.

3.8 DATA TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Kolb (1999:33) the validity of the instrument procedures accurate results or information. In supporting Kolb's idea the researcher used semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Trustworthiness in a qualitative research refers to validity and reliability (Lincoln & Guba as cited in Takia, 2009). Ensuring trustworthiness is important because it evaluates its worth checks whether the findings fit and are consistent. To ensure reliability in a qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial (Golafshani, 2003). The trustworthiness of the research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability.

Participants are asked to examine field notes and early analysis that researchers can give back something to their participants and engage in member checking as a means of ensuring trustworthiness (Morton, 2001). However, trustworthiness of a research should not end with the methods employed but should continue to strive to represent findings in ways that honour the respondents' commitments to the study, as well as the researcher's commitment to their desire to contribute to the project to enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study. According to Morrow & Williams (2009) suggest that a study is considered trustworthy if the researcher can clearly communicate what he/she has found and why it matters. The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is how an inquirer can persuade his or her audience (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth (Bryman & Burgess as cited in Maponya, 2010).

3.8.1 RELIABILITY

The reliability and validity of a study affects the credibility of the findings. Reliability relates to the methods of data collection and the concern that they should be consistent and not distort the findings (Kuze, 2009). McMillan & Schumacher (2006:130) explained that reliability referred to the consistency of measurement, or the extent to which the scores were similar over different forms of the same instrument or occasions of data collection. Reliability, according to Lowe (2000:121) was a matter of how stable the results were. Reliability was established when an instrument was administered on the same individual more than once and yielded the same results. Researchers need to feel confident that the results they obtain are not being affected by a research instrument that throws up different results each time it is used.

Reliability refers to the stability accuracy and precision of measurement (Kuze, 2009). Reliability is concerned with accuracy and precision (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). This means that if a variable is tested under the same conditions then that variable must produce the same result. Reliability is reflected in the fact that produces the same results each time the instrument is applied (Delpont, 2005). Mays & Pope (1995) advocate that the main ways in which qualitative researchers ensure the retest reliability of the analysis is by maintaining meticulous records of interviews and observations, and by documenting what the process of analysis in detail and that was what the researcher intended doing in order to make the study credible.

3.8.2 VALIDITY

Delpont as cited in Komle (2009) asserts that face validity is concerned about the superficial appearance or face value of an instrument. This simply means that, if the instrument appears to measure the variables it claims to measure, then the instrument has face validity- whether the instrument measures the concept in question accurately. McMillan & Schumacher (2006, p130) asserted that the instrument validity was the extent to which inferences and uses made on the basis of scores from an instrument were reasonable and appropriate. Validity was a judgement of the appropriateness of a measure for specific inferences, decisions, consequences and uses that result from the scores that were generated. According to Lowe, et.al (1991:121), the validity of an instrument meant ensuring that the instrument measured the attribute(s) which it is supposed to measure.

It refers to the quality of data and explanations and the confidence we might have that they accord with what is true and what is real. Claims to validity involve some demonstration that the researcher's data and his/her analysis are firmly rooted in the realm of things that are relevant, genuine and real; they act to reassure the reader that the research is not based on poor data and erroneous interpretations. All the interviewees were asked same questions and there was enough time to respond and there were also follow-up questions. This increased validity of what the interviewer intended to see.

For this study, to ensure that it was reliable and valid, the researcher carried out a pilot study which helped in the reduction of ambiguity, and ensured that the methodologies employed, instruments and data collection techniques were appropriate for the study.

3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES /CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher adhered to all legal and ethical norms as enshrined in the statutory research requirements. Strydom (2007) advocates that human beings are the objects of study in the social sciences that bring unique ethical problems to the fore which would never be relevant in the pure, clinical laboratory settings of the natural sciences. For researchers in the social sciences, the ethical issues are pervasive and complex, since data should never be obtained at the expense of human beings. Babbie (2001) asserts that anyone involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreement about what is proper and improper in scientific research.

Ethical principles should be internalised in the personality of the researcher to such that ethically guided decision making becomes part of his lifestyle (Strydom, 2007). This means that in this study the researcher abided by the research ethics and had to follow all the ethical issues so as to validate the study and not compromise the trust the participants had on her.

According to Kuze (2009), in any research endeavour, researchers are expected to employ high standards of academic rigor and to behave with honesty and dignity. The acceptability of social research depends increasingly on the willingness of the social researcher to accord respect, to the subjects and to treat them with consideration. Ethical issues in research include the need for informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality.

3.9.1 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

When conducting the research, the researcher should under no circumstances allow for participants to participate or continue unwillingly with the study (Mack et al. 2005). It is important to assure the potential participant that participation in the research is absolutely voluntary and that he/she will be free to discontinue participation at any time if he/she wishes (Ibid). This suggests that in this particular study, the principle of voluntary participation was adhered to, and that no one was forced to participate in the study. Only those who volunteered were allowed to participate. Participants were also informed of their freedom to withdraw at any time if they no longer felt interested or comfortable with the study.

The researcher also indicated to the participants that refusal to participate or the decision to withdraw would not result in any penalties or loss of benefits to which the participant was otherwise entitled (Leedy & Omrod, 2001).

In other words, the researcher always checked if the participant was still willing to continue with the study before each and every interview was conducted.

However it was made clear how important the participant was and how much it meant that he/she completes the study. This ensured that cooperation or maximum participation was secured, and that the participant willingly gave rich information.

3.9.2. INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent is one of the most important tools for ensuring respect for persons during research (Mack et al., 2005). It can be defined as a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so that they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate.

With reference to this study, consent forms which briefly described the expectations of them as participants were issued to respondents. Participants were informed of all aspects of research that might be reasonably expected to influence their willingness to participate in the research (Adam, 2010). They were also informed about what it is they were volunteering through for a brief description of the purpose of the research. For instance, the use of the tape recorder was discussed upfront with the respondents, who all gave the researcher permission to use it.

The participants of this study were adults and learners, which meant that they had the capacity to give informed consent directly. After giving a detailed explanation of the purpose and the objectives of the research to the participants, the researcher then formally (gave consent forms) requesting their participation in the study. Mack et al (2005) suggest that these consent forms must be in the local language, use local terms, and be written for a language level that potential participants can easily understand. In this study, the consent forms in English were given to the respondents, since teachers were regarded as the people who should understand English. The informed consent documentation must include a description of any benefits to the participant (if any or others) that may reasonably be expected from the research.

3.9.3 PROTECTION FROM HARM

Researchers should not expose research participants to undue physical or psychological harm to unusual stress; embarrassment or loss of self-esteem and any form of psychological discomfort (Leedy & Omrod 2005). Strydom (2007) advocates that human beings as the objects of study in the social sciences brings unique ethical problems to the fore which would never be relevant in the pure, clinical laboratory settings of natural science. For researchers in the social sciences, the ethical issues are pervasive and complex, since data should never be obtained at the expense of human beings. Babbie (2001) asserts that anyone involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreement about what is proper and improper in scientific research. Ethical principles should be internalised in the personality of the researcher to such an extent that ethically guided decision making becomes part of his lifestyle (Strydom, 2007). This meant that in this study the researcher abided by the research ethics and had to follow all the ethical issues so as to validate the study and not compromise the trust the participants had on him\her.

When conducting a research it is imperative for the researcher to note that he is working with human beings and therefore needs to constitute behaviour that is acceptable in terms of protecting participants (Vapi, 2007). Thwalingca (2007) posits that any researcher needs to take into consideration the welfare of respondents. Since research studies raise issues that are not anticipated, Leedy & Omrod, 2001; Ritchie et al as cited in Vapi (2007) suggest that ethical issues have to be taken into consideration. A basic guideline is that the researcher should make sure that no individual suffers any adverse consequences as a result of the study and will also be attentive to maximizing positive outcomes of the research process (Fowler, 2002). Ethics look at our relations, our duties to each other, individually and collectively (Blatner, 2006), and are about the principles and rules we use to decide which actions are acceptable and which are not those that guide our relationships with others (SAAVI, 2008). Ethics are based on what is good, right, fair and just (Ibid). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the following ethical issues were observed and respected throughout the study.

3.8.4 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is about not disclosing the identity of study participants, and not attributing comments to individuals in ways that can permit the individuals or institution with which they

are associated to be recognised, unless they have expressly consented to being identified (Richards & Schwartz, 2002). In most research studies, the participants provide information they may consider confidential and anonymity throughout the study and until the study is over (Leedy & Omrod, 2001). This is in line with what was followed in this study where participants were assured that their names would not be revealed anywhere and under no circumstances in the study, and that no personal or sensitive information would be released without their consent. In other words, the researcher did not invade the privacy of the respondents but respected them and obeyed a strict code of ethics in respecting their anonymity when recording their responses (Thwalingca, 2007).

To that effect, the researcher did not use the respondents' real names and institutions to avoid the possibility of reluctance from the respondents once they suspect that the investigation is the invasion of their privacy. This means that anonymity and confidentiality were maintained and respected throughout the study to ensure that no harmful effects came in the way of the respondents after completion of the study. This is in support of Hood (2008) who posits that ethical considerations should ensure that the research causes no harm to the participants.

3.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter the research approach, research methodology and the research designs used in this research were vividly outlined. This has been done with references to research questions, problems as well as the aim or purpose of study. The methodologies and instruments used for data collection were also discussed. Sample and sampling, data collection methods as well as analysis of data are also explained. Ethical issues were discussed and the researcher explained how these ethical issues were observed in the study. The quality of any research is important and, thus, the researcher alluded to the way in which the quality of this research had been ensured. The next chapter presented the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to present and analyse data. These data were generated through the use of semi-structured interviews and document analysis. As has been indicated in chapter three, data presented was gathered from two rural schools in the Kentani District. For ethical reasons, these schools are referred to in the study as school A, which is a junior secondary school in Kentani and school B which is also a junior secondary school in Kentani. In this chapter also the background information of participants was presented as a table that illustrated the representatives of school, gender, age group, qualifications, teaching experience and reasons for joining the profession. Furthermore, the participants were given pseudo names, which the researcher used throughout the study. All the data were presented and analysed with the focal point being how each research question was answered, and how it refers to the emerging themes, sub-themes, and how it supports those with verbatim citations. Data were collected from teachers and learners aimed at responding to the following research questions:

Main Research Question: How is small group teaching employed by teachers in the senior phase in Kentani District?

Sub Research Questions:

- What are the teachers' understandings of the practice of small group teaching?
- How do teachers approach small group teaching in the classroom?
- What are the challenges faced by teachers when employing small group teaching?
- What measures can be put in place in order to promote effective use of small group teaching?
- What suitable model could be recommended to assist senior phase teachers in enhancing the way they perform their small group teaching?

This chapter is structured as follows:

4.2. Methodology of the analysis process

4.3. Profiles

4.3.1. Profiles of the research sites

4.3.2. Profiles of the respondents

4.4. Data Presentation

4.4.1. Analysing data gathered through interviews

4.4.2. Analysing data gathered through documentation analysis

4.5. Discussion of the findings

4.2 METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS PROCESS IN BRIEF

In analyzing the data the researcher started by reading the transcripts in their entirety several times in order to get a sense of the interviews as a whole before dividing it into parts, to determine the emerging categories and themes. Similar topics were clustered together in all the interviews. Data were compared to establish themes, trends and patterns. Emerging themes, patterns and trends were identified and written down. Emerging themes were cross-referenced with the research question to ensure that the investigation stayed on track. The themes were categorized into topics. Related topics were categorized and data materials belonging to each category were grouped together.

4.3 PROFILES

4.3.1 Profiles of the research sites

The researcher has decided to choose rural schools. The reason is being based upon the words of former president Nelson Mandela, namely that the rural areas of SA continue to lag behind the rest of the country in the post-apartheid era (HSRC-EPC, 2005: vii). Nonyane and Mlitwa (2008) also state that the majority of schools in rural areas in South Africa still lack basic resources and experienced, skilled teachers. It is against this background that the researcher decided to choose rural schools. For ethical reasons, these schools are referred to in the study as school A, and school B and are junior secondary schools in Kentani. Both these schools are situated in deep rural areas of Kentani District. In conclusion, both the sampled schools have teachers who have more than ten years teaching experience. In addition, these schools already have teachers that have their own understanding of the practice of small group teaching. However, these teachers have different approaches to small group teaching.

4.3.2 Profiles of the respondents

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF GENDER, AGE GROUP, QUALIFICATIONS, TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND REASONS FOR JOINING THE PROFESSION (SCHOOL A)

School	Gender		Age group				Qualifications			Teaching Experience				Reasons for joining the profession		
School A	M	F	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Diploma	1 st Degree	Hons and above	0-10 yrs	11-15yrs	16-20 yrs	21 yrs and above	Calling	Only job	Forced by parents
Teacher 1	X				X		X	X	X				X	X		
Teacher 2		X		X			X					X			X	
Teacher 3		X		X			X					X			X	
Teacher 4		X		X			X				X			X		
Teacher 5		X			X		X				X			X		

4.3.2.1.1 Keys used to represent participants

T 1: Teacher 1

T2: Teacher 2

T3: Teacher 3

T4: Teacher 4

T5: Teacher 5

T1 is a male teacher aged between 46-55; this means that he is not a youngster anymore. He has the following qualifications: Diploma in teaching, 1st Degree in Education and B.Ed Honours in Teaching and Learning. He has been teaching Social Sciences and LO since the implementation of C2005, RNCS.NCS and CAPS .He has a lot of teaching experience in the senior phase that is more than 21 years in the teaching profession. Amongst all other professions available, he chose teaching as his career. He is a teacher who is not interested in attending learning area (subject) workshops.T2 is a female teacher in the mid forties (36-45), this means that she is not young anymore .She only obtained Diploma in Education. She has no interest in furthering her studies. She has a lot of teaching experience, been teaching English and Creative Arts for many years in the senior phase. She is an enthusiastic teacher especially in Creative Arts, always seeking for latest information.

Teaching was the only available profession she could chose then.

T3 is a female teacher falling in the age between 36-45, meaning that she is no longer young anymore. She obtained Diploma in Education and never had intention of pursuing her studies. She has been teaching Maths and Natural Sciences all these years resulting in having a lot of experience in the senior phase .Choosing teaching as a profession was the only option she had as there were no other available interesting careers during that time.

T4 is a female teacher in her mid-forties. Having the Diploma as her only qualification in the teaching profession does not bother her because she does not pursue her studies. Long teaching experience especially in the senior phase was her main concern, teaching Economic Management Sciences and Technology for 15 years .She chose teaching amongst other professions because she developed a sense of liking for it.

T5 was a female teacher in her late forties .She had a Diploma in Education as her only qualification ,having no intention of studying anymore. She had been teaching Home Language in the senior phase for about 15 years and some other learning areas (subjects) in the Intermediate phase due to shortage of teaching staff. She has a passion of doing thorough research in challenging matters that would come up with better resolutions concerning small group teaching. She always seeks information on the Internet programmes on the implementation of small group teaching and share that knowledge with other teachers that are really in need of it such as the good approach to small group teaching, the best references to be used by teachers and learners, by so doing that would improve the standard of performance of the teachers during small group teaching. She always emphasizes the idea of teachers being mentored and motivated by SMTs at school and the District level, not once a year but at least four times a year through workshops, thus reviving the lost spirit of teachers. By so doing the performance of teachers would improve during small group teaching.

Table 2: SUMMARY OF GENDER, AGE GROUP, QUALIFICATIONS, TEACHING EXPERIENCE REASONS FOR JOINING THE PROFESSION (SCHOOL B)

School	Gender		Age group				Qualifications			Teaching Experience				Reasons for joining the profession		
School B	M	F	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Diploma	1 st Degree	Hons and above	0-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	16-20 yrs	21 yrs and above	Calling	Only job	Forced by parents
Teacher 1		X			X		X	X	X				X	X		
Teacher 2		X		X			X				X			X		
Teacher 3		X		X			X				X				X	
Teacher 4	X			X			X				X				X	
Teacher 5		X		X			X					X			X	

T1 is a female teacher in her late fifties. She obtained the following qualifications: Diploma in Education, 1st Degree in Education and B Ed Hons .She seems to be a dedicated teacher by being enthusiastic in educational matters. She teaches Maths and Natural Sciences for so many years in the senior phase, which results in her having a lot of experience in the teaching profession. She chose teaching and saw it as a calling.**T2** is a female teacher between 36-45 years of age. She only has a Diploma in teaching as her qualification .She has no intentions of furthering her studies. She has been in the teaching profession for almost twenty years, teaching Social Sciences and Creative Arts in the senior phase. The teaching profession was the only job she could do.

T3 is a female teacher aged 44.She has a Diploma in Education as her only qualification, without bothering herself to study anymore. She offers to teach Technology and Economic Management Sciences (EMS) in the senior phase .She has been teaching these learning areas for almost fifteen years .She chose teaching as it was the only profession she could do due to some circumstances then.**T4** is a male teacher in his late forties. A Diploma in Education is the only qualification he obtained. He has been teaching Home Language (Xhosa) and Life Orientation in the senior phase for fifteen years. Teaching profession is his calling, considering how much effort he puts in the learning areas he teaches.

T5 is a female teacher aged between 46-55 years which means that she is old enough and nearer to the retirement age.

She has been a dedicated teacher throughout her teaching profession, has been able to teach English and Natural Sciences in the Senior Phase and also in the Intermediate Phase due to shortage of teachers. She is a kind of teacher who has the guts to visit the District Office pleading for good advice from Subject Advisors about the different skills and approaches that could be used by teachers in enhancing the performances of teachers and learners during small group teaching. During her visits to the District Office she always requests for the necessary updated documents that would equip teachers about different teaching strategies to be used when implementing small group teaching.

The information and knowledge she gets would be shared in a cluster workshop as she knows exactly what challenges are encountered by teachers during small group teaching. That particular teacher as a cluster leader had sometimes during cluster workshop, the opportunity of giving teachers time to voice out their problematic areas when conducting small group teaching. She has the ability of giving teachers superb ideas on how to be a successful teacher when implementing small group teaching in the classroom, as she has been teaching for a very long time. She acts as a liaison officer between teachers and the District Office, she would jot down all the teachers' enquiries that are not resolved during the cluster meeting workshop and bring them to the Subject Advisor concerned. She always suggests adequate training for teachers in order to improve the teachers' performance during small group teaching.

Table 3. SUMMARY FOR GENDER, AGE GROUP AND GRADE (SCHOOL A)

School	Gender		Age group					Grade
	M	F	12 yrs	13 yrs	14 yrs	15 yrs	16 yrs	
School A								7,8 &9
Learner 1		X	X					7
Learner 2		X		X				8
Learner 3	X						X	9

Keys used to represent participants

L1: Learner 1

L2: Learner 2

L3: Learner 3

L1 was a female learner, aged 12, doing grade 7. It was her first year in the senior phase. **L2** was a female learner aged 13, doing grade 8. She was in her second year in the senior phase. **L3** was a male learner who was 16 years old. It had been his third year in the senior phase and one of those top learners who always gave guidance assistance to the slow learners or the ones that did not really understand clearly the procedures to be followed during small group teaching. By having these type of learners in the classroom, he had the influence on other learners of making the learning process a lively performance. This learner enjoyed small group teaching and saw it as something that promoted creative and critical thinking. He had been an enthusiastic learner who was always willing to cooperate in whatever work was performed in the classroom, showing great wisdom and confidence when attempting to answer the asked questions in front of other learners.

Table 4: SUMMARY OF GENDER, AGE GROUP AND GRADE (SCHOOL B)

School	Gender		Age group					Grade
School B	M	F	12 yrs	13 yrs	14 yrs	15 yrs	16 yrs	7,8 &9
Learner 1		X		X				7
Learner 2	X						X	9

L1 was a female learner who was 13 years old. She was doing grade 7 and in her first year in the senior phase. **L2** was male learner aged 16, doing grade 9. He had been in the senior phase for four years. He was the type of learner who was totally uninterested in the learning process, because during small group teaching he would be busy chatting, disturbing others who would be concentrating, having a hope that although he did not contribute in the discussions she would still get the marks as others did. It seemed clearly that he could not understand the full procedure to be followed during small group teaching.

4.3.5. MAIN FINDINGS

The tables above show the profiles of the respondents from school A and school B who participated in this research respectively. The four tables above show that there were ten teachers and five learners who participated in the interview process.

This means that the total number of interviewed people for this study is fifteen 15. The four tables also show that the majority of the respondents (66, 6 %) were females. The reason behind was that, these two sampled schools were female dominated. The two tables for teachers also indicated that the majority of the respondents (70%) were between 36-45 years and the last age group was between 46-55 years (30%). This suggests that these teachers are not young anymore and no longer have interest in curriculum matters and do not care whether small group teaching is employed or not in the classroom. Furthermore, a zero percent (0%) between the age group of 26-35 shows that there are no youngsters or fresh blood at all in these sampled schools.

These two tables also indicate that the teachers of these sampled schools have more than ten (10) years of teaching experience. This may suggest that they have lots of experience in terms of employing small group teaching in the senior phase. That experience could come in handy when the senior phase teachers are faced with challenges when employing small group teaching in the classroom. The assumption is that because of their experience, they should be able to identify measures to be put in place in order to promote effective use of small group teaching. The table also shows that the majority of the respondents (87%) from the selected schools have more than sixteen (16) years of experience as teachers.

This suggests that these teachers might have had the needed experience or expertise to help their schools attain goals. This is because they have been teaching for a long time, and might have experience in dealing with unfavourable work conditions such as —lack of resources; learner discipline and poor conditions of service. It appears that some of the teachers may not be in a position to plan their group work due to lack of skills to do so and this results in the failing of many of their lessons. It is observed that the challenge experienced by some of the teachers in Kentani District is that they are unable to formulate quick ways of forming groups over a short space of time, instead learners spend almost 40% of the time that was supposed to be used for discussions in forming groups. In the context of this study the teachers' use of group work appears not to be purposeful to them, since most teachers in this district understand group work as something to keep learners busy, while they do other activities that are not even related to the discussed topic (Andrew, 2015). The researcher has conducted empirical study in this district and found that in some instances teachers become frustrated by noise and movements made by learners and lose focus.

In terms of their qualifications, the two tables above indicate that most of the respondents had not developed themselves academically, because 20% of them had not taken their education further than just a teaching diploma. Moreover, the table further indicates that the teachers of the two schools are post graduates. This gave an assumption that most of the respondents were less capacitated and equipped with better teaching and classroom skills as few of them had done courses that were in line with their field of work. This also shows that most of the respondents have not yet bothered themselves by furthering their qualification up to post graduate.

Another interesting implication is that, only 50% of the respondents came to teaching as a calling, that is, the love of the occupation. 50% chose teaching as they regarded it as the 'then' easily available job. None of the respondents were forced or influenced by their parents to follow this career. In the two tables above for learners it is clearly indicated that these respondents qualify to be at the senior phase according to their age. The majority of learners are females.

4.4. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

As I have mentioned above, semi-structured interviews as well as document analysis were used to collect data from the two (2) selected rural schools of Kentani District.

4.4.1. PRESENTING DATA COLLECTED THROUGH SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In the context of this study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. These data collection tools have been proved to be useful triggers; as the respondents presented their responses, sharing up their own experiences.

They were presented as verbatim reports. In order to answer the main research question of the study, sub-research questions were formulated; and these were later turned into main themes that guided the discussion of this study.

The research question was posed: How is small group teaching employed by teachers in the senior phase in Kentani District?

From the main themes, various sub –themes were drawn to assist in breaking the picture into more specific categories.

4.4.1.1. THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRACTICE OF SMALL GROUP TEACHING

Small group teaching is a learning that takes place when students work together usually in groups of 10 or less. In this study there different views about teachers' understanding of the practice of small group teaching .The table below illustrates some of the feelings and reactions of teachers about the practice of small group teaching.

Table 5: Teachers' understanding of small group teaching

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Common, popular teaching approach.	Needs acceptance and implementation

4.4.1.2. Common, popular teaching approach

This is a very popular teaching approach being adopted by the government to be used by all teachers in the classroom when implementing curriculum. However, things did not happen according to the teachers' wishes. Small group teaching is one of the teaching approaches difficult to manage especially if a teacher is unacquainted with it. Therefore, when teachers practise small group teaching in the classroom, they should encourage learner engagement in all the activities. In the context of this study, teachers were asked about their understanding of small group teaching after it had been introduced and adopted to be implemented.

Teacher such as **T3** mentioned:

“There’s no other option we have in our Department, concerning small group teaching, we must just move on with it, nothing will change as everything comes from above, a Top Down Approach, but it is a difficult approach to use”.

Reflecting from the above responses, it is clear that teachers have not yet fully understood the small group teaching approach. This statement is confirmed by **T3** when she grumbled about small group teaching as it is something that comes from above.

4.4.1.3. Needs acceptance and implementation

Small group teaching is a government proposed idea which needs to be accepted and be implemented by teachers to learners. **T2** stated:

“Government issues do not favour anyone; they just need a drive from teachers’ hearts. Small group teaching simply requires to be accepted and implemented in the classroom.”

L 1 commented to other learners:

“I really appreciate what came about from the department which is small group teaching, as it encourages and promotes creative and critical thinking. It also moulds us to be responsible citizens of South Africa.”

L 3 voiced out clearly to other learners:

“I enjoy having this type of group work as it provides us with more opportunities to receive more immediate feedback on the learning and also encourage learners towards self-directed and independent learning.”

Reflecting from the above responses it is clear that it is not according to the teachers and learners ‘likes or dislikes to be engaged in practising, accepting and implementing small group teaching in the classroom.

4.4. 1.4.THEME 2: THE APPROACH OF SMALL GROUP TEACHING IN THE CLASSROOM

When approaching small group teaching it is of great importance to use social –psychological forces to enhance and maximize the conditions under which learning occurs. This table below illustrates different approaches to small group teaching.

Table 6: The approach to small group teaching in the classroom

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Employment of small group teaching in the classroom	Lots of confusion about small group teaching

4.4.1.5. Employment of small group teaching in the classroom

The approach rests on the view that small group teaching has to be considered in the wider context of the whole classroom, and the first theme concerns the classroom context within which groups will operate. These include classroom and class size, seating arrangements in the classroom, the size, number of groups and the composition of groups. In the context of this study teachers are not fully equipped on how to employ small group teaching in the classroom. **T1** bombarded:

“Where and how are we going to start employing small group teaching in our classrooms?”

Similar to the above mentioned response, **T4** also mentioned:

“You come to school not knowing how to employ small group teaching in the classroom, there is a large number of learners in front of you and it is difficult to keep them in full concentration, WOOOW”. “At times you teach three (3) learning areas (subjects) in all three grades (classes) of the senior phase alone, whereas it is even difficult if you teach two learning areas (subjects) in all the three grades of the senior phase, nobody seems to care about us. Tell me how do you cope in such an environment?”

Reflecting on the above mentioned responses it is clear that teachers do not fully understand on how to approach small group teaching in the classroom. Hence, most of the teachers were found as not the key roles, guides and facilitators in the employment of small group teaching in the classroom.

4.4.1.6. Lots of confusion about small group teaching

Teachers and learners are still confused about small group teaching, having no clear direction where to start and how to proceed.

T2murmured:

“Now everything has changed upside down, we, teachers are in a very confused teaching stage, not knowing exactly when and what to do in the classroom.”

Similar to the above mentioned response L2 pointed out:

“I do not care whatever they are doing, I depend on other learners, and being in the same group with them means I am going to get the same marks they will get, even if I do not fully participate in the discussion.”

Response from another learner, L3 voiced out clearly:

“I like small group teaching as it gives me sufficient time to chat and gossip with my friends in the group whilst the teacher is busy giving guidance to other groups in the classroom.”

Responding from the above statements, it is clear that almost all teachers have a vivid dislike towards small group teaching and learners do not get a clear instruction from teachers. Learners do not show any interest in the teaching and learning process, as they display a negative attitude towards small group teaching. Some learners rely too much on others, lazy to think independently and find relevant answers required for a particular activity.

Most of the learners are still confused and do not understand the intentions of small group teaching in this era.

4.4.1.7. THEME 3: TEACHERS' CHALLENGES DURING SMALL GROUP TEACHING

Teachers face a very serious challenge during small group teaching, like whole class teaching, it has both strengths and weaknesses. The table below illustrates some of the challenges that are faced by teachers during small group teaching.

Table 7: Challenges faced by teachers during small group teaching

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Continuous introduction of different curricula	Incapacitation

4.4.1.8. Continuous introduction of different curricula

The Department of Education continuously introduces different curricula, without even considering that the previous one has been mastered by teachers or not. When teachers were asked about how they felt, their experiences, the challenges during small group teaching, **T3** mentioned:

“Today the department introduces this, that day it comes up with something else, having not mastered even the first one. The way I am so tired about these department issues concerning this teaching profession. I wish I could reach age fifty -five (55) and retire soon and leave this profession.”

Reflecting from the response mentioned above, it comes out clearly that teachers at grassroots level are not considered when a decision is to be taken by the Department, or when something new is about to be implemented.

4.4.1.9. Incapacitation

Teachers always request assistance from the Department of Education to be capacitated about small group teaching. It takes a very long time to get a response from the Department of Education, this leads to teachers having a negative attitude and being incapacitated in small group teaching as it is always new to the teachers. **T5** pointed the fact that:

“To teach in nowadays is just a strenuous exercise, how can the managers expect effective teaching if the teacher is not fully capacitated about the skills and knowledge on how to employ small group teaching in the classroom.”

Responding from the statement above, it is of good importance for the Department of Education to capacitate teachers with skills and knowledge through continuous workshops.

4.4.1.10. THEME 4 MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE IN ORDER TO PROMOTE SMALL GROUP TEACHING

There are serious measures that need to be taken into consideration by teachers in order to promote small group teaching, by ensuring that the designed activities achieve the learning outcomes and identify the problems within the lesson. The table below illustrates some of the measures to be put in place by teachers.

TABLE 8: Measures to be put in place in order to promote small group teaching

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Adequate training	Lack of required resources

4.4.1.11. Adequate training

It is very difficult for teachers to conduct small group teaching in the classroom as there is no adequate training for them. Teachers consider themselves fortunate if they are called to a workshop from the district office once in a six months' period. There is a complaint from teachers that cluster meetings are held once in a while where they get small support from the teachers who have a green light on how to employ small group teaching in the senior phase. **T3** pointed out clearly:

“Adequate training through facilitated workshops can help teachers perform much better when employing small group teaching. These workshops should not be done just once in a year, at least they should be conducted quarterly, that could assist teachers in getting better knowledge on how to employ small group teaching”.

Similar to T3’s response, T1 also shared the very same line of thought. He mentioned:

“Motivation, mentoring and nurturing on how small group teaching is employed in the senior phase can enhance the performance of teachers.”

Reflecting from the above statements one can argue that monitoring and support from District Office by visiting schools can bring assistance and success where the teachers lack knowledge and skills on how to employ small group teaching in the classroom.

4.4.1.12. Lack of required resources

Teachers cannot conduct small group teaching effectively as there is a lack of resources, especially in classrooms with large numbers of learners where it is mostly difficult to keep them in full concentration. T3 pointed out:

“If the Department of Education can just avail the resources for the classroom that can enhance the teachers and learners ‘performances during small group teaching. WOOOW! They can see wonders.”

Similar to above mentioned response T1 also mentioned:

“The Subject Advisors just want to see the work done by teachers without considering the hostile realities of not having the required resources necessary during small group teaching.”

Responding from almost the same statement as mentioned by T3, emphasis is put by T4 saying:

“It is a shame and a disgrace in our schools to conduct small group teaching without the necessary, required resources for example textbooks, wall charts, laboratories, libraries, TVs and other useful materials needed during small group teaching. The so called “Departmental officials” are sitting in their cosy offices earning fat salaries with enormous benefits and are just dictating terms with absolutely no idea of what we are going through in these schools.”

Reflecting from the above mentioned statements, it is clear that the Department of Education does not supply the schools with educational resources to improve small group teaching.

4.4.1.13. THEME 5: MODELS THAT PROMOTE SMALL GROUP TEACHING

Teachers need to practise active teaching and learning which involve the use of strategies that maximise opportunities for learners to learners and learners to teacher interaction in order to promote effective small group teaching. The table below illustrates some of the models that promote small group teaching.

Table 9: The models that promote small group teaching

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Enhancement of teaching strategies	Application of new different assessment techniques

4.4.1.14. Enhancement of teaching strategies

When teachers were asked about models that promote small group teaching, the issue of enhancing teaching strategies came along very strongly.

T2 mentioned:

“I think teachers should try to employ different and interesting teaching strategies like role play, research based projects, discussions, fieldtrips, case studies and many others that would attract the attention of learners by fully involving them in their own learning.”

Similar to **T2's** response **T5** also shared the very same line of thought. She mentioned:

“The Department of Education needs to give assistance to teachers in enhancing teaching strategies that would benefit both teachers and learners during small group teaching.”

Commenting on the above mentioned statements, it is clear that both teachers and the Department of Education should come up with new teaching strategies that will enhance small group teaching.

4.4.1.15. Application of new different assessment techniques

The Department of Education needs to provide teachers with prescribed documents having different assessment techniques. These documents should clearly explain how to implement these assessment techniques. In the context of this study teachers need to be supplied with these documents in order to improve the implementation of small group teaching.

T3 mentioned:

“I find it very difficult to apply new, assessment techniques during small group teaching as I am not familiar with them. If the Department can just supply teachers with documents having all the necessary information, the management could get good results.”

Reflecting from the above mentioned statement one may argue that equipping teachers with new different assessment techniques is the best weapon to improve small group teaching.

4.4.2. ANALYZING DATA THROUGH DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The researcher analyzed the selected two (2) rural school's documents, which were, the minute book for the SMT (School Management Team), the minute book for IQMS (Integrated Quality Management System) and a Supervision minute book. The documents were analyzed to find out if there is any information related to the conceptualization on how small group teaching is employed in the senior phase. Both schools were in possession of the above mentioned documents. The information contained from these documents was much related as both these schools belonged to one district.

The SMT Minute book:

The minute book for the SMT meetings was a functioning document as it reflected all the SMT meetings that were held in the previous years up to the current year 2015. The information contained in the documents that was relevant to the topic included the following:-

- Allocation of duties to teachers: Duties allocated indicated; subject allocation per Grade per phase;
- Distribution of LTSM (Learner Teacher Support Material)
- Assessment and Supervision

The documents clearly reflected how many learning areas each teacher taught per grade in the whole phase. They also reflected LTSM to be distributed per grade, per learning area. These documents revealed that there was a shortage of resources as the suppliers had not yet fully delivered all the necessary teaching and learning material on time. That automatically would affect the performance of the learners as there was insufficient material to assist in enhancing the way the teachers performed in the senior phase. In the documents it was also stated clearly that Assessment and Supervision were an ongoing process which assisted teachers where they needed to be mentored, nurtured and monitored on how to conduct effective small group teaching. It was also confirmed by the minutes of the SMT meetings from both schools that different phase HOD's usually met and discussed how they should conduct assessment and supervision procedurally for example setting of dates, listing all the requirements such as teachers' masterportfolios having all the levels of planning especially lesson plans, different assessment techniques and completed recording sheets.

Learners' portfolios reflecting how much work already done. All the above documents would assist the teachers in understanding the practice of small group teaching in the senior phase.

IQMS (Integrated Quality Management System) Minute book

The minute book for the IQMS reflected how to conduct IQMS activities so as to uplift the standard of performance of teachers in the classroom. The IQMS Committee \Board meets to plan the implementation of IQMS to teachers. The minute revealed all the necessary steps to be followed: Pre-evaluation meeting held by teachers concerned with the DSG (Developmental Support Group) or peer and the Immediate Supervisor, educator self-evaluation using the IQMS instrument having criteria and ratings.DSG teacher evaluation with the Immediate Supervisor using Lesson Observation, given ratings using PS (Performance Standards). Educator is given an opportunity to raise issues hampering his \ her performance. Guidance is provided to the educator on the development of the PGP (Personal Growth Plan) post evaluation meeting with the DSGs, Immediate Supervisor and the SMT, looking at the performance standards where the teacher has got low ratings, giving advice where teachers needed to be developed, mentored and nurtured.

This minute book stated clearly how the teachers performed in the classroom and how they got assisted on how to approach small group teaching in the senior phase.

Minutes from the IQMS revealed that teachers are really faced with challenges when employing small group teaching and the SMT members are fully aware of that. The respondents explained that some teachers experienced difficulty on how to approach and conduct effective small group teaching. The minute books from both schools confirmed that teachers have different understanding of the practice of small group teaching.

Assessment and Supervision Minute Book

The minute book for assessment and supervision reflected on how to check the syllabus coverage by supervising the work done by teachers and learners. It stated clearly how the dates are set for supervision, how much work should be covered at a certain period, for example per week, how many tests are to be written per month, per class.

How to check and control work from teachers and learners. This book reflected how the progress of the school was being monitored by the SMT, concerning small group teaching. How the teachers approached small group teaching and the feedback from the supervisors was also stated. Challenges around teachers concerning small group teaching should be discussed by the SMT and staff members so as to be given advice on time where necessary before it was too late. It emerged that both the SMT and the teachers had positive visions about how teachers should go about executing their functions on a daily basis. Their ideas, planning and concerns indicated measures that can be put in place, improving the performance of teachers, in order to promote effective use of small group teaching. The information contained in all the three documents showed significance for this study.

The researcher has therefore managed to collect those areas that were relevant to small group teaching.

4.13. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of this study were summarized into themes, sub-themes and main issues raised. Data was presented based on the understanding of the practice of small group teaching, the approach of small group teaching in the classroom, teachers' challenges during small group teaching, measures to be put in order to promote small group teaching and models that promote small group teaching.

The sub-themes identified were as follows: common, popular teaching approach; needs acceptance and implementation; employment of small group teaching in the classroom; lots of confusion about small group teaching; introduction of new different curricula; incapacitation; adequate training; lack of required resources; enhancement of teaching strategies and application of new different assessment techniques. These sub-themes will be used to guide the discussion in this chapter.

4.14. SUMMARY

The analysis of this data was done according to each case of collecting data, for example, from the interviews and from the school documents. From both data collection methods, the information received indicated that even if the respondents come from different schools in Kentani District, they had similar perceptions and experiences pertaining to their profession about small group teaching.

They showed that the teaching profession is full of challenges which need to be solved by both the teachers and the education department. This study analysis has also included the use of the SMT, IQMS and Supervision minute books.

4.5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this part of the study the focus now is on the interpretation, a discussion, together with an analysis of the data thematically in line with the sub-research questions the study sought to answer. The purpose of the study was to explore small group teaching in the senior phase with the aim of identifying suitable approach of managing small group teaching. Moreover, the study will encourage teachers to use different teaching strategies during the facilitation of small group teaching. The findings of this study are discussed, according to the emerged themes from the sub-research questions that guided the study.

4. 5.2.THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY ARE SUMMARISED UNDER THE FOLLOWING HEADINGS:

Common, popular teaching approach; needs acceptance and implementation; employment of small group teaching in the classroom; lots of confusion about small group teaching; continuous introduction of different curricula; incapacitation; adequate training; lack of required resources; enhancement of teaching strategies; and application of new different assessment techniques.

4.5.2.1 Common, popular teaching approach

When implementing curriculum in the classroom small group teaching is a very common, popular teaching approach that was introduced by the government in order to be used by all teachers. However, not all teachers' wishes become positive, at times they appear negatively. It came out in this study that small group teaching requires great mental effort to accomplish especially if the teacher is not familiar with it. In the very same line of argument, it was reviewed in chapter two that when teachers practise small group teaching in the classroom, they should encourage total learner engagement in all the activities. According Criticos (2002) states that by giving learners the opportunity to talk, interacting with other learners and teachers, enables the learners to construct their own understanding of concepts, remember them better and use them in real life situation.

This form of group work also helps learners to develop a sense of academic rigour and a willingness to share ideas. Reflecting from the results of this study, it can be concluded that teachers have not yet fully understood the small group teaching approach.

4.5.2.2. Needs acceptance and implementation

Teachers and learners need to accept small group teaching as it is a government proposed idea. Small group teaching approach needs to be implemented by teachers in the classroom. This approach gives learners an opportunity to develop higher –level intellectual skills such as analysis, synthesis, interpretation, judgement and problem solving.

In the context of this study it was found out that government issues do not favour anyone especially concerning small group teaching ,whether it is understood or not. Some learners really seemed to be taken up by this approach as they looked at it and saw something that was precious to them in terms of moulding them and becoming responsible citizens of South Africa. Small group teaching can be used to develop research skills, such as questionnaire design, or more general transferrable skills like oral fluency (Gillies, 2003).This type of teaching which is small group teaching provides opportunities for learners to learn and develop cooperative behaviour including critical thinking and the process of group problem solving. At some point the learners start to develop key skills of teamwork and co-operation. Reflecting from the results of this study , it can be argued that teachers and learners need to be engaged in practising, accepting and implementing small group teaching in the classroom ,whether they like it or not.

4.5.2.3. Employment of small group teaching in the classroom

Small group teaching has to be considered in the wider context of the whole classroom, this approach rests on that view, the first theme concerns the classroom context within which the groups will operate, and these include classroom and class size, seating arrangements in the classroom, also the size and the number of groups, and the composition of groups. The study confirms that the teacher is the key role in organising the effectiveness of small group teaching .In the very same line of argument the teachers are not fully equipped with on how to employ small group teaching in the classroom. Reflecting from what has been found in this study, it can be argued that teachers do not fully understand how to approach small group teaching in the classroom. Hence, most of the teachers were discovered not to be the key roles, guides and facilitators in the employment of small group teaching in the classroom.

4.5.2.4. Lots of confusion about small group teaching

There is no clear direction for teachers and learners concerning small group teaching, where to start and how to proceed, as both teachers and learners are still confused about this approach. Almost all teachers and learners have a vivid dislike towards small group teaching as the learners do not get a distinctive instruction from the teachers. Learners display a negative attitude; do not show any interest in the teaching and learning process. In this study it was found out that most of the learners are still confused and do not understand the intentions of small group teaching in this era. Reflecting from what has been found in this study, it can be argued that despite engaging in forms of interaction, involving the renegotiation or reconciliation of ideas, group work was productive rather than disruptive, and should help to dismiss such fears.

4.5.2.5 .Continuous introduction of different curricula

Different curricula are being introduced now and again by the Department of Education without even checking whether these curricula are functioning well or have been fully mastered by teachers or not .In the context of this study it was found that small group teaching is also a difficult approach to use well and it should be used with other teaching methods only if it assists learners to achieve the lesson's outcomes. It was clearly stated by most of the teachers at grassroots level that they are not considered when a decision is to be taken by the Department especially when something new is about to be implemented concerning the curriculum. At first the Department introduced these following different curricula one after the other; OBE (Outcomes Based Education), C2005 (Curriculum 2005), RNCS (Revised National Curriculum Statement), NCS (National Curriculum Statement) and now CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements), all these curricula were not given sufficient time to be tested if they were being mastered or not by teachers and learners.

4.5.2.6. Incapacitation

The Department of Education does not fully capacitate teachers about small group teaching as this is always new to the teachers and this leads to teachers having a negative attitude towards it. Teachers always seek assistance from the Department of Education about being capacitated about small group teaching, but it takes a long time to get a response.

Reflecting from what the literature has confirmed, one can argue that it is of good importance for the Department of Education to capacitate teachers with skills and knowledge through continuous workshops. To support this argument, Cohen (1999) identified that teachers are unable to plan and manage the tasks effectively during small group teaching which results in learners' work having no clear idea of the educational purpose of their activities.

Teachers do not understand the key elements of small group teaching and how to incorporate these elements into the lesson.

4.5.2.7. Adequate training

When the results of this study were presented the issue of lack of adequate training on the side of the teachers came very strong. It was further revealed that teachers consider themselves lucky if they are called to attend a workshop from the District Office once in a period of six months. A complaint was lodged against the departmental officials that cluster meetings are held once in a while where teachers get a mutual support from other teachers who have a green light on how to employ small group teaching in the senior phase. However, this makes it very difficult for the teachers to conduct small group teaching in the classroom as there is no adequate training for them. It can be argued that teachers need a thorough training through facilitated workshops in order to be able to employ small group teaching effectively in the senior phase. Learners have to be taught how to work in small groups and not assume that they already know. Teachers also need to be monitored, mentored, nurtured and supported by the District Officials through school visits that can bring assistance and success where there is lack of skills and knowledge about small group teaching.

4.5.2.8. Lack of required resources

There is a lack of resources in most schools, making it very difficult for teachers to conduct small group teaching effectively, especially in classrooms with large numbers of learners. In this study it was revealed that it is very strenuous for teachers to employ small group teaching in classes with huge numbers where the teacher is supposed to keep the learners in full concentration without the required resources. This reduces the chances of producing best performance in the classroom.

In chapter 2 of this study it was revealed that the necessary material for that specific activity should be available in order to enhance the teaching and learning process. Reflecting from what the literature has confirmed, it can be argued that classrooms need to be fully equipped with the necessary material, having the intention of supporting and stimulating teaching and learning successfully during small group teaching (Howe & Tilmie ,2003).

4.5.2.9. Enhancement of teaching strategies

The use of different teaching strategies that maximise opportunities for the interaction between teachers and learners, involving active teaching and learning, need to be practised by teachers so as to promote small group teaching. When teachers were asked about models that promote small group teaching, it came out that teachers should try to implement new different and interesting teaching strategies like role play, research based projects, discussions, field trips, case studies and many others that would attract the attention of learners by fully involving them in their own learning (Huddleston & Unwin,1997). In the literature review, a continuum of strategies model of small group teaching emphasize active teaching and learning strategies that will provide opportunities for relating learning to previous experience but the teacher's role is critical in ensuring that reflection occurs (Pownall,2012).Reflecting from the results of this study and what the literature has confirmed, there is still a need for the Department of Education to give assistance to teachers and learners about new teaching strategies that would benefit both teachers and learners in enhancing small group teaching in the classroom.

4.5.2.10. Application of new different assessment techniques

Different assessment techniques are to be provided by the Department of Education to teachers through prescribed documents. In the context of this study it was found that teachers need to be fully equipped with proper documentation, having clear explanations on how to implement these assessment techniques. These documents would assist teachers by having the necessary information on how to apply these techniques and would improve the employment of small group teaching in the classroom. Reflecting on what the literature has confirmed, it can be argued that teachers must design activities that motivate discussion, encourage conversation, debate and also learners be taught how to develop problem-solving or thinking skills and these activities need to be resourced appropriately (Slavin, 1995).Clear assessment criteria is spelt out clearly before the lesson begins and worksheets are provided with clear task instruction.

The success of each session requires to be evaluated after, whether formally or informally.

4.5.3. Summary

The main findings were summarized into common, popular approach, needs acceptance and implementation, employment of small group teaching in the classroom, lots of confusion about small group teaching, continuous introduction of different curricula, incapacitation, adequate training, lack of required resources, enhancement of teaching strategies and application of new different assessment techniques. What came strong in this part of the discussion was the issue of teachers being incapacitated about small group teaching. It was also emphasized that it is the responsibility of the Department of Education to equip teachers with skills and knowledge on how to employ small group teaching in the senior phase. In summary it can be concluded that it takes a while for a teacher and learner to be fully adjusted into something new like implementation of small group teaching in the classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0. Introduction

The evidence of the research was presented and discussed in the previous chapter. The previous chapter dealt with data presentation, interpretation and analysis, where the findings were also discussed with reference to the relevant literature. The study aimed at analysing how small group teaching is employed in the senior phase. The challenge that inspired the researcher to undertake this study was stated in chapter 1. Literature review was done in chapter 2 in order to support the arguments that would come out of this study. Chapter 3 considered the methodology that was undertaken, the paradigm, the approach and the design of this study. Chapter 3 also detailed clearly data collection instruments which were semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The sampling strategy, site selection and the size of the sample and the research participants were also identified. Chapter 4 tabled and discussed the data. After that the data was interpreted and analysed meaningfully from what had been said by the participants.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a final reflection and present a general overview on the research that has been conducted. This study did not use a large population of participants; it only engaged representatives from the Senior Phase only. The sample population allowed the researcher to probe more deeply in order to understand personal perceptions, experiences, and opinions. While presenting the general overview of the study and reflecting on the main findings, this chapter also drew the conclusion from the data by summarizing the main findings of the study, according to the sub-research questions. Furthermore, the chapter gave suggestions and recommendations that were in line with the research findings. The implications about small group teaching were also discussed in this chapter.

The following section discussed the summary of the findings that have emerged from this study.

5.1. Summary of the chapters

This section was a summary of findings which triggered certain emotions that emerged from teachers practising small group teaching. These findings were in agreement with the findings of Dolman (2005); Mattistich & Watson (2003) and Criticos (2002) whose studies revealed that teachers were faced with serious challenges including insufficient resources, lack of skills and knowledge and teachers being incapacitated about SGT.

5.1.1. Summary of chapter 1

This chapter introduced teachers on how to facilitate SGT through the necessary stages of planning. This chapter built the foundation of what was expected in the rest of the study. The problem statement indicated that SGT was a not an easy approach to use, as teachers were still using the old traditional methods .Literature reviewed suggested the best ways teachers could use on how to manage SGT and also to design the model suitable for senior phase teachers. Hence this study analysed the teacher's role in facilitating and supporting the learning of students.

5.1.2. Summary of chapter 2

This chapter summarised literature conceptualising SGT, active participation of learners. The key role played by teacher during SGT was often described as being the guide, the planner, the facilitator ,the monitor ,the evaluator and the assessor on the side (Jolliffe,2007) .Clearly defined specific tasks and objectives were to be understood by all learners in the group. Deep learning being provided with problems that evoke discussion and reflection after are the key features during SGT.

Small group teaching involves interaction among learners and also between teacher and learners. This SGT is a widely recognised pedagogical practice that promotes learning and socialisation across a range of curriculum areas from primary school to tertiary level. Working cooperatively together, learners are given a chance to share ideas, receive help, and listen to other learners' perspectives, which maximise the potential for cooperation and learning.

This SGT is also a difficult approach to use. Planning was not carefully done enough by teachers resulting into learners' work having no clear idea of the educational purpose of their activities. Clear assessment criteria were spelt out before the lesson commences and worksheets were provided with clear task instruction so as to produce quality teaching and learning. A Continuum of Strategies Model adapted from Huddleson & Unwin (1997) were also summarised, having the main focus on transmission methods, meaning formal, didactic, expository and teacher-centred approaches. Hence, this study aimed at identifying suitable approach of managing SGT.

5.1.3. Summary of chapter 3

A sequential qualitative research approach was used which incorporated the use of qualitative data. Qualitative data was collected from purposive sampling of fifteen(15) participants that is ten(10) teachers and five(5) learners through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio-taped and transcription was done in the next stage. Ethical considerations were also considered as the participants' real names were not used and they were requested permission to participate in the study. Permission was granted by the District Department of Education and the principals of schools.

5.1.4. Summary of chapter 4

The profile of the participants was presented in the form of qualitative design and then the analysis and interpretation followed. The data was analysed based on themes drawn from the main research questions. The themes answered the research questions. The data from the audio-tape was transcribed and analysed. The next section consisted of the findings from the literature.

5.2. Summary of the findings from the research

The following was a summary of findings per research question.

5.2.1. What are the teachers' understandings of the practice of small group teaching?

- Research indicated that SGT is a learner –centred approach ,that encourages learners ‘ engagement, learner interaction with teachers and other learners, through the opportunity to talk ,enabling learners to construct their own understanding of concepts ,remember them better ,and use them in real life situation(Criticos ,2002).
- Furthermore, in this approach teachers should provide learners with a problem. That problem had been discovered, allowing the learners to explore, choose, question, disagree and explain, understand the connections, dynamic patterns and processes involved in a particular problem (Reger & Norman, 1996).
- Results indicated that the majority of the teachers had not yet fully understood how to practise SGT, being difficult for teachers to manage this approach effectively in the classroom. This kind of approach was still not familiar to the teachers as this style was a government proposed idea that needed to be accepted, practised and be implemented whether teachers liked it or not, resulting in teachers having a negative attitude towards SGT because they did not understand the practice of SGT . Some learners did appreciate having this kind of approach, stating that SGT encouraged and promoted creative and critical thinking.

5.2.2. How do teachers approach small group teaching in the classroom?

- Having number of learners in front of the teachers, they seemed unable to approach SGT, having no clear direction where to start and how to proceed. The teacher manages the lesson efficiently but also mediates thoughtfully throughout the lesson (Mennin, 2007).By getting reports from teachers it was very clear that teachers were being frustrated about teaching three learning areas (subjects) in the same grade whereas they did not have clear knowledge on how to approach SGT. Teachers seemed not fully equipped on how to employ SGT in the classroom.

They had a touching question within themselves that how would they cope to approach SGT effectively working under those strenuous conditions, without being cared for, teachers seemed to be neglected by the Department of Education. Hence, most of the teachers were found not being key roles, guides and facilitators when approaching SGT.

- Just by the mere look of things, most of the teachers and learners were still confused about SGT. Teachers had a vivid dislike towards SGT and learners did not get a clear instruction from teachers, resulting on learners not achieving the goals set for them . The teacher instructs learners clearly about what they must do and how they should go about their activities, the lesson is operated diagnostically throughout by the teacher, intervening during the discussion (Mennin, 2007). It was clearly stated that some learners relied too much on others for information, lazy to think independently and unable to find relevant answers for particular activities. Learners got a chance of chatting and gossiping during SGT whilst the teacher was busy giving instructions and guidance to other groups.
- Some learners showed no interest in the learning process as they displayed a negative attitude towards SGT, having a hope that being in the same group with participating or gifted learners would mean they would obtain high marks obviously even if the learners did not fully participate. Research, moreover, strongly indicates that developing interpersonal skills and communication skills to learners is of vital importance, teaching them teamwork skills, making sure that learners are helping and encouraging each other, everyone is participating, appreciation is shown by other members, and agreement is reached at a certain level of discussion (Blatchford, 2004).It seemed most of the learners were still confused and did not understand the intentions of SGT in this era.

5.2.3. What are the challenges faced by teachers when employing small group teaching?

- Teachers face a very serious challenge when it comes to employing SGT, managing the group work poorly by assuming that learners know how to work in groups without training them.

The teachers experience a huge challenge concerning the Department of Education which continuously introduce different curricula without even considering that the previous ones have been mastered by teachers or not. It comes out clearly from the teachers that whatever is to be taken by Education Department as a decision, they are not part and parcel of that at grassroots level. That cause a lot of dissatisfaction among the teachers, not having the same spirit when it comes to employing SGT.

- Most of the teachers are not fully capacitated with skills and knowledge on how to employ SGT in the classroom, which result in teachers having a negative attitude. Teachers look on the other side of the teaching profession and discover that, this profession is a very strenuous one, where the teachers are not cared for, when they ask for a workshop that would take a very long time to get a response .Few workshops have been conducted by the Department in order to give assistance on how to conduct SGT effectively. At the same time the managers expect effective teaching with good performance from learners.
- There is still a lot of struggle amongst teachers in employing SGT as they do not get the assistance from the Department of Education. Teachers do not plan carefully enough with the clear idea of the educational purpose of the learners' activities. Without the help from the department teachers could not practise well and effectively SGT.

5.2.4. What measures can be put in place in order to promote effective use of small group teaching?

- If teaching is to be taken seriously there are some drastic measures that need to be taken into considerations by teachers in order to promote effective use of SGT. Cluster meetings are to be called regularly in order to share ideas and get support from other teachers. The Department of Education should involve teachers in adequate training through facilitated workshops ,that can assist teachers perform much better when employing SGT.

- Teachers need to be monitored and being supported by the District Office through school visits where the teachers will be able to identify clearly the exact challenge, and be given quick advice there and then, that will promote the effective use of SGT.
- So as to enhance the performance of teachers in the senior phase, motivation, mentoring, and nurturing need to be exercised by the SMT, cluster leaders as well as the District Office whereas that rarely happen.
- At schools where teaching takes place ,there is a lack of required resources needed, for example textbooks, wall charts and other important material needed during teaching and learning, the Department of Education still lack to supply schools with the necessary educational resources to improve small group teaching.

5.2.5. What suitable model could be recommended to assist senior phase teachers in enhancing the way they perform their small group teaching?

- Some of the teachers voiced out that they should come up with different and interesting teaching strategies like researched based projects ,case studies, discussions ,field trips ,role play and many more others, so as to fully involve the learners in their own learning, enhancing the way the teachers perform during SGT.
- Also the Education Department has a role to play with regard to SGT, giving assistance to teachers, promoting effective teaching in the classroom.
- It is quite clear that teachers and the Department of Education ought to come up with new teaching strategies that would benefit both teachers and learners, by attracting the attention of the learners and giving them the chance to be responsible in the teaching and learning situation.
- A view came out from a teacher stating that, as teachers they experience difficulty in applying new assessment techniques due to being not familiar with them.

So all the teachers suggested that the Department of Education should try and provide teachers with prescribed documents having all the necessary information on how to apply these new different assessment techniques. By so doing, that would be the best weapon to improve the performance of teachers during SGT.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Small group teaching is learner-centred approach that is very popular at the moment, which is practised differently by countries. The common understanding of SGT is that it encourages learners' engagement. There should be learner interaction with teachers and other learners for SGT to be fruitful. It is the duty of the teacher to have the necessary information on how to implement SGT in the classroom. At times teachers have failed to have the required skills on how to practise SGT. Hence the following recommendations were made:

- This study argued that teachers require sufficient skills, knowledge and proper understanding on how to approach SGT. This might also assist teachers to be clearer about the roles to play and to improve the way they conduct SGT. The Department of Education should find ways to provide teachers with the necessary information on the implementation of SGT.
- Teachers need to adjust to working conditions in schools, having large numbers of learners in small classrooms where it became difficult for a teacher to conduct small group teaching effectively. The Department of Education should not neglect rural schools concerning infrastructure, these schools had to be looked after with great concern. Workload should be reduced to teachers in order to have enough time to manage SGT properly and to pay attention to the slow learners.
- Curricula continuously change; teachers were required to develop themselves further with knowledge and skills on the implementation of the current curriculum so as to improve the performance of learners. Department of Education should capacitate teachers with information which would promote SGT through facilitated workshops.

A thorough continuous training of about a week quarterly could make a difference in promoting SGT.

- The Department of Education, School Management Team, together with teachers, should try to work hand in glove in order to make sure that SGT is practised at schools thus improving the quality of teaching and learning. All the above educational structures need to perform the following duties; to nurture, motivate and mentor teachers on how to employ SGT. Cluster meetings have to be organised now and again, to give assistance where necessary.
- The District Office has to supply the schools with the required, educational resources relevant for teaching and learning.
- There was a need for teaching strategies to be enhanced in order to improve how SGT is employed in the senior phase. Teachers should try and come up with different, interesting teaching strategies that would assist in enhancing the way teachers perform in the classroom, with the help from the Department.
- As it had been very difficult for teachers to apply new assessment techniques, it is of great importance for the Department to provide teachers with prescribed documents having all the necessary information on how to apply these techniques. By so doing ,the role of a teacher would be fulfilled, being the facilitator, the guide, the mediator, the manager, the instructor, the monitor ,the planner and the evaluator(Mennin,2007).
- In order to fulfil all these roles, the teacher should get a full support from the District Office, fellow colleagues and School Management Team.
- Finally, the researcher suggests that teachers should be provided with money for transport and catering if they would attend a workshop, so as to motivate them.

5.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Other studies need to be conducted as a follow up which could contribute to improvement on how SGT is employed by teachers in the senior phase .It appeared that it could have been better if teachers were well informed and equipped with the understanding and practice of SGT. Teachers would be willing to take a step in approaching the practice, knowing all the necessary roles to play during SGT. More importantly, such an endeavour could also advance the development of teachers professionally. Further research should be conducted on the views from teachers concerning the approach and challenges experienced during SGT.

5.5. SUMMARY

This whole chapter demonstrated different opinions of research participants on various themes drawn from the main research questions as indicated in the introductory section of this chapter. There were different perspectives and conceptions regarding teachers' views on SGT. Teachers voiced out clearly their views on how they understand and practise SGT, the teachers' roles played that were not well performed had been identified. Finally, teachers reported their overall experience on SGT. Majority of teachers reported that SGT is a difficult approach to use but needs to be accepted and be implemented as there is no other alternative, just to accept it because it is a government proposed idea. It encourages learners' engagement, learner interaction with teachers and other learners, through the opportunity to talk, enabling learners to construct their own understanding of concepts, remember them better, and use them in real life situation (Criticos, 2002).Hence ,the teacher should design activities that motivate discussion ,encouraging conversation, debate and be taught problem-solving or thinking skills, all these activities should be resourced appropriately(Dennis &Christine,2012).

5.6 .CONCLUDING REMARKS

The following conclusions were drawn from the literature that was reviewed for the study, as well as from the data collected through the use of semi-structured interviews and document analysis from the selected schools:

From the discussion it is clear that the two rural schools in Kentani District did have generic needs and challenges, typical of rural schools, but also experienced unique problems not prevalent in all rural schools. The challenges these schools experienced with regard to small group teaching did not promote efficiency with regard to execution of their day to day functions. It was impossible for teachers and learners to achieve the set outcomes. It was quite understandable why the end year results of these rural schools differed from urban schools in the province. As long as the policy of the Department of Basic Education (DoBE, 2011:10) was that schools had to be provided resources and finances for the subject, this would remain a challenge in rural schools.

This study showed that teachers from two rural schools were somehow dissatisfied but they ought to comply with the department's obligations of accepting and implementing small group teaching in the classroom. The Department of Education, teachers and learners needed to be partners in their endeavour to find the solutions to the specific challenges being experienced. Small group teaching is a government proposed idea which requires teachers to be engaged in practising, accepting and implementing it in the classroom. Teachers seemed not to have a full understanding on how to approach small group in the classroom, they did not know where to start, how to proceed, hence they were not doing exactly what they were supposed to be doing, not being the key roles, guides and facilitators in the employment of small group teaching.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1 APPENDIX A

Ethical Clearance Certificate (PDF attached)



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE REC-270710-028-RA Level 01

Certificate Reference Number: WAD011SMAN01

Project title: **Exploring small group teaching in the senior phase: A case study in Kentani Education District.**

Nature of Project: Masters

Principal Researcher: Pumza Maneli

Supervisor: Prof N Wadesango

Co-supervisor:

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Special conditions: Research that includes children as per the official regulations of the act must take the following into account:

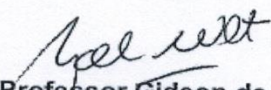
Note: The UREC is aware of the provisions of s71 of the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and that matters pertaining to obtaining the Minister's consent are under discussion and remain unresolved. Nonetheless, as was decided at a meeting between the National Health Research Ethics Committee and stakeholders on 6 June 2013, university ethics committees may continue to grant ethical clearance for research involving children without the Minister's consent, provided that the prescripts of the previous rules have been met. This certificate is granted in terms of this agreement.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance Certificate if
 - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected
 - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
 - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require
 - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.
- In addition to the need to comply with the highest level of ethical conduct principle investigators must report back annually as an evaluation and monitoring mechanism on the progress being made by the research. Such a report must be sent to the Dean of Research's office

The Ethics Committee wished you well in your research.

Yours sincerely


Professor Gideon de Wet
Dean of Research

10 September 2015

7.2 APPENDIX B

Permission to conduct research from the Department of Education



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

DIRECTORATE : IDS&G

Physical Address: Butterworth District • Mission Location • Butterworth • 4961

Postal Address: Private Bag X1319 • Butterworth • 4960 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Reference: M. V. Zokwe

Email: zokwem@gmail.com +27 (0)47 401 7788

Date: 2016/04/29

Faculty of Education

Fort Hare University

East London

Re: Permission to conduct interviews

This serves to confirm that Mrs Pumza Maneli visited my office to solicit permission to conduct research to some schools belonging to the circuit that I'm managing. She further confirmed that the research form part of the requirements for her Master's Degree.

Permission is therefore granted for the interviews to go ahead at Magiqweni JSS and Tshongweni JSS throughout May 2016.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully

M.V. Zokwe – Circuit Manager



building blocks for growth



Ikamva eliqaqambileyo!

7.3 APPENDIX C

(i) Letter to school A requesting permission to conduct research

Teko Springs A/A

Kentani

4980

18th May 2016

The Principal

Kentani

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH

I am a student registered at Fort Hare University, East London Branch doing Masters in Education. My research topic is: Exploring small group teaching in the senior phase: A case study in Kentani education district. I hereby request permission to undertake research at your school. Participation will be voluntary, meaning that respondents will be free to withdraw at any stage of the research process and there will be no negative consequences that will be attached as a result of withdrawal.

Research ethics in the form of confidentiality and anonymity will be adhered to so as to ensure maximum participation from the respondents. Semi- structured interviews will be used as an instrument to collect data.

I hope that my request receive your kind consideration.

Yours Faithfully

P. Maneli

Maneli P.

7.3 APPENDIX C

(ii) Letter from school A granting permission to conduct research

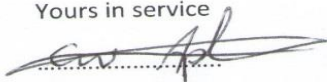
The Supervisor
Fort Hare University
East London

Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS FOR MASTERS DEGREE

The permission is here granted to Mrs P. Maneli to conduct interviews at the above named school. We hope she will adhere to the research ethics as we understand that the research is done as a pre –requisite for the completion of the study.

Yours in service



C.N. Apleni

Kentani

4980

19th May 2016

7.4 APPENDIX D

(i) Letter to school B seeking permission to conduct the research study

Teko Springs A/A

Kentani

4980

18th May 2016

The Principal

Kentani

4980

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH

I am a student registered at Fort Hare University, East London Branch doing Masters in Education. My research topic is: Exploring small group teaching in the senior phase: A case study in Kentani education district. I hereby request permission to undertake research at your school. Participation will be voluntary, meaning that respondents will be free to withdraw at any stage of the research process and there will be no negative consequences that will be attached as a result of withdrawal.

Research ethics in the form of confidentiality and anonymity will be adhered to so as to ensure maximum participation from the respondents. Semi- structured interviews will be used as an instrument to collect data.

I hope that my request receive your kind consideration.

Yours Faithfully

P. Maneli
.....

Maneli P.

7.4 APPENDIX D

(ii) Letter from school B confirming the research study to be conducted

Kentani

4980

19th May 2016

Mrs P.Maneli

Teko Springs A/A

Kentani

4980

Madam

REQUEST TO BE ASSISTED IN M.Ed RESEARCH AT

With reference to your letter dated 18th May 2016 to conduct research to our institution, I have no objection to that exercise due to ethics attached to it. This means that permission is granted to the student.

Yours in-service


.....

Principal

Five Informed consent letters (PDF attached)

115

NAME OF APPLICANT

Ethics Human 2011

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OFFICE USE ONLY

Ref

Date

information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

The interview will last around (X?) minutes (*this is to be tested through a pilot*). I will be asking you a questions and ask that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but we ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers. When we ask questions about the future we are not interested in what you think the best thing would be to do, but what you think would actually happen. (*adapt for individual circumstances*)

If possible, our organisation would like to come back to this area once we have completed our study to inform you and your community of what the results are and discuss our findings and proposals around the research and what this means for people in this area.

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

.....
Signature of participant

Date: 19-06-2015

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study

.....
Signature of participant

Date: 19-06-2015

Document approved by UREC: 11 August 2011, V01

NAME OF APPLICANT

Ethics Human 2011

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OFFICE USE ONLY

Ref

Date

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I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

N. Nihade
.....
Signature of participant

Date: 19-06-2015

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study

N. Nihade
.....
Signature of participant

Date: 19-06-2015

Document approved by UREC: 11 August 2011, V01

NAME OF APPLICANT

Ethics Human 2011

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If possible, our organisation would like to come back to this area once we have completed our study to inform you and your community of what the results are and discuss our findings and proposals around the research and what this means for people in this area.

INFORMED CONSENT

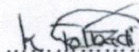
I hereby agree to participate in research regarding I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

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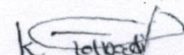
I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.



Signature of participant

Date: 19-06-2015

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study



Signature of participant

Date: 19-06-2015

NAME OF APPLICANT

Ethics Human 2011

<<

>>

OFFICE USE ONLY

Ref

Date

information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

The interview will last around (X?) minutes (*this is to be tested through a pilot*). I will be asking you a questions and ask that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but we ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers. When we ask questions about the future we are not interested in what you think the best thing would be to do, but what you think would actually happen. (*adapt for individual circumstances*)

If possible, our organisation would like to come back to this area once we have completed our study to inform you and your community of what the results are and discuss our findings and proposals around the research and what this means for people in this area.

INFORMED CONSENT

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I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

N. Fotose
Signature of participant

Date: 19-06-2015

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study

N. Fotose
Signature of participant

Date: 19-06-2015

7.6 APPENDIX F

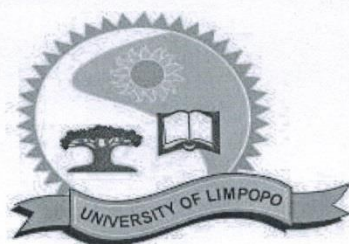
INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE

MAIN/CENTRAL QUESTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTION
<i>How is small group teaching employed by teachers in the senior phase in Kentani district?</i>	➤ What are the teachers' understandings of the practice of small group teaching?	• <i>What do you understand by small group teaching?</i> • <i>How do other teachers understand small group teaching?</i>
	➤ How do teachers approach small group teaching in the classroom?	• <i>How do you understand small group teaching should be approached?</i> • <i>What is the common approach of small group teaching in your school?</i> • <i>What do you think is the best approach of small group teaching?</i>
	➤ What are the challenges faced by teachers when employing small group teaching?	• <i>What are the challenges you experience on small group teaching?</i> • <i>What makes it difficult for you to conduct effective small group teaching?</i>
	➤ What measures can be put in place in order to promote effective use of small group teaching?	• <i>Do you need any training on how to facilitate your small group teaching?</i> • <i>Do you get any support from any source on the issue small group teaching?</i> • <i>What kind of support do you specifically need to assist you?</i>

		• <i>Do you think you need some materials that can be provided to you to assist with facilitating small group teaching?</i>
	➤ <i>What suitable model could be recommended to assist senior phase teachers in enhancing the way they perform their small group teaching?</i>	• <i>Do you have any approach you use that work well for you in terms of small group teaching?</i> • <i>What are some the small group teaching models that you know?</i> • <i>What do you recommend as a best small group teaching model?</i>

7.7 APPENDIX G

Editorial Certificate



**University of Limpopo
Centre for Academic Excellence**

Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 2574/3439, Fax: (015) 267 3318, Email: Owence .chabaya@ul.ac.za

EDITORIAL CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I, Owence Chabaya, have edited for language use and plagiarism, the dissertation entitled "*Exploring small group teaching in the senior phase. A case study in Kentani Education District*", submitted by Pumza Maneli. I adjudged the project as original and free of any significant plagiarism.

I am a qualified language editor, academic literacies trainer and author who also holds a Doctoral degree in Education Management. I work as a Professor in the Centre for Academic Excellence at the University of Limpopo. I have vast teaching experience, and in editing; and have edited numerous Honours, Masters Dissertations and PhD theses and research articles. I have also done rapporteuring and written workshop reports on several education related matters.

Although the utmost care was taken in editing the project, the final responsibility rested with the author.

Yours

Prof Owence Chabaya
20/12/16

Finding solutions for Africa