

**THE IMPACT OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ON
MANAGING CLASSROOM PRACTICE.**

A mini dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree:

MASTERS OF EDUCATION (Education Management & Policy)



University of Fort Hare
By
Together in Excellence

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2005**

DECLARATION

I Namhla Prudence Sotuku of the Faculty of Education University of Fort Hare, solemnly declare that the copy of the mini-dissertation submitted by me is original. It is in no way the work of someone else. The research is the result of my efforts through the professional guidance of the supervisor whose name and signature appear below.

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I am indebted to the members of my family, especially my children, Sifanelwe and Ayandiswa, who were often left alone during my time of study.



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Abstract

In South Africa vast efforts and considerable resources continue to be spent on providing in service training for teachers to stimulate professional development and improve classroom practice. The impact of these professional development programmes on long term practice is uncertain. But there seems to be evidence that programmes based on a growth or constructivist model are more effective.

This study investigates University of Fort Hare graduates who have completed a four year part time in service degree course in primary education. The intention is to determine the impact two years after completion. Are the learnings from the course still being implemented? Is self monitoring continuing now that support from the institution has ceased? A series of research initiatives undertaken while the students were still on the course produced optimistic results. The question is, are these apparent changes in practice being maintained over time?

The literature tends to be negative about the long term benefits of conventional teacher development programmes, with one author going so far as to state that South Africa's previously disadvantaged teachers will always require bureaucratic control and monitoring. This research indicates something to the contrary, and finds that the small sample of teachers who participated in this research project have maintained the claimed gains two years after completion. Their classrooms remain learner centred, critical thinking is promoted and a range of ways of coming to know are demonstrated. These teachers do self monitor and give clear evidence of adopting a meaningful reflective professional attitude. In most cases, changes in practice do not reside to their classrooms but extend to the local community and neighbouring schools.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Following independence, most African nations embrace an educational policy that seeks to revise radically the inherited colonial curriculum. Recently, an influential body of work has emerged to suggest that the curriculum is a critical arena in which the ideology of the state is both projected and contested. The curriculum becomes a site of conflict and contestation because it embodies the values, norms, objectives, interests, priorities, and directions of the state and other powerful sectors of society (Jansen 1991).



South Africa, an African nation had as an important development in its post-apartheid era, the departure from apartheid education through a commitment to an outcomes based curriculum reform (Cross et al 2002). The new curriculum required teachers to change their classroom practice. The new demands on teachers and their teaching have become a new challenge at the centre of education research debate as they created a need for a major paradigm shift in teacher education to effect the desired changes in classroom management practices. Vast efforts and considerable resources continue to be spent in providing in-service training for teachers for stimulating professional development, improving school practice or implementing social policy in order to improve the quality of education and to ensure improved learning outcomes for students.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

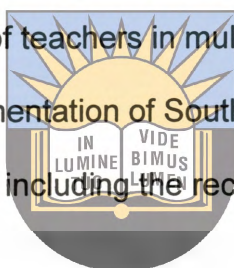
In the rural Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, most higher education institutions realized the need for a major paradigm shift in teacher education and many teachers' professional development initiatives have been put in place. The current wave of reform pays attention to the details of training and development of competent teachers. Professional development covers a range of broad activities designed to contribute to the learning of teachers who have completed their initial teacher training, thereby moving teachers forward in skills and knowledge beyond the point of initial training (Pretorius & Lemmer 1989; Craft 1996 & Aderndorff et al 2002).



Among the higher education institutions in the Eastern Cape is the University of Fort Hare (UFH) which also responded to the call for a paradigm shift in teachers' classroom practices. In 1996, the University of Fort Hare, the Eastern Cape Department of Education, Teacher Unions and 22 Non Governmental Organisations in the province gathered to map out the beginning of a joint project. They motivated and supported the initiation of a Distance Education Project. Through this strategy, Fort Hare in partnership with the Provincial Department of Education, and with the support of Teacher Unions would develop and run programmes with the primary goal of upgrading the qualifications and professional development of teachers through distance learning in the Eastern Cape where it was estimated that up to 40% of the sixty thousand teachers working in the province were not considered adequately qualified in line with the

new qualification framework. The University of Fort Hare then made serious plans for the establishment of the project. In 1998 the University of Fort Hare Distance Education Project (UFHDEP) was launched. The UFHDEP programmes aimed at:

1. upgrading the professional qualifications of under qualified teachers.
2. improving the professional practice of teachers in the classroom.
3. encouraging the enskilling of teachers in core learning areas , namely Mathematics , Science , Technology and Languages.
4. promoting the enskilling of teachers in multi-grade teaching.
5. contributing to the implementation of South Africa's new curriculum and other policy frameworks , including the recognition of teacher-learners' prior learning.

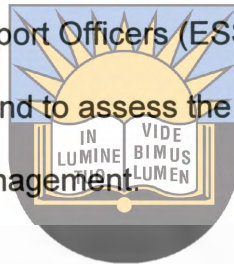


University of Fort Hare (UFHDEP Brochure, 2000)
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The programmes of the UFHDEP fell into two categories: Formal professional development programmes leading to qualification awards and Non-formal professional development and enrichment programmes. Among the formal programmes was a four year Bachelor of Primary Education degree (B.Prim Ed). This degree is currently called the Bachelor of Education - Foundation and Intermediate Phase (B.Ed F&I).

With eighteen centres established there were soon over a thousand teacher learners registered. (Teacher Learners is a higher status term than 'students')

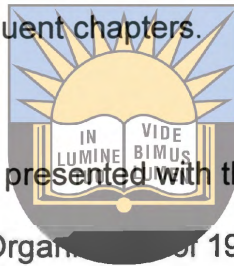
chosen by the DEP as a designation for experienced teachers upgrading their qualifications). This programme offered a supportive environment to students registered for the B.Ed by providing fortnightly face to face sessions at a venue close to their place of work or home. At a face to face session an Umkhwezeli and the teacher learners share experiences based on the modules and the course which included classroom management practices. (Umkhwezeli is an Xhosa term that clarifies the role of a part time tutor in the B.Ed Programme). In addition a team of ex- college lecturers were seconded to this programme as Educator and School Support Officers (ESSOs) and their key role was to do supportive classroom visits and to assess the teacher learners' practices, which include classroom management.



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The programme developed poly-semantic study materials to enhance self study and support the implementation and management of 'best practice' in classrooms and the school. Poly-semantic study materials use a variety of print literacies, or "range of text forms that include icons, photographs, drawings, diagrams, tables, charts and mind maps to convey and re-inforce sense and meaning' (quoted from a personal interview with a materials developer, 2004). The B.Ed programme is a materials based programme offered over eight semesters. In each semester two courses are offered: a core education studies course and core learning areas course. For each course sets of study materials called imithamo are provided. (Umthamo is a Xhosa word meaning a small "bite sized" chunk or mouthful that can be handled at one time).

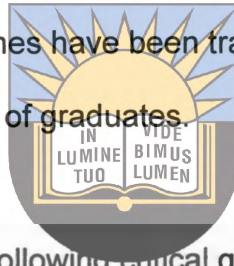
As it evolved, this programme attracted attention in South Africa and even internationally from various educational institutions. As a result of this interest research initiatives on the initial impact of this programme were conducted. Organisations such as South Africa Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), the Open University of Britain, the University of Witwatersrand School of Literature and Language Studies and the University of South Australia, Adelaide, all involved themselves in a range of different research projects which I will refer to in subsequent chapters.



In 1999 this programme was presented with the Eastern Cape Premier's Trophy for "Best Education Organisation of 1999" in the province. Teachers registered in the programme also applauded the programme in their newsletter *Intlantsi*, (Issue 2 - July 2000), for helping them bring about effective changes in their classrooms and schools. "This project is "Mavula Kuvaliwe" – that is, it opens closed doors (Williams T F) and "The boredom that existed within me has been replaced by challenges in the activities found in the Imithamo." (Tshotwana N L).

It is now over two years after the first group of teacher learners who were registered in this programme fulfilled the requirements of the B.Ed degree. Their affirmation was in April 2002. Affirmation is a form of summative assessment where external and internal affirmers gather to verify the

processes of continuous assessment. There is much anecdotal evidence from a range of sources that celebrate the success of this programme. But is this enough evidence? One of the research initiatives pointed out, "...we know what the teacher learners say about teaching and learning but we do not know whether the learnings from the programme have been translated into their practice in the classroom" (Amos & Devereux 2003:13). It shall therefore be the concern of this research to analyze the University of Fort Hare B.Ed graduates' classroom management practices to determine the extent to which learnings from the programmes have been translated into practice involving a small representative sample of graduates.



The study will address the following critical question:

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1. What is the impact of the B.Ed professional development programme in managing classroom practice? In order to answer this question, there are three sub-questions.

- How do the graduates manage classroom teaching and learning two years after completion?
- What are the real changes in their classroom practice versus the claimed changes?
- What practices characterized in the imithamo prevail and are still evident in the classroom practice without support from UFH?

Answering these questions will give insight into the extent to which teachers are able to manage and sustain improved approaches in their classrooms.

What happens when support goes?

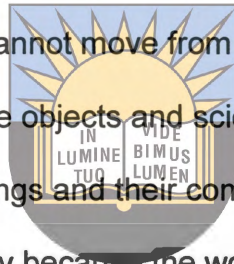
Wally Morrow (1989: 2) quotes Boyce who claims that "In South Africa we have no alternative to external monitoring and bureaucratic controls, and South African schools and their teachers have become so accustomed to bureaucratic control one wonders whether they would be able to develop the capacity to self monitor their performance?" This research will attempt to investigate whether the above claim is right or wrong. Does the absence of the continued support from the institution mean the end of the effective changes in classroom practice of the University of Fort Hare graduates?



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study examines the real changes in teachers' practice of classroom management. It therefore requires the researcher to look at individual classroom practices and search for deep perspectives. Metaphorically individual teachers' classroom practices vary, they are composed of different textures, many colours and therefore cannot be explained easily or simply. The researcher therefore needs to understand and interpret daily occurrences and social structures as well as the meanings people give to phenomena (Cantrell 1993: 83). I have realized that teachers' classroom practices vary in complex ways: they are composed of different cultural textures, have different atmospheres and as a researcher one needs to understand and interpret each classroom's multi-layered occurrences and complex social structures as well as the varied meanings people in that social context give to their interaction.

The positivist science theoretical framework is therefore not appropriate for this study because this paradigm as Janse van Rensburg (2001:13) describes it, has assumptions that are characterized by a belief of a single reality that usually aims to discover some law-like regularities about social contexts. Its epistemological assumptions are that events are based on facts that are value free and that there is a cause – effect relation between facts. The researcher functions as an independent and detached observer. Finding out the real changes in individual teachers' classroom practice cannot move from a general law. General laws fit well when dealing with concrete objects and scientific data like the boiling point of liquids, but not with human beings and their complex interactions. Generalisation will pose a problem in this study because the world of teaching and learning is not the same in all classrooms.



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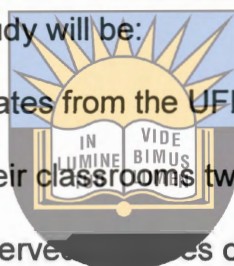
This study will be located within the post-positivist theoretical framework because this framework accommodates the fact that, while there may be law-like generalities in social contexts, it is important to closely study individuals or small groups (such as a particular school) in order to learn more about social realities in particular contexts (Janse van Rensburg 2001:13). Under the post-positivist theoretical framework, the paradigm that is appropriate for this study is then the **interpretive tradition**. Bassey (1995:12) describes the interpretive tradition as follows: *“Interpretation is a search for deep perspectives on particular events for theoretical insights. It may offer possibilities but no certainties as to the outcome of future events”*.

I am a firm believer in Social Constructivism which says that we construct our own view of the world in interaction with our social context. Therefore the personal perceptions of the participants and the meaning they make of their teaching and learning situations can make a valid contribution to a better understanding of the impact of teacher development programmes, and also to my own personal understanding of the world of teaching and learning.

RESEARCH GOALS

The major objectives of the study will be:

1. To discover how the graduates from the UFH B.Ed programme manage teaching and learning in their classrooms two years after completion.
2. To critically assess the observed practices of classroom management.
3. To find out whether the classroom management practices are related to the educational theories and philosophies that are characterized in the imithamo.



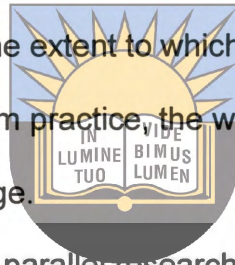
RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

With reference to teacher professional development programmes offered through distance learning, this research is an intriguing area of research which I feel is neglected as it concerns students' practice beyond the completion of their courses. This study will therefore be tapping into new ground. Most research in distance learning aims at improving the system of distance education so as to serve students while they are still engaged in their studies. What I am doing looks "beyond graduation", it goes beyond the learning centres where the

learnings took place into the contexts where learnings learnt have to be translated into practice. It investigates the extent to which changes in practice have become imbedded in the day to day work of teachers and the effectiveness with which they manage and organize teaching and learning.

The findings from this study could be used to:

1. provide useful policy and planning information for course planners and developers of teachers professional development programmes. I believe that the more we know about the extent to which professional development courses impact on long term practice, the wiser policy decisions can be that are based on this knowledge.
2. contribute to and stimulate parallel research in this neglected area of research focusing on students after the completion of a course, what Lockwood (1995) call "beyond graduation".



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ENABLING FACTORS OF THE STUDY

As a former Umkhwezeli and an Educator and School Support Officer in the programme and also a Provincial trainer in the Department of Education workshops on the Revised National Curriculum Statement, the researcher has had ongoing contact with some participants and their colleagues. She is known and trusted by the teacher learners she has worked with. Having been involved in the programme since 1999, I know its vision and mission and will be able to

use the findings of this study to provide useful policy and planning information for course planners and developers in the future.

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The following assumptions are made:

1. That all participants will agree to take part in the study.
2. The researcher will have access to relevant documents on B.Ed assessment
3. The use of more than one data collection method will help the researcher in attempts to avoid the dangers of bias that can easily contaminate data.



In the following chapter I will outline the literature I reviewed in order to inform and support my research. I consulted books on Teacher development in general with more of a focus on in-service work. I also took account of what was relevant from writings about good classroom practice and change in practice. Specific comment on the earlier research papers on the work of the Fort Hare DEP is also included. In chapter three I outline the research design and approach I followed in this study. I discuss my findings in chapter four and make recommendations along with my conclusions in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In South Africa education policies have changed radically to reflect the society's desire to reconstruct and develop the education system after apartheid (Revised National Curriculum Statement. 2002). Manganyi (2001:28) says that the purpose of the new policies is to uproot old practices, beliefs and values about social order and to replace them with new ways of conducting national business. There is therefore no such thing as a complete teacher as long as knowledge in the field of education continues to evolve and new techniques for classroom practices are introduced. The implication is that there will always be something new for the teacher to learn regardless of one's qualifications and experience.



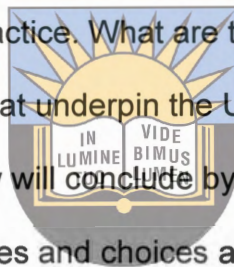
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There is a need for teacher development programmes that will help teachers to alter their prior conceptions, beliefs, skills and behaviour regarding teaching and learning. They have to translate whatever they learn in a development programme into improved classroom practice. Then a number of questions arise. What type of teacher development programme would lay the foundation for a long term impact on teachers' classroom practice? What is good classroom practice? And, is teachers' participation in a professional development programme a surety that they will put into practice what they have learnt from that programme?

This study is an impact study to determine the extent to which learnings learnt in the B.Ed teacher development programme have been translated into practice.

The first part of this review will look briefly at the literature on in-service teacher development programmes. In particular approaches that are effective in developing and helping teachers to bring about effective changes in their classroom practices and that lay a foundation for long term impact on practice, including the approach adopted by the UFH B.Ed programme will be outlined.

The second part is an examination of literature dealing with philosophies and theories on good classroom practice. What are the current educational theories on good classroom practices that underpin the University of Fort Hare B.Ed imithamo? The literature review will conclude by examining literature dealing with teachers' professional challenges and choices and their implications for change in classroom management practices.



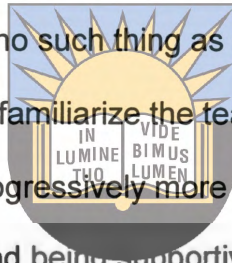
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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR IN SERVICE TEACHERS

The literature reveals that development programmes are trying to change teachers and improve their teaching. When policies change and new educational approaches are adopted then teachers have to undergo some form of orientation or retraining to bring their classroom practice into line. The term professional development is used to describe moving teachers forward in knowledge and skills beyond the point of initial training (Craft 1996; Pretorius & Lemmer 1998; Adendorff et al 2002).

A model for professional development programmes.

Research in this field indicates that effective professional development programmes have been based on the growth model (Bagwandeem & Louw 1993; Elliot 1993; Craft 1996). Jackson (as cited in Bagwandeem & Louw 1993:71) suggests that the growth model is based on the assumption that teaching is “a complex and multifaceted activity about which there is always more to know and the motive for learning more about teaching is not to repair a personal inadequacy but to seek greater fulfillment as a practitioner of the art”. The view expressed here is that there is no such thing as a complete teacher and the focus of the growth model is to familiarize the teacher with developments in her field, assist her in becoming progressively more sensitive as to what is happening in her classroom, and being supportive of her endeavours to improve what she is doing.



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The need for increasing professional competence is also echoed strongly in the Norms and Standards for Educators promulgated by the Government in 2000 and in the Integrated Quality Management Systems document (2002). These documents specify seven roles that educators have to fulfill in order to demonstrate professional competence. An educator must be:

- a learning mediator.
- an interpreter and designer of learning programmes.
- a leader, administrator and manager .
- a scholar, researcher and life long learner.

- an assessor .
- a learning area specialist
- and also play a community, citizenship and pastoral role.

So professional development programmes need to take into account many aspects of the professional work of teachers.

However in the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001: 27-29) it is argued that “competence is meaningless if there is no commitment alongside it”. Wally Morrow in his speech in the Saamtrek Conference as quoted in the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001:27) also echoes this issue as follows;



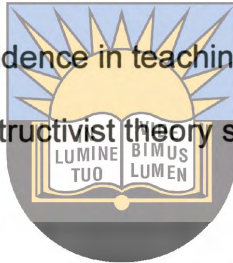
“It is fashionable to think of education in terms of the development of competencies but there are limitations on this view. Nazi leaders were not in general lacking competence...High degrees of competence are compatible with moral degeneracy. Most teacher-education programmes focus too sharply on the development of competence and not enough on professional commitment”.

Competence in the classroom is clearly not enough. One needs to look at the moral integrity of teachers as this will affect their commitment.

The literature accessed indicates that most successful teacher development programmes have been based on the constructivist theory of learning. It is suggested that constructivist learning is concerned with strategies by which all learners (including children and teachers) construct ideas about their world (Osbourne & Wittrock 1985; Bell et al 1990; Collins et al. 2001). This implies that

an effective teacher development programme does not condone classroom practice that is seen as simply a matter of reproducing pre-programmed ideas from training. The programme must value the experiences and expertise the teachers bring with them.

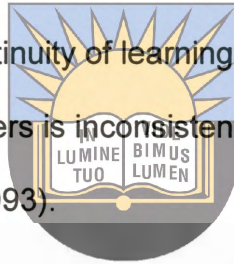
From my personal experience as a primary school teacher attending teacher development workshops, I have found that participating in a development programme based on the constructivist framework is more empowering and more likely to boost one's confidence in teaching. I believe that a development programme based on the constructivist theory should incorporate strategies such as:



- recognizing the prior knowledge and existing skills of participating teachers and building on that.
- doing a needs analysis of teachers in practice and using the findings to inform the overall organizational culture of the programme.
- using interactive approaches by allocating time for sharing experiences, working together to plan as well as time for reflection on actions taken.

It is claimed that there is an increasing adoption of the Hermeneutic view for in-service teacher education as opposed to the platonic or rationalist view and the social-market view. The Hermeneutic view suggests that practice is grounded in interpretation of particular situations (Bagwandeem 1993; Elliot 1993). In the following paragraphs I will outline my understanding of these three views.

The platonic view is underpinned by the principle of rationalism; namely that good practice transcends the biased and prejudiced practical cultures of everyday living when it is derived from a theoretical understanding of educational values and principles. The image of a teacher emphasized by this tradition is that of a rational –autonomous professional who is developed at the initial phase of teacher training and once developed, then the teacher can be left to self – direct future professional learning. “Rationalism in professional education implies voluntary patterns of in-service provision and any prescription like the National Curriculum which secures continuity of learning by prescribing the learning experiences of qualified teachers is inconsistent with the image of a rational-autonomous teacher” (Elliot 1993).



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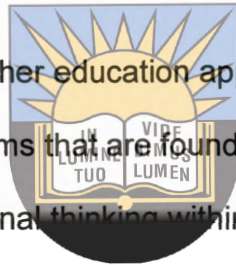
Elliot highlights only one view of an autonomous professional teacher, the view of a teacher who uncritically follows prescribed instructions. Morrow (1989: 5) argues that:

“...an autonomous teacher is not anomic, not ungoverned. To claim to be autonomous is to claim to be governed in a special kind of way. An autonomous teacher does not ignore the wishes and interests of others – parents, pupils, governments, employers – but such a teacher does reserve the right to consider such wishes and interests in the light of appropriate criteria. The wants and wishes cannot be simply taken as given starting points.”

The idea of an autonomous professional can be taken two ways. The person who mindlessly does what they have been trained to do is one version. But the self-driven, more flexible professional who is prepared to question, modify and

adapts ideas and programmes comes closer to the growth model of a developing teacher.

I am interested in the way in which B.Ed graduates act autonomously in their classrooms. Are they blindly following the theories and ideas suggested in the imithamo or are they adapting them, extending them and making them their own?

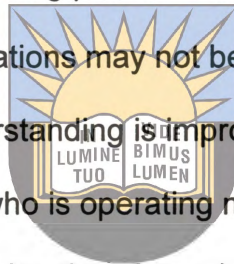


The social market view of teacher education applies to education, the production-consumption systems that are found in the economic sphere (Bagwandeem 1993). Educational thinking within this view is governed by the principle of behaviourism. In the behaviourist approach the dominant view is that teaching is only the provision of a stimulus that would result in particular conditioned responses (Cole 1978).

The Hermeneutic view of teacher education has situational understanding as the basic principle that underpins it. It suggests that practice is grounded in interpretations of particular situations. Its manifestation in the in-service field has been the adoption of classroom and school focused action research approaches which highlight the role of teachers as researchers in effecting improvements in practical situations which are seen as complex, ambiguous and unpredictable (Elliot 1993; Craft 2000). Such a view therefore suggests that an effective development programme should equip teachers with strategies to adopt a reflective and critical stance. Teachers should be encouraged to make some

adaptations to ideas and theory suggested during training by taking into consideration their own particular situation. This then accommodates what Morrow (1989: 5) is talking about, that one has to act autonomously and not just conform to rules or blindly follow a particular teaching theory.

However, Elliot (1993) in his interpretation of the Hermeneutic view of teacher education, which has situational understanding as the basic principle that underpins it, argues that grounding practice on situational interpretation is problematic as some interpretations may not be objective. Nevertheless he also suggests that situational understanding is improved not by eliminating bias but by modifying it. The teacher, who is operating mindfully needs to also be aware of their own bias in any given situation. A teacher development programme should encourage teachers to be self-critical of their own situational understanding and interpretation so as to avoid the danger of subjective blindness and not exploring other possible means to solve educational problems in their classrooms.



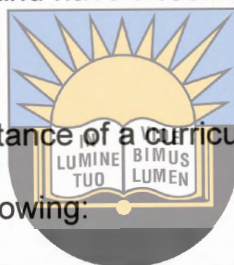
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The link between professional development and curriculum development

There appears to be consensus in literature that curriculum development is inseparable from teacher development. In South Africa when the curriculum changed after 1994, it required teachers to change their classroom practice in order to effect the required changes. As the departure from apartheid education was through a commitment to Outcomes Based Education (OBE), this required teachers to teach using the new

approach. I believe that any teacher development programme aiming at helping teachers to improve their practice should be conversant with the current demands that are being placed on the teachers, as well as the way these demands influence the teachers' needs.

“Supplying a theoretical foundation and a practical framework that seems compatible with what has worked in the past provides less intuitive teachers with an accessible way to improve their methods of instruction” (Von Glasersfeld 1989). New ideas have to be linked to the actual ways teachers have been solving their problems in the past otherwise teachers will remain confused and have a feeling of inadequacy.



In their discussion of the importance of a curriculum-in-practice approach, Hoadley & Jansen (2002) highlight the following:

- *It provides the teachers with a more complete view of teaching and learning.*
- *It validates the teacher's role as a curriculum developer. It shows us how teacher's actions - both good and bad, thoughtful and thoughtless - transform the curriculum plan into practice. This view acknowledges that, it is desirable that teachers, as thoughtful professionals, adapt the knowledge taught so that it is meaningful to their particular learners.*
- *By acknowledging the roles that teachers and learners play in changing specified curriculum content, this approach also assumes that knowledge changes. It suggests that:*
 - *teachers will approach teaching critically;*
 - *they will read and interpret and adapt knowledge before they teach.*
 - *learners' understandings are also constructed in practice;*
 - *their understandings are constrained by their contexts and backgrounds;*
 - *they bring some kinds of knowledge to class but lack other knowledge; and this impacts on their learning in both positive and negative ways.*

(Hoadley & Jansen 2002:34)

What Hoadley and Jansen highlight for a curriculum-in-practice approach is in line with the growth model and the constructivist approach to learning which have been discussed as laying foundation for most successful teacher development programmes.

During affirmation the teachers registered in the B.Ed claimed that the course helped them in improving their classroom practice because of the link between the declared intentions of the programme and the reality of the world of teaching. They said this boosted their confidence and also helped to bridge the gap between them and their learners. Part of the purpose of this study is to verify such claims.

The University of Fort Hare B.Ed. programme for in-service teachers is based on the constructivist theory of learning. The various recent research initiatives that investigated this programme suggest that the following factors as facilitating teacher development have been considered in the course design:



1. developing a non threatening and supportive environment
2. acknowledging the uniqueness of individual teacher's classroom situation and thereby giving teachers some autonomy.
3. acknowledging the teachers' existing skills, experience and knowledge they bring to the programme.
4. giving teachers time for reflection and sharing experiences of classroom practices because teachers cannot develop confidence to teach when they are isolated.
5. using an ongoing interactive hands on , minds on , hearts on approach : providing opportunities and time for teachers to practice any new behaviour and to come back and share its effects in the classroom, raise questions, not forgetting the learners experiences of the new strategy. A crucial tool in this

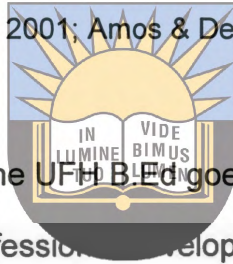
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process was the encouragement to keep a journal, which forms part off the assessed work.

6. adopting a non deficit approach to develop the confidence and competence of primary school teachers to teach.
7. providing scaffolding for the teacher learners enabling them to take large steps in their learning with confidence .
8. the use of poly-semantic material.

(Compiled from research by Botha & Osei-Agyakwa 2001; Mays & Welch 2001; Reed

2001; Amos & Devereux 2003; Chartes & Paige 2003)

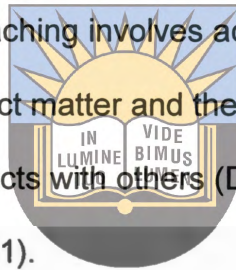


It is clear from the above that the UFH B.Ed goes a long way towards linking curriculum development to professional development. But will the graduates' classroom practices bear witness to this? Has this programme managed to develop a community of autonomous professional practitioners? The overall consequences of such an innovative developmental programme has been an increased number of competent and confident primary school teachers who see themselves as agents of change and who now assume a leading role in their schools (UFH –In-Service Programmes Newsletter: Intlantsi April 2004 , issue 1 pp 2 &6). This research will probe more deeply claims of effectiveness such as this and try to determine the extent to which there is evidence of long term change taking root.

WHAT IS GOOD CLASSROOM PRACTICE?

I believe that teaching and learning takes place in different contexts. It occurs during social interaction between two or more people that is characterized by guidance and support provided by the one who has already achieved a skill. Working together in this way with a teacher helps learners make their own sense and meaning in ways that get increasingly complex. (Vygotsky in Moon & Murphy 1999).

Many authors highlight that teaching involves acting within multiple domains concerning the child, the subject matter and the context simultaneously and often acting within one domain conflicts with others (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997; Moon & Murphy 1999; Collins et al 2001).

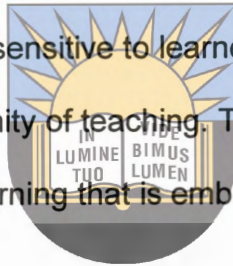


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1. The learner: his social background, needs, interests, learning skills and strategies. The individual is inescapably influenced and shaped by the groups to which he belongs – family, nation, civilization.
 2. The subject knowledge: What needs to be learnt, how to effect effective learning, how to assess what has been learnt?
 3. The community in which the school is: What is valued by the community? What is their view of education? A school is not a closed chamber shut against all outside things.

In this study as I will be examining teachers' classroom practice, I will also have to determine the extent to which they operate within the foresaid domains.

The theory of learning and the teacher's role

Current literature indicates that good classroom practice is based on the constructivist paradigm (B.Ed imithamo 1998; Collins et al 2001; Adendorff et al 2002; Revised National Curriculum Statement in South Africa 2002; Chartres & Paige 2003). The constructivist tradition emphasizes that learners are active participants who construct their understanding, discover and accommodate new facts, build their own understanding and use the discoveries and personal experiences to develop their own new knowledge. This means that teachers must prioritize teaching that is sensitive to learners' needs. A teacher must aim for flexibility rather than uniformity of teaching. They should provide a stimulating environment for meaningful learning that is embedded in contexts that make sense to the learners.



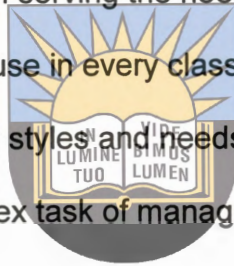
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There is an assumption in current literature that for learners to learn effectively and make the most of the learning opportunities offered to them by the teacher, they have to be active participants in the classroom. Interaction between teachers and their learners is seen as fundamental to both the activity of teaching and to the organization and management of the classroom. Therefore a learner centred environment is one of the key features of the constructivist model of teacher practice.

This emphasizes a shift from the behaviourist approach that has dominated over the past three decades where the dominant view was that a direct causal

relationship existed between teaching and learning. Teaching was only the provision of a stimulus that would result in particular conditioned responses (Cole 1978). The Distinction between rote learning and learning with understanding was not considered.

However, Osbourne as cited in Collins et al (2001:68) argues that teaching a constructivist classroom is no plain sailing: "there is an inherent dilemma in constructivist teaching between serving the needs of an individual child and that of the class." This is true because in every classroom, learners differ in terms of gender, mental ability, learning styles and needs and each and every teacher is therefore faced with the complex task of managing learner diversity in her classroom.



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Current literature including the B.Ed. imithamo on teaching and learning, advocates for a socio-cultural approach to learning. The socio-cultural approach to learning attempts to envision the links between history, culture, language, symbols, thought, relationships, social organizations, activity, biological development and self identity. Thus a socio- cultural view of learning highlights among other things, 'the social origin of mental functioning and the importance of self esteem for learning' (Andrew Pollard as cited in Collins et al 2001: 7).

From my reading it is clear that the current literature for the socio-cultural approach largely draws its views from the long tradition of theorists such as Piaget, Brunner, Dewey and Vygotsky.

Vygotsky in his discussion of the mental functioning of the child's mind in the social interaction that happens in the classroom clarifies the significance of the teacher's role. According to Vygotsky the role of the teacher must be developmental and is to lead learners to higher levels of thinking by interpreting and giving significance to things and events. Vygotsky indicates that there are two levels of development that exist simultaneously in a developing child:

1. *the current level of development (CLD) which is manifest in what the child can do without help.*
2. *the potential level of development (PLD) which is manifest in the child's abilities with optimal guidance from the teacher.*

(Cele 1978; Gallimore 1994; Kenyon 1999; Adendorff 2002).

The teacher therefore provides scaffolding to direct learning from learner's current level of development (CLD) to a more advanced edge of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD lies between the CLD and the PLD and it is a level at which learners cannot quite manage to grasp a concept or perform a mental operation on their own but will soon be able to do so especially if assisted by the mediator. The teacher as a mediator must therefore continually extend and challenge the learners, assisting them to move towards a higher level of cognitive operations. The teacher as a mediator of learning should always try to

be aware of the learner's level of understanding (prior knowledge) so that new learning can be appropriately targeted.

Vygotsky in his emphasis of development as a process of learning sees effective interaction in the classroom as action that promotes development through guidance provided by a person who has achieved some skill in the use of intellectual tools. For Vygotsky, development moves from the social to the individual. His theory therefore allows for peer tutoring to bring about cognitive growth because it does not base social interaction on power but rather on the inequality of skills (Murphy 1999).



However Piaget's theory of cognitive development is based on an individualist approach. He sees development as moving from the individual to the social.


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Piaget says that egocentrism blocks the establishment of reciprocity and cooperation in considering differing points of view. According to Piaget it is not until middle childhood that children's intellect benefits from social interaction. He says children generally find it difficult to consider the logic of another's views that they would either continue to see things from their perspective or switch to other person's perspective without understanding the rationale and hence without actually advancing developmentally. (Cole 1978; Mwamwenda 1995; Rousseau & Meyana in UFH umthamo 2 1998; Murphy 1999).

Does this mean learners cannot formulate their own ideas before they reach middle childhood? Does this imply that a culture of sharing, working as members of a team, listening to and understanding the rationale behind other people's views in order to modify your own thinking and beliefs, cannot be nurtured in a primary school classroom?

Language and learning

Dewey placed an emphasis on the dependence of meaning of linguistic expressions on practical social interactions.



"If language ... is recognized as the instrument of social cooperation and mutual participation, continuity is established between natural events (animal sound, cries etc.) and the origin and development of meanings (Dewey 1958: xi-xii in Moon & Murphy 1999).

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The implication is that language is an important and powerful tool essential for communicating ones thinking and ones understanding of the world. It is central to the teaching and learning situation. In my research I will need to pay careful attention to the language of the classroom.

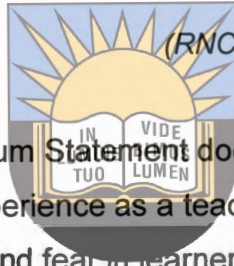
The Revised National Curriculum Statement has this to say about the importance of language.

Language shapes our identity and knowledge. It serves a variety of purposes:

- *Personal- to sustain, develop and transform identities; to sustain relationships in family and community ;and for personal growth and pleasure.*
- *Communicative-to communicate appropriately and effectively in a*

variety of social contexts.

- *Aesthetic- to create, interpret and play imaginatively with oral, visual and written texts.*
- *Educational – to develop tools for thinking and reasoning, and to provide access to information.*
- *Cultural – to understand and appreciate languages and cultures and the heritage they carry.*
- *Critical – to understand the relationships between language, power and identity, and to challenge uses of these where necessary to understand the dynamic nature of culture; and to resist persuasion and positioning where necessary.*



(RNCS Grades R-9: Languages 2002)

The Revised National Curriculum Statement document puts forward the positive use of language, but in my experience as a teacher I have listened to teachers using language to inflict pain and fear in learners and to make them feel disempowered and useless. I have also visited classrooms where teachers did not help learners to make meaning of the language specific to a learning area. As a researcher I have to take into account the language used in the classrooms and its complex effect on learning.

Culture and learning

Jerome Bruner cited in Moon & Murphy (1999:148-173) in his discussion of culture, mind and education claims that, culture shapes the mind of an individual. Snowden & Gorton (1998:107) define culture as "a social or normative glue that holds an organization together". This normative glue refers to the values or social ideas and beliefs that organization members come to share. In any classroom there is a certain culture that is being nurtured and practiced by the teacher and learners. Thinking and learning therefore are always situated in a cultural setting

and always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources. It is culture that provides tools whether symbolic or material for organizing and understanding our worlds in communicable ways. Culturalism concentrates on how human beings in cultural communities create and transform meaning. Bruner in explaining culturalism refers to the nature of the mind. He says that “the mind could not exist save for culture because the evolution of the mind is linked to the development of a way of life where reality is presented” (Bruner in Moon & Murphy 1999:148-173).



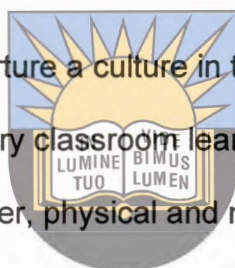
Classrooms should therefore be communities of practice in which particular ways of knowing are embedded. If it is the culture in one's class that only the teacher does the talking, even if the teacher may change and try to use methods that involve learners when there is a visit in the culture that learners are used to and have been socialized into will surface. In classroom observations in my research I have to be very careful of “window dressing” and therefore will try to discern the true ‘normative glue’ of a particular classroom.

Cross et al (2002) claim that education systems are part and parcel of the fabric of the societies in which they operate. For one to understand these societies one must take into account their historical, political, social and cultural settings.

Schools are part of the communities in which they are situated so they have a unique culture because of their history and socio-political situation . Some are rural and some are urban societies. In my research I will investigate the

relationship between individual schools and their communities and the effect that relationships have on managing classroom practice.

Bruner in his description of culture as the tenet of identity and self esteem asserts that “while there is cultural variation in the ways in which self esteem is experienced, any education system that diminishes the school’s role in nurturing its pupils’ self esteem fails at one of its primary functions” (Bruner 1996:38).



Teachers therefore have to nurture a culture in their classrooms where all learners find an identity. In every classroom learner diversity faces every teacher. Learners vary in terms of gender, physical and mental ability, ethnicity and all aspects of culture. More- over learners differ within the classroom in terms of their learning styles, needs and experiential background. No matter what the differences are, if the result of good teaching is learning, then it must be learning for all learners in that classroom. Therefore managing learners’ diversity must be an integral part of good teaching. Any researcher working in classrooms will need to be very alert to reading this classroom culture.

Reflective Practice

Good classroom practices call for reflective practice (Gallimore 1994; Morrison & Ridley in Preedy 2000; Soler 2001; Dewey in Adendorff et al 2002; the Revised National Curriculum Statements in South Africa 2002; B.Ed core learning areas imithamo). This literature calls for teachers to adopt a reflective and critical

stance as a requisite of good teaching or else they will continue to be guided by traditional ways of doing things. They will teach in ways that they are accustomed to and not implement changes or only implement them in a cosmetic way.

A distinction between reflective action and routine action needs to be made.

Reflective action is seen as the ability to stand back from the experience and weigh up beliefs in the light of evidence from practice that we usually take for granted. Being a reflective practitioner is crucial in teachers' classroom practice.

Teachers need to think carefully about the choice of teaching and learning strategies used in class. They do not need to be defensive about their choices but should weigh them up by looking at learners' learning as evidence of the suitability of the strategies used. They need to listen to and trust their inner voice.

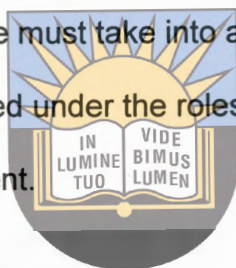
If they fail to do so, then their actions in class will be guided by traditional ways of doing things. They will teach uncritically in ways that they are accustomed to.

Four varieties of reflective teaching practice are evident in the literature that deals with reflective practice. Soler (2001:74) sums up these four varieties as follows:

1. an academic version that stresses reflection upon subject matter and the representation and translation of subject knowledge to promote student understanding.
2. a social efficiency version that emphasizes the thoughtful application of particular teaching strategies that have been suggested by research on teaching.
3. a developmentalist version that priorities teaching that is sensitive to students' interests, thinking and patterns of developmental growth.

4. a social reconstructionist version that stresses reflection about the social and political context of schooling and the assessment of classroom actions for the ability to contribute towards greater equity, social justice and humane conditions in schooling and society.

I believe that none of the above four varieties of reflective teaching practice can be adopted and used alone in the teaching and learning situation. All four varieties should co- exist with a degree of harmony as different elements from each lay a solid foundation for effective changes in classroom practice. What is suggested here is that a reflective practice must take into account the multiple facets of teaching. These were discussed under the roles of a teacher suggested in the Norms and Standards document.



PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES AND CHOICES

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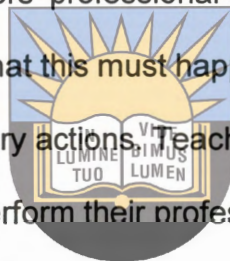
Julius Nyerere (1973) had this to say about development

Development brings freedom, provided it is development of people. But people cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. For while it is possible for an outsider to build a person's house an outsider cannot give the person pride and self confidence in themselves as human beings. Those things people have to create in themselves by their own actions. They develop themselves by what they do; they develop themselves by making their own decisions, by increasing their own knowledge and ability and by their own full participation – as equals – in the life of the community they live in...

Moving from the above quotation, I believe that the goal of a professional development programme or workshop presented by 'experts' that is characterized by quick tips for teachers, grabbing of ready made handouts and easy- come easy- go 'nice' ideas, will not give teachers pride and confidence in their role in the classroom. **But**, even though a development programme might

be based on a non-deficit model underpinned by the constructivist learning theory to improve teachers' skills and competencies, when the term of the developmental programme is over and the teachers have graduated the onus rests on the individual teacher to sustain the learnings and translate them into classroom practice. What happens beyond graduation leads to the question of commitment. Having acquired professional competences is meaningless if there is no commitment alongside it.

The South African Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001:29) emphasizes the need for teachers' professional commitment to go jointly with professional competence and that this must happen through self regulation rather than the fear of disciplinary actions. Teachers need to commit themselves to do all within their power to perform their professional duties in accordance with the ideals of their profession. Teachers have to uplift their status as professionals in their communities by being role models that are valued and have a sense of the nobility of their calling.



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We cannot deny the fact that teachers encounter many contradictions in their profession that are sometimes obstacles to progress. Many teachers work in seriously under resourced classrooms and schools, especially those in the rural schools. Some teachers are faced with redeployment while others have been designated as temporary for years while performing the same duties as other permanent teachers. These contradictions have led to teaching being an unhappy profession. But there are teachers who are very committed and try to carry out their duties professionally in spite of these difficulties. These teachers

acknowledge that as teachers they perform a crucial social function. This belief in their personal social value provides the intrinsic motivation that reveals itself as commitment

Fullan (2001:14) suggests that "rapid change is inevitable and endemic in our current postmodern society, which continuously generates multiple and complex change". Because of this, attempts to manage change cannot assume a stable environment in which to do this. We have to take into account the fact that instability and continued change forms part of the environment for any implementation and that there is always a need for flexibility and adaptability in any development programme.



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A teacher responds to curriculum change in one of three ways outlined below. I believe these responses could be used to clarify teachers' actions after the completion of a professional developmental programme, when there is no longer support or monitoring from the institution that offered the course. I will bear them in mind as I proceed with my research work in the classrooms and schools of the teachers selected for my research.

1. *CO-OPTION - Here the curriculum is implemented, but with no real changes in the teachers and learners as well as no changes in the classroom. These teachers re-interpret new ideas through their old understanding of teaching and learning. Although the teacher may in principle support new ideas, the teacher largely teaches as she always has and learners learn as they always have.*

2. *NON – IMPLEMENTATION - Here the new ideas are simply ignored.*

3. *MUTUAL ADAPTATION - Here the new curriculum is changed or modified in the process of teaching. This means that the new ideas and the teacher's practice are changed. The change is not conceptualized as a dramatic change but rather small, incremental changes always involving teachers and constantly taking into account the contexts in which the new policy or ideas need to be implemented.*

(Milbrey McLaughlin in Hoadley & Jansen 2002:212).



CONCLUSION

It is clear that effective professional development programmes for teachers are mostly based on a constructivist approach. A constructivist approach to teacher development values the knowledge and skills that teachers have and uses them as basis for programme content. This increases relevance and because the content is more appropriate, the programme is most likely to boost the teachers' confidence and competences in teaching. It is believed that long term programmes using the growth model lay a foundation for long term quality teaching and are more valued by all stakeholders than approaches characterized by "quick tips for teachers, grabbing of handouts etc "... (See pages 14 & 20 of this chapter)

There is a clear indication in the literature that there should be a link between the development programme and the reality of the teaching world so that teachers

do not find themselves undervalued or have feelings of inadequacy. This link between the intentions of a development programme and the reality of teaching is more likely to help them to translate into practice what they have learnt. However teachers have to be encouraged to adopt a critical and reflective stance in their classroom practices and not be mindless functionaries. They have the responsibility to adapt and modify ideas to fit their teaching contexts. For one's teaching to be regarded as good, it must produce learning and be developmental. Therefore managing learner diversity must not be seen as an additional task but an integral part of good teaching.



Every classroom has its own culture and that culture is the 'normative glue' that holds the classroom together as an organization. Learning and thinking are always situated in a cultural setting and always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources. Teachers need to make their classrooms communities of practice in which a range of ways of knowing and coming to know are embedded.

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Finally professional competence must go jointly with professional commitment otherwise no matter how good a teacher development programme is, if it focuses too sharply on the development of competence and not enough on professional commitment, it will not have a long term impact on practice. In my research I will be trying to determine the extent to which this has happened for

the UFH students in my study. The following chapter examines the methodology underpinning this study.



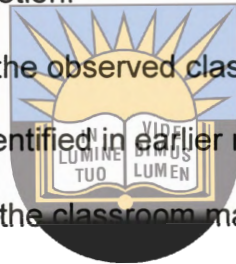
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CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter puts forward the research methodology underpinning this study and also describes the research path followed. There were three primary objectives of this study:

- to discover how the UFH B.Ed graduates manage teaching and learning after completion.
- To critically assess the observed classroom practices against the claimed changes identified in earlier research.
- To find out whether the classroom management practices are related to the theories and philosophies characterized in the UFH B.Ed imithamo or can they be attributed to other factors?



APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research stand. Qualitative research methods are increasingly common in contemporary research in education. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that qualitative data provide a source of well grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in a local context.

This study is investigating the “**real changes in teachers’ classroom practice**”. So collecting qualitative data within an ethnographic approach is

appropriate. Ethnography is an investigative process that studies human life. Le Compte and Priessle (1993:8) suggest that "educational ethnography has been used to describe educational settings and contexts, to generate theory, and to evaluate educational programs. It has provided rich, descriptive data about contexts and activities of participants in educational settings. Such data can be seen to represent educational processes and their results as they naturally occur and in context".

This study takes into account what Le Compte and Priessle (1993:9) say about educational ethnography: "Educational ethnography:

- *must acknowledge the culture of the people being researched.*
- *is an approach to studying problems and processes in education.*
- *documents the lives of individual teachers for unique and common patterns of experience , outlook and response (in ethnography people are not subjects ; they are experts on what the researcher wants to find out) (Burns 1991:223).*
- *contributes to improved outcomes in educational and school practice".*

(Le Compte and Priessle 1993:9)

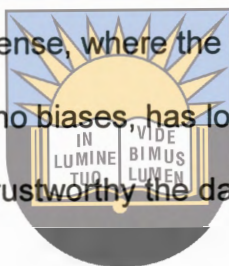
Bell (1987:7) states that by "sharing the same experiences as the subjects so to understand better why they acted as they did is an effective method to study small groups". Because I once belonged to the population of teachers myself I can still identify closely with their context of work. Having similar experiences will enable me to have the ability to read and understand the classroom culture

and context. It will also allow me to ask in depth and probing questions during the interviews.

KEY ISSUES RELATED TO THIS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Objectivity

In qualitative research the researcher puts herself into the context of a situation in order to understand it. The researcher in qualitative research is the instrument of both data collection and data interpretation. This means that objectivity in the traditional scientific (positivist) sense, where the researcher is separated from the researched and claims to have no biases, has lost its meaning. But I need to be asking myself all the time how trustworthy the data and interpretations are.



Validity and reliability

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Validity generally refers to the accuracy and value of interpretations and is normally linked to objectivity. Winegardener (2001:8) says that since objectivity is rejected in qualitative research there are other criteria for validity. From her criteria, the following have been selected to ensure the trustworthiness of this study:

- Member checking: the corroboration of data by participants.
- Chain of evidence: find meaningful links between research questions, raw data and findings.
- Research positioning: a demonstrated sensitivity by the researcher to how she relates to the case study.

- Reporting style: the ability to reconstruct the participants' reality credibly and authentically.

The above will help the researcher in attempts to avoid dangers of bias that can easily contaminate data. I also believe that the use of triangulation for this study will ensure its validity and reliability. Triangulation can be defined "as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour" (Janse van Rensburg 1994). For this study, triangulation will be more than just the use of more than one method of data collection but will also help in getting different perspectives or points of view.



Ethical considerations

In a qualitative research the ethics aspect needs to be given special attention. Research participants do not owe anything to the researcher and are entitled to be treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. Currently the tendency is not to view research participants as participants only but to also see them as partners in the research and to refer to them in this manner rather than call them subjects. This study paid attention to the following ethical considerations: (from Huysamen 1994.)

- Voluntary and informed consent: participants were approached and therefore participated with their full knowledge and approval and the true nature of the research was discussed with them.

- Respecting the privacy of research participants: classroom observations were done with the participants' consent and tape recorders were used where participants felt comfortable. Maintaining participants' anonymity was also respected.

(Huysamen 1994:178-185)

THE RESEARCH PATH

The qualitative research methods that I planned to use include: in-depth, open ended interviews; direct observation in classrooms and interaction with written documents (portfolios of teachers and learners work). (Guba & Lincoln 1981; Patton 1990; Cantrell 1993; Cohen & Manion 2000).



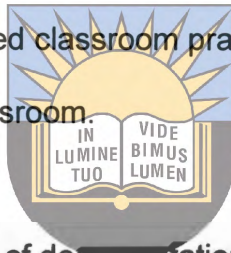
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Interviews: The purpose of the interview is to allow the researcher to gather descriptive data in the participant's own words. This allows the interviewer to develop insights into how the participants interpret and make meaning of the world. For this study, school management teams and colleagues in the same schools as the B.Ed graduates will be interviewed using in-depth, open-ended interviews. Although this might be riskier as the groups may argue and not agree on issues raised, this will be more likely to give a deeper understanding and a true reflection of the real situation. Guba and Lincoln (1981: 177-8) propose that open ended interviews are most "appropriate when the issue is complex, the relevant dimensions are unknown, or the interest of the research lies in the description of a phenomena, the exploration of a process, or

individual's formulation of an issue". I will also use post observation formal interviews of the graduates themselves to clarify some practices of classroom management observed during teaching and learning will be done.

Observations: The purpose of observations is to give the researcher direct first hand experience of phenomena that are being studied (Cantrell 1993).

Observations of teachers selected for this study as they carry on with their classroom practice will be done. The classroom observations will help in finding out whether the claimed changed classroom practices from interviews and research are evident in the classroom.



Documentation: The purpose of documentation is to provide additional information as well as to clarify or verify data. For this study the participants will be asked to present their portfolio based on their current work. This direct evidence will reveal and also help in detecting patterns that are more general. And this will lead to the development of general conclusions or theories that can possibly inform policy.

The sequence of events was:

- selection of participants
- informing participants
- interviewing school management teams and colleagues
- classroom observations

- interviewing the graduates after the classroom observation
- documentation
- data analysis

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

A representative sampling dividing the participants into different groups was used. Eight graduates from the first cohort of the University of Fort Hare B.Ed (F&I) were selected. The following criteria were used to select the participants:

- Four of these graduates were from the Butterworth district which is classified as a disadvantaged rural area. The other four were from the East London district which is classified as urban. This was done to compare teachers' classroom practice in different localities.
- Two graduates from each area had for 4 years continuously attained merit in their studies and two graduates from each area have at a certain year during their studies been considered to be at-risk teacher learners or review cases. This was done to determine if long-term change is related to academic performance.

INFORMING PARTICIPANTS

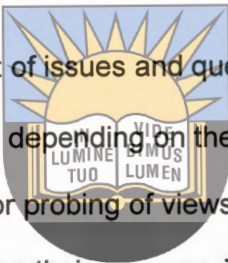
During April and May 2004 I contacted the graduates telephonically to invite them to take part in this study. Then visits were made to the schools to speak to the principals and seek permission, clarify the purpose of the study, to negotiate mutually convenient times to conduct the interviews and classroom

observations and ensure ethical procedures. A letter to negotiate entry into the schools was written and forwarded to school principals. (see appendix A)

INTERVIEWING THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS AND COLLEAGUES.

In depth open ended interviewing of school management teams and colleagues in the same schools as the graduates were conducted. Gray (2004:215)

expresses very clearly my ideas of how to conduct the unstructured interviews:



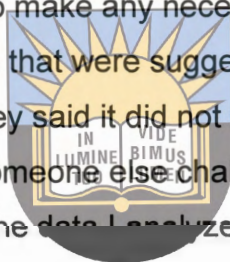
“The interviewer has a list of issues and questions to be covered. The order of questions may also change depending on the direction the interview takes. The research interview allows for probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers. This is vital when a phenomenological approach is being taken where the objective is to explore subjective meanings that respondents ascribe to concepts or events. Such probing may also allow for the diversion of the interview into new pathways which, while not originally considered as part of the interview, help towards meeting the research objective.”

The scheduled time for the interview differed from school to school but in every school it was done a day before classroom observations. A tape recorder was used for the interviews and interviewees were assured of confidentiality of the recorded material. Field notes were also taken .The approach was explained to the participants. It was stressed that it was their interview and I would be just a

listener. This interview served two purposes for this study. It helped to collect the following data:

- (1) the graduates' observable classroom practices while they were doing the Bed. course. This was very crucial so as to find out whether there are similarities or differences in the findings of the initial research on the impact of the Bed course.
- (2) The graduates' observable classroom practices now that they have completed the B.Ed. course.

Using open ended interviews was a new technique to me and I decided to let the first interview work as a pilot interview. It allowed me to sharpen my interview skills, to assess if I was getting the data I hoped for, to get the interviewees to evaluate the research tool and to make any necessary changes. From the first interview there were no changes that were suggested but interviewees commended the approach as they said it did not allow one to supply biased information as there would be someone else challenging it. The information from the first interview is included in the data analyzed in chapter Four.



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For section one of the in-depth interview, where the participants talked about the graduates' practice while they were doing the B.Ed course, I had a summary of the findings from research on the initial impact of the programme and also from the UFH newsletters where teacher learners voiced out the helpfulness of the programme in their classroom practice. Once an issue was covered I just ticked it off the list and added any new issues that came out of the interviews. (See appendix B).

Also for section two of the interview where the participants responded to the issue of the graduates' practice after the completion of the course, I had the summary of findings from initial research. But I also had to probe the

respondents with some questions for clarity especially when I observed that certain issues of the graduates' practice that were raised in section one were not raised in this section. This was important so as to detect similarities or differences between the claimed changes while the graduates were still studying and now that they have graduated. This was helpful in addressing this study's critical question: **What changes remain evident in the graduates' classroom practice?**

I had planned to conduct the interviews in English not in Xhosa so as to keep the respondents clear and straight to the point and only allowing them to code switch. However in some schools there was a problem. The interviews were very long as interviews depend on the interviewees' ability to recall and communicate and this led to having the interview conducted mainly in Xhosa.



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Besides those hiccups, the open-ended interviews gave a strong sense of a deeper understanding of the situation. There was a consensus that this was a true reflection of the real situation.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Each graduate was visited in her classroom at a convenient time. The aim was to observe each graduate teaching at least two learning areas of her choice. I spent the whole school day in each school. A tape recorder was used in schools where technology allowed and only when the teacher concerned agreed. This was done

to check the accuracy of field notes. Field notes were also taken as an unstructured method of observation. The tally system was used where a record is done every time a particular event happened in class and comments were used to give a broader view. A recording schedule containing prompting questions to remind the researcher of what to look for was created. (See appendix C).

Guba and Lincoln 1988; Patton 1990; and Cantrell 1993 highlight the following issues when it comes to observations which the researcher has taken into consideration when this research tool was selected. In terms of strengths the observation method

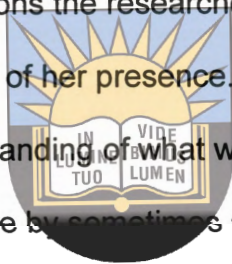


- (1) provides the context for study;
- (2) it allows for an inductive approach;
- (3) gives direct first hand experience with events while they occur;
- (4) serves as a check against bias, prejudice and selective perceptions;
- (5) builds on the researcher's knowledge and/ or enhances understanding;
- (6) allows the inquirer to see the "whole" in a way that members cannot.

In terms of weaknesses, observation may alter the setting through the presence of the researcher. It is not always easy to clearly differentiate between objective and subjective information. Observation can be very time consuming and produce volumes of data.

It is in the light of the above weaknesses that the researcher followed the observations with an interview and a portfolio presentation so as to get a deeper understanding and a true reflection of the real situation. More over, aligning myself with Brunner's theory of culturalism (as discussed on page 29 in chapter 2), even if the teaching and learning situation is altered just for me, the culture that learners have been socialized into will surface.

During the classroom observations the researcher tried to be as unobtrusive as possible to minimize the impact of her presence. The researcher joined in for some time so as get an understanding of what was happening and also to let the learners feel free. This was done by sometimes asking learners questions on the content taught in order to discern the culture of that particular classroom - was it based on the right answer syndrome or were learners' critical thinking skills being developed?



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INTERVIEWING THE GRADUATES AFTER CLASSROOM OBSERVATION.

Interviewing the graduates was a structured interview. General questions were formulated to be used as prompts to explore the interviewees' perceptions. (See appendix D). This was done immediately after the classroom observation. The interview served two purposes for this study:

- to clarify issues from observed classroom practice.
- to ensure that the classroom setting and proceedings have not been altered .

This interview allowed for issues to be explored in depth by means of follow up questions. Responses to the questions revealed a lot about the teacher and helped to assess their competence as reflective practitioners. This is one of the B.Ed programme's exit level competences. Being a reflective teacher is also an issue that has been raised in the literature as a prerequisite of good classroom practice, (see pages 31-32).

The following weaknesses of interviewing when it is chosen as a research tool were taken into consideration.



Interviews

- can be affected by the interviewee's physical and emotional state;
- are highly reflective of interviewee's perceptions and biases;
- can be affected by the reactions to and interaction with the interviewee
- and depend largely upon the interviewing skills of the researcher

(Guba and Lincoln 1988; Patton,1990).

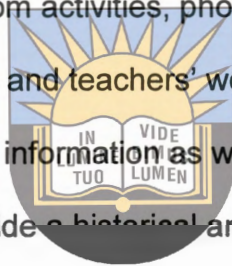
The researcher therefore followed this interview with portfolio presentation which is document analysis so as to get highly reliable information.

Having learnt from the first interview, my interviewing skills were now a bit sharper and as such the interview questions were kept short. The appreciative inquiry method was followed. The appreciative inquiry does not focus on deficiencies or failings. It recognizes that there are very different ways of viewing

the world as appreciative inquiry interprets the world not as a set of unsolved problems, a series of gaps and deficiencies and failures, but as a set of brave attempts, a series of partial achievements, a sequence of possibilities that could yield rich rewards (UNICEF, Training Manual, 2003).

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation refers to paper data and includes for example, records, files, planning notes, notes arising from activities, photographs and learners' portfolios. They may include both learners and teachers' work. The purpose of document analysis is to provide additional information as well as to clarify or verify other data. This paper data may provide a historical and ongoing record of events.



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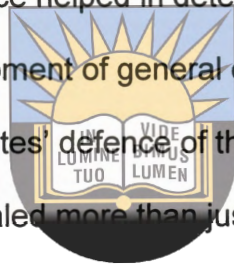
The following are therefore identified as the strengths of document analysis:

- it can provide a wealth of information, some of which is not accessible through observation or interviewing;
- it can provide highly reliable information if records are legal or official in nature;
- it can confirm information from other sources;
- it provides different perspectives on similar information
- and helps the researcher retain the context of the setting.

The weaknesses are that the documents may be of poor or variable quality (inaccurate or incomplete). The documents can still reflect the perceptions and

biases of participants. (Guba and Lincoln 1988 ; Patton 1990; Cantrell 1993; Craft 1996).

For this study, the graduates were asked to present their portfolios based on their current work and also their learners' work. The graduates displayed their work and defended it, in response to questions posed by the researcher. This was not unfamiliar to the graduates as this is one of the tactics used in the B.Ed. assessment. This direct evidence helped in detecting patterns that are more general and lead to the development of general conclusions on classroom practice. More -over the graduates' defence of the portfolios and their responses to the follow up questions revealed more than just their classroom practice. It also revealed the reasoning behind their actions and the choices they make in their professional work. This will be detailed more under data analysis.



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DATA ANALYSIS

After having done interviews of different people, visited different classrooms, seen and listened to different teachers defending their portfolios and having transcribed all the data I had gathered, I was left with an enormous amount of data that was rich and broad. This left me with the problem of how I would work through and present the data.

"Data analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it down, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others "(Bogdan and Biklen in Cantrell 1993:97).

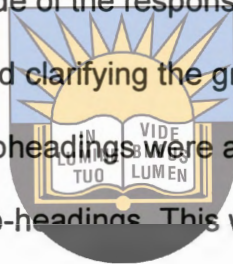
As part of the data analysis process the researcher involved some of the participants as a form of triangulation in order to check her work with the data. This takes account of the criteria for validity and trustworthy-ness of qualitative research suggested by Winegardener. (See page 41).

After all the data was collected through interviews, classroom observations and documentation, the complex data that was collected was analysed. Tapes were listened to very carefully in comparison with field notes for each data collection tool used. A transcript was made of the responses for each data collection tool.

Key ideas and patterns emerged clarifying the graduates' classroom practices.

As these patterns emerged, subheadings were added and all the information was then organized beneath the sub-headings. This work with the data will be set out

in more detail and discussed in chapter 4.



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CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the findings obtained from using the different research tools or instruments such as open ended and structured interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. There were three primary objectives of this study:

- to discover how the UFH B.Ed graduates manage teaching and learning two years after completion.
- to critically assess the observed classroom practices against the claimed changes identified in earlier research.
- to find out whether the classroom management practices are related to the theories and philosophies characterized in the UFH B.Ed imithamo or can they be attributed to other factors.

The findings will be analyzed and discussed in this chapter so as to draw informed conclusions and make appropriate recommendations in the final chapter.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS FROM OPEN ENDED INTERVIEWS

The open ended interview focused on the graduates' practice while they were doing the course and after completion. From the analysis of data collected, the following patterns of their practice emerged

- (a) Their practice inside the classroom has clearly improved.

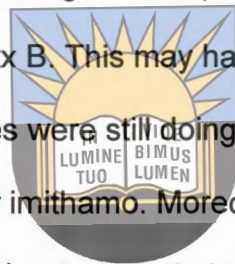
- (b) Their professional development is more than the development of their own classroom practice but extends to include and involve other teachers and the school.
- (c) Sharing experiences with their immediate communities confirms and encourages continued growth and development.

These patterns showed that the B.Ed teachers' practice is more than the development of their own classroom practice. Including other colleagues and the school community was typical of the graduates' changed practice. These teachers' practice seems to be guided by continued re-assessment of their role and developmental history as teachers. They acknowledge and value what they have learnt from doing the B.Ed course. This re-assessment is then continually followed by efforts to restore and sustain what they have learnt from the course. It is clear that they are not relinquishing the learnings that they have gained from the four years of the B.Ed course. With this constant re-assessment and renewal, further growth is possible. More-over, the recognition that they have now as primary school teachers that are no longer seen as passive recipients of workshops but as assets has given them pride and self confidence. For some graduates it is for the first time that in their teaching careers they are confident enough to air their views on decision making in school meetings and argue their points in teachers' workshops. Some graduates have in the past been labeled as 'sub-B teachers' and identified by the low status of the grade they teach. That labeling has stuck with them and has led to an inferiority complex. Having

participated in the B Ed they see themselves as the same as any other primary school teacher and they consider themselves as worthy of respect regardless of the grade they teach.

Section One: When the graduates were still doing the course

For this section the findings fit well with the initial research on the impact of the B.Ed. programme (B.Ed. newsletter; Intlantsi 2000; Reed 2001:10-12; Amos and Devereux 2003:11; Chartes and Paige 2003:6). The summary of findings from the initial research is in appendix B. This may have been largely influenced by the fact that, when the graduates were still doing the course they had to fulfill certain requirements set in their imithamo. Moreover as a practice based programme, the B.Ed course did not separate teachers' development from the classroom reality. But literature revealed that teachers professional challenges and choices may lead to non implementation of new ideas in their classrooms in the long term (Milbrey McLaughlin in Hoadley & Jansen 2002:212).



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The school management teams and colleagues interviewed talked with vigour and passion about the programme and how it changed the teachers. What came out more often was the graduates' commitment to their work, their boosted confidence and their willingness to help and share information with other teachers who were not even registered with UFH. Here are samples typical of the responses recorded in my study:

Principal at graduate 1's school: *"I was not really thrilled when teacher 1 enrolled for the course because in my school I already had teachers who had a degree, but were not really helpful. I was afraid that she was also going to be puffed up. But what I saw was a teacher gaining confidence in her teaching, a helpful teacher willing to share what she was learning with us. She doesn't only teach well but is committed to her work. You know she is concerned about how we do things around here, how what we do will affect our learners and parents. She is our voice of reason..*

Colleague at graduate 4's school: *It is not about how educated you are, it is about how much you love and respect your job. That is what we have learnt from teacher 4.*



Colleague at graduate 8's school: *For a long time primary school teachers were undermined. But when teacher 8 continued doing the B.Ed. course she gained confidence. Within no time the teachers at the Junior secondary came to her for help. I couldn't believe it myself, a grade two teacher having confidence to go and teach in grade 7.*

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It is clear from the respondents that the B.Ed. programme has had a positive impact on the graduates' practice while they were still doing the course. My next challenge was to find out whether the impact was sustained in the long term.

Section two: The graduates after completing the course

What the graduates are doing now that they have completed the B.Ed. course varied from school to school. For some graduates the practice is now confined to the development of their classroom practice. One challenge that I become aware of was job insecurity. About 3 of the graduates are faced with redeployment. This

has caused one graduate, an older teacher who has been identified as in excess to lack the zeal to go beyond her classroom in a school she will soon leave and to confine her changed practice to her classroom. But the other two who are young have taken redeployment in a positive spirit, such that one colleague of teacher 4 had this to say “She is making her presence felt, she will leave a gap when she leaves”. These graduates are still very active as agents of change in their schools and also in the community. This has resulted in them being offered teaching posts in various neighbouring schools that are in need of teachers.



What was evident from the interviews is that in most schools, what the graduates initiated was now maintained by everybody. For example graduates introduced school policies, parental involvement in decision making and use of parents as resources. They also initiated clusters and involved themselves in networking with various departments to help the schools in one way or the other. Many of these initiatives have been adopted as part of the normal running of the school. And most importantly, these changes clearly seem to have become part and parcel of the new 'normative glue' that characterises these schools.

“She is still as enthusiastic as ever about her work. But we do not leave everything to her. We have decided not to let the things she started through imithamo disappear. We as the staff are carrying on with them. That is what makes our school different. (of teacher 2)

“When we go to workshops on the RNCS, she is very active. That makes us proud as a school because we know what she says there, is happening in our school and we learnt it from her.”(of teacher 8)

This really impressed the researcher because it seems that there is clear evidence that participating in the B.Ed course has enabled such teachers to play a pivotal role in improving the culture of the school. What these teachers have gained goes beyond personal development.

The interviewees in all the schools echoed that the long term changes have been significant. By being open about their studies and having involved all stakeholders including their colleagues, the respondents felt that the graduates are now responsible for maintaining good work and high standards. Sustaining what they learnt from the course is about them continuing to be accountable. This responsibility and accountability of teachers is evidence of commitment.

This echoes and supports what Morrow in the Summitak Conference was referring to when he made the link between competence and commitment. (See page 15 of this study). What these teachers are doing shows that their professional competences go jointly with their professional commitment and this is evidence that the B.Ed course did not only focus on competences but also on commitment. Most interviewees echoed that the assessment tactics used in the B.Ed programme developed and encouraged professional commitment. This proved that the course has helped to create a culture of accountability among teachers who have participated in it.

Concerning the graduates' practice in the classroom, there was consistent response from the interviewees in the different schools that the graduates are still

maintaining good classroom practice and are still committed. It was clear from the responses got from the interviewees that the change in classroom practice characterized in the UFH B.Ed programme was embedded in the graduates' classroom life. This continued change was evidence that some teachers have the capability to self monitor their performance. The graduates' continued changed practice without any support from the institution challenges Morrow's (1989) pessimistic claim about South African teachers: "...*South African teachers have become so accustomed to bureaucratic control, one wonders whether they would be able to develop the capacity to self monitor their performance*" (page 7 of this study).



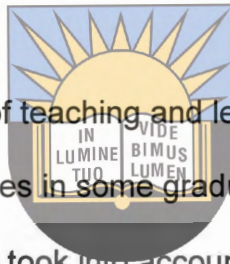
Some interviewees cited in a previous study that the graduates, even parents prefer and ask that their children be in the class taught by these graduates and this parental pressure has made other teachers see a need to use the Fort Hare graduates as wells of knowledge when it comes to classroom practice. The responses from the people interviewed are clear evidence that graduates have now gained respect in their communities.

From the consistent acknowledgement that the claimed changes are still evident in the graduates' practice, the researcher learnt that an effective professional development course is the one that frees people's potential. Once people's potential is unleashed and they believe in themselves any development then brings freedom and lays the ground for sustainability.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS FROM CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

From the classroom observations of the graduates' individual classroom practice, the following patterns emerged:

- teacher and learners interaction continued to be learner centred.
- Grouping procedures varied and were mostly appropriate for the learning experiences.
- Classroom arrangement created an atmosphere of a learner centred environment.
- Assessment was part of teaching and learning but there are still gaps in the assessment practices in some graduates' classrooms.
- The content of learning took into account the learners environment.
- Methods and strategies to enhance learning and to help learners to think critically were seen to be used.



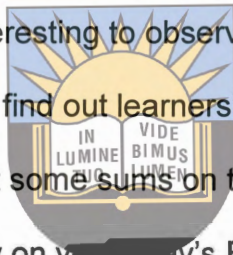
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Teacher and learners interaction

The interaction between the learners and the teacher was more informal and relaxed than what one is used to seeing in most schools. The learners were free to talk but adhered to certain classroom rules which were hung on the wall of almost all the classrooms. For example: chanting responses in chorus form was not allowed, listening to each other was encouraged, learners had to ask for permission before leaving the classroom. What impressed the researcher was that although the teachers were figures of authority in the classrooms, the

atmosphere was not tense. The learners had a relaxed business like working relationship with their teachers. This relationship was characterized by absence of fear and there was friendship and trust (not a doctor patient relationship). In one foundation class, I found the teacher sitting on the floor surrounded by her learners and the learners were talking about what they saw on their way to school.

During the lesson the teacher started a new lesson by finding out the learners' prior knowledge. It was very interesting to observe some teachers not using question and answer method to find out learners' prior knowledge. In one class learners were asked to work out some sums on the board, in another class they were asked to do a journal entry on yesterday's English lesson and the journals



writes were used as a basis for the new lesson. The teacher praised the learners for their contributions during the lesson.

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It was evident in the classes visited that the teachers adopted the saying that “all learners can learn “. Even when whole class teaching was taking place the teachers were seen to take into account the different learning styles and ability. This was shown by the teachers' encouragement of the shy ones to participate. During one language lesson a learner who seemingly was not word smart was asked to dramatise in order to give meaning to what he wanted to say. The implication was that the teachers believed that all learners have to be active participants in class for them to learn effectively and the use of both non verbal

and verbal communication effectively is seen as a contributing factor in liberating learners' potentials.

Teachers themselves were seen using gestures to clarify concepts especially in the foundation phase and also learners' writing was a mixed mode. The learners expressed their thoughts in literal writing and also in drawings, which is a form of artistic expression. What I also noticed and really impressed me was that not only the teacher encouraged learners to respect each other, but this practice seems to have been instilled in the learners themselves.



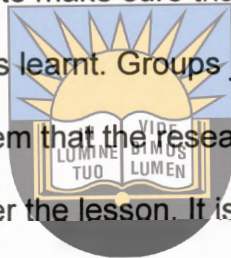
In summary in the classrooms visited, the culture I found is that the classrooms are communities of practice in which particular ways of knowing are embedded. Every learner's self esteem is being developed and the value of equality and the practice of non-discrimination is instilled in learners. The relationships between the teacher and the learners are characterized by mutual understanding, acting critically and taking shared responsibility for the smooth running of the classroom.

Grouping procedures

As found out by Chartres and Paige (2003), some teachers used a variety of grouping structures that were appropriate for the learning experiences. The fact that the teachers matched the organizational structure with specific activity is a significant one in terms of professional development and this proved that the use

of group work was not window dressing for my sake. There were however two graduates (graduate 3 & 2) who used the same grouping structures throughout the lesson where I felt at some stage of the lesson a different grouping structure would have maximized learners' participation.

I also observed one graduate (graduate3) who when using group work gave the different groups different topics around a broader theme but did not consolidate the whole lesson at some stage to make sure that all learners go home with the same understanding of what was learnt. Groups just reported what they had discussed. This is really a problem that the researcher had to include in the discussion with the teachers after the lesson. It is also evidence that there is always room for growth and consolidation. It is important to highlight that the two graduates who were experiencing problems with grouping are in the category of those who were once review cases during their years of study.



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Besides that, learners enjoyed working in groups and it was evident that working as a team was the culture in all the classrooms. The learners knew the different roles that they had to assume as group members. I observed some learners being group leaders, scribes and reporters. What impresses me is that in most classrooms as each group reported, other groups asked questions for clarity. It was very interesting to observe primary school learners listening to each other's views and realizing the problems with their own perspectives. This showed me that even though Piaget claims that learners at this stage are egocentric and that

blocks the establishment of reciprocity and cooperation in considering differing view points, if they are provided with opportunities or a culture where the consideration of differing view points is the norm and practice, they can transcend the barriers of egocentrism. (Piaget's claims have been discussed in chapter 2 on page 27-28 of this study).

Classroom Arrangement

In all the classrooms visited, the learners did not sit in rows but sat in mixed groups. All the classrooms had concrete learning and teaching resources that were used to enhance learning and to give meaning to abstract concepts introduced. This was evidence that *umthamo 14* on creating a learner centred environment has had a long term effect. In some classes there were different corners for various activities taking place in the class and learners knew when to use the different stations. For example there were reading corners, mathematics resource stations, a corner for those who needed extra support or even extra work. This was further proof that managing learner diversity has become an integral part of teaching for these teachers. All the classrooms were rich in print literacy produced by learners. This proved the long term impact of the languages *imithamo* on teachers' practice. Here is a sample of writing that is on the wall in one of the classrooms I visited that was evidence of the graduate having made the managing of learner diversity an integral part of her teaching.

Classroom 8: A child is like a butterfly in the wind. Some can fly higher than the others but each one flies the best it can. Why compare one against the others?

(1) Each one is different.

(2)Each one is special.

(3)Each one is beautiful.

Classroom 3: Wamkekekile kwa grade 3. Olu luhambo lwakho. Lonwabele ngolwakho uhlobo. (literally translated as... Welcome to grade 3. This is your journey, experience it in your own way.)

The Teacher's Assessment of the learners

Assessment in the classes visited was done. I saw examples of teachers who

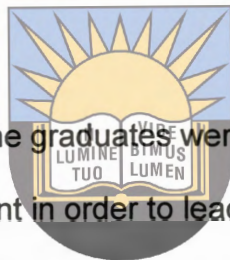
took into consideration baseline assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment. The use of Baseline assessment was more than finding out learners' current level of development. It was also used to negotiate the curriculum. The willingness to incorporate learners' views and needs in deciding

the focus of classwork is again evidence of deeper change in practice and a move towards learner centredness.

- Teacher 1 in grade 7: The new lesson was on abuse and learners in groups were given articles from newspapers. These articles depicted various forms of abuse. The teacher wrote guiding questions on the board on the information that the learners had to look for as they read the article. The learners' responses helped the teacher in targeting the new knowledge appropriately.
- Teacher 4 in grade 4: Learners as individuals were given a journal writing exercise. They were asked to reflect on yesterday's English lesson. Their journal writes were then used as basis for what was to be learnt for English that day.

- Teacher 7 in grade 2: Learners worked out mathematics problems on the board. Learners' problem solving indicated whether they had grasped with understanding the previous lesson which builds to the new lesson.

Only two teachers used the question and answer method for baseline assessment and this really impressed me because it has become a norm in most classrooms that only the question and answer method is suitable for baseline assessment.

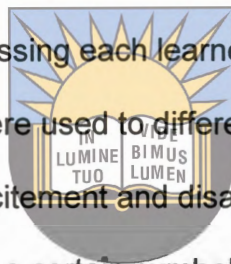


I observed clear evidence that the graduates were using formative assessment to re-inforce what was already learnt in order to lead the learners onto the next stage of the lesson. In all the classrooms visited after each stage of the lesson the teacher would try to find out whether the learners understood the new knowledge that was dealt with in the previous stage of the lesson. I listened to teachers asking their learners some questions. The questions asked required learners to substantiate their answers. The right answer syndrome was not the culture in these classrooms. Critical thinking skills were practiced. I observed:

- learners working out problems on the board for mathematics and explaining to the whole class how they reached the solutions.
- learners, filling out missing words for English on the board so that they had to read the sentences they had made.

When all this was happening, I observed learners helping each other. This was a stage where peer tutoring took place and learners volunteered to do so.

In all the classrooms learners were given classwork activities as part of summative assessment. They had to work as individuals. This stage was characterized by silence and a great deal of concentration, which was revealed by the learners' body language. In all the classrooms the teacher read the exercise for all learners before they started writing. In the foundation phase, the learners would bring their books to the teacher for assessment. What I saw was that they did not finish all the problems given to them at once but would work on one problem and come for assessment before tackling the next one. The teachers also went around assessing each learner. Assessment rubrics like symbols such as faces, stars were used to differentiate learners' level of performance. I observed the excitement and disappointment the learners projected when they were given a certain symbol. It was clear that they understood the meaning of each symbol. After every learner had finished writing, corrections were made on the board and learners had to do them in their books. At this stage the teacher or a learner would explain to the rest of the class how the solution should have been worked out.



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In the Intermediate and Senior Phase the learners would put their books on the table after they had finished writing. Class leaders would then take the books and distribute them to all learners for assessment. The exercises given would then be worked on the board and the learners did the assessment and the teachers later on endorsed this with their signatures. After the assessment process corrections would be made.

The content of learning

Learner centred approaches were used to teach the new lessons. Various teaching methods that allowed for maximum learner participation were used in the different stages of the lessons. I observed teachers moving from the discovery method to the question and answer method then to the narrative method and to the discussion method. What impressed me was that teacher talk did not dominate in these lessons. Each lesson I observed had its own shape but there was a balance between teacher talk and the learners' participation.

Teachers used resources to enhance learning and teaching.



Learners' participation varied from working as individuals to working as pairs and also as groups. The sequencing of content in accordance to the requirements of the revised national curriculum was adhered to. Learning outcomes were made explicit to the learners. The content to be learnt was well sequenced in degrees of difficulty and also according to the assessment standards for the learning outcome covered. The learners' environment was used as the initial resource from which the context of the content was drawn. I observed teachers who when clarifying certain concepts gave examples from learners' everyday life and environment.

This aspect of their work was impressive. Even the Intermediate and Senior Phase teachers were using the Revised National Curriculum even though they

have not been trained to deal with it yet. But the Intermediate Phase teachers will implement the RNCS in 2005 and the Senior Phase in 2006. This showed that these teachers were exercising some autonomy in their classrooms. They took into consideration learners' interests and needs in the light of the appropriate criteria. This means that these learners will be better prepared when the RNCS is implemented.

As cited by Chatres and Paige (2003), the teachers had adapted and built upon learning experiences from imithamo in two ways. Firstly by developing an umthamo focus in more depth and in a more relevant context for their learners. And secondly, by adapting the structure and strategies of imithamo activities to new topics not described in the imithamo. In addition to that the teachers used methods suggested in the imithamo for certain learning areas in different learning areas. This showed that these graduates were not blindly following the theories suggested in the imithamo. They have adopted a reflective and critical stance which is a requisite of good teaching as suggested in the literature.

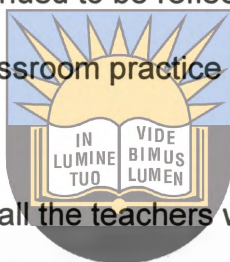
In all the classes visited I observed learners using mind maps to help organize their thinking in relation to the content of the learning area. The teachers did not ask them to do so. I concluded that the use of mind maps has become part of a new culture in these classrooms. Using mind maps is characterized in the imithamo and was used as a tactic to get the teacher learners to put their flow of thinking on paper and then organize and sequence it to address a range of

issues dealt with in the imithamo. When I saw the teachers now using the same strategy this showed me that the learnings learnt from imithamo have been found very useful for classroom practice and have taken root and flourished.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS FROM THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AFTER CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS.

The following pattern emerged from these interviews.

- The graduates continued to be reflective practitioners.
- Each graduate's classroom practice was unique.

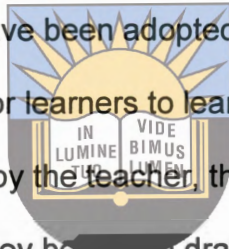


During the structured interviews all the teachers were asked to give insight into what they considered to be good classroom practice. The following were consistent responses:

- Involving all learners in the lesson.
- Planning before coming to class.
- Accessing resources for teaching.
- Valuing learners' prior knowledge.
- Group work.
- Hands on activities.
- Loving and respecting your learners.
- Do not underestimate your learners.
- Support and facilitate learning and do not spoon feed your learners.

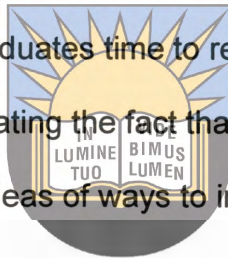
- Understanding that learners learn at different paces.
- Making sure that each lesson deals with a balance of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.
- Allowing for time to reflect on the lessons you taught and find out what went well, what did not go well and what needs to be improved.

From the graduates' responses it was clear that they have developed an understanding of current thinking of the ways learners learn. The constructivist teaching framework seems to have been adopted with clear understanding. These graduates believed that for learners to learn effectively and make the most of opportunities offered to them by the teacher, they have to be active participants in the classroom. They believe in drawing the context of the content learnt from learners' environment and everyday life. All graduates' classroom practice is characterized by a key aspect of tapping into learners' current level of development before any new lesson. They believed tapping into what learners already know helps in targeting new knowledge appropriately and this gets the learners' undivided attention as there will be new knowledge to be learnt. It was evident from their responses that their classroom practice deals with more than just having learners acquire knowledge. It also focuses on knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. These are the underlying aspects of good classroom practice that underpin the RNCS.



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The graduates' classroom practice showed that they are reflective practitioners. They have the ability to stand back from the teaching and learning experience and weigh up beliefs that they could have taken for granted. This reflective stance proved that they have achieved one of the B.Ed exit outcomes, which is that of becoming a reflective practitioner. Much as they gave their insight into what they consider to be good classroom practice, I referred them to some practices observed while they were teaching and probed them to think more deeply about what they had done. The discussion we had around their observed classroom practice, gave the graduates time to reflect on their actions and choices. In this way I was celebrating the fact that through reflective practice the graduates remain open to new ideas of ways to improve practice.



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FINDINGS FROM DOCUMENTATION *Together in Excellence*

When the teachers presented and defended their own portfolios and that of the learners the following patterns were detected:

- Learners' portfolio was a collection of selected materials of what learners have done in class.
- Teachers' portfolio was evidence of professional development.

Learners' portfolios

The learners' portfolios displayed were a selection of evidence of what the learners had done. This variety of learners' work was from different learning areas and programmes. Each learner had several sections in their portfolio

according to the learning areas taught. In each portfolio what impressed me was how the work selected showed clearly each learner's level of performance. The teachers could talk about and explain each learner's progress in each learning area when looking at the portfolio.

What was found to be weaknesses in the work presented were the tools of assessment used by most graduates. The assessment tools mostly used were ticks and signatures. Sometimes assessment symbols like faces, stars, national codes and grids were used but with no intensive level descriptors clarifying learners' level of performance.



Teachers' portfolios

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The teachers' portfolios presented were evidence that they still continue to see themselves as being active change agents. Evidence brought showed that most of these teachers were now making their presence felt outside their schools. It excited the researcher very much to find out that, the practice of these graduates involved more than personal development, and even more than their own schools' development. There was clear evidence that for most graduates their influence had extended extensively to share and involve other schools and communities. These teachers now participate and work in partnership with a range of community groups and departments such as the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, the READ project and the 4H club that is on community farming and the growing of community vegetable gardens.

Portfolio presentation is one of the assessment tools used in the B.Ed programme and watching the graduates confidently presenting their portfolios really impressed. Not a single one of them was nervous instead they were so relaxed and even “bragged”. More over, it was interesting to find that these graduates were still in the habit of keeping evidence as proof of what they are doing. This is further evidence that proved the long term impact on practice of approaches used in the Fort Hare B.Ed. These graduates had labeled photographs, newspaper cuttings, testimonials and letters as proof of their involvement in these initiatives.



I saw graduates' portfolios showing evidence of continued professional growth. Their professional growth was characterized by some of them having moved to senior posts. Some are furthering their studies and others are planning to do so. Some have participated in competitions like the Teacher of the Year Award. One graduate who amazed me has been nominated as the Eastern Cape Mathematics and Science teacher of the year 2003. She is also a revising author of mathematics guides for grade 7 with the University of Stellenbosch and participated in creating an English and Xhosa Science Dictionary. Such developments and fearless attempts to venture into new grounds proved that the approaches used in the B.Ed helped to unleash teachers' potential.

The professional development of these graduates is not only about themselves. They are continuing to expose their learners to a variety of activities. In almost all

the schools visited the learners have participated in the Baswa Le Metsi competition that is run by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and some learners have gone on to represent the Eastern Cape at the National level.

On discussing these portfolios the graduates' responses were further evidence of how the principles underpinned in the B.Ed imithamo and the approaches used in the B.Ed course continue to help teachers to sustain their changed practice.

Graduate 1, 2, 3, 5&6: All said something along the line of... "The imithamo taught us to believe in our learners"



Graduate 8:" Studying with the University of Fort Hare was not only an eye opener but it was also the beginning of a new life in the classroom for both me and my learners"

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All the graduates voiced this sentiment: The imithamo on schools as learning communities helped us in striving for the betterment of our schools, to involve and respect the communities where we work, and not to be selfish but to share what we know with other teachers.

The researcher made an important discovery as she tried to probe the graduates for reasons behind their decisions and the choices they continue to make concerning their professional development and the continued change agency role. The graduates' responses revealed that the different learning styles they have been exposed to in the B.Ed. programme had an impact on the individual graduate's practice. The different learning styles are: activists, reflectors, pragmatists and theorists. Here are some examples of imithamo in which teacher

learners are exposed to the different learning styles: Reflectors: all the imithamo from 1-48 including the siyetyisas encouraged reflection; Theorists: umthamo 2, 17, 29, Activists and pragmatists: umthamo 6, 9, 30, 39, 40. These various learning styles are described in detail in appendix E. Because these graduates were exposed to these different learning styles they are now able to make *choices* that suit them and with which they are comfortable. Here are some of the responses that informed the researcher's discovery:

Graduate 3: "I am a shy person. I cannot stand up and facilitate a session. I am good as a supporter"

Graduate 7: "I cannot deprive my learners of opportunities. I sacrifice my time so that the learners in my school can benefit."

Graduate 8: "The development I got from the University of Fort Hare gave me freedom. I try out new ideas in my class and see if they work. If they do I share them with other teachers."

Graduate 8: "These competitions help me to prove that I am not a theorist. These things happen in my classroom. Even in my classroom I encourage my learners to give reasons for their answers"

Graduate 1: "During the RNCS workshops I do not keep quite. I even volunteer and explain some issues"

Amongst the documentation that the graduates presented as part of their portfolios, I was surprised to find out that they were still keeping journals. These also informed the discovery that relates to the incorporation and the use of the information on learning styles. In these journals there was a continuous reflection

on what happened in class and in the daily lives of the graduates. I found evidence that particular attention was paid to critical teaching moments.

Graduate 3: "I have realized that I took a very harsh decision by sending my learners home to fetch school fees. The parents were at work".

Graduate 5: "Busi needs to go to the remedial class, I have to talk to her parents"

Graduate 6: "Thobile reminds me of Todd in umthamo Ten"

Graduate 7: "I felt good about myself for having stood up in that workshop and clarified that using a learner centred approach does not delay progress in class."

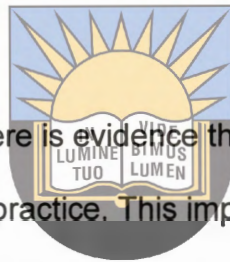


The journal writes and the reasons the graduates gave in supporting their choices and actions in their practice also revealed the graduates as individuals. They continue recognizing the value they and their learners have as people and are now seeing the possibilities. The above transcripts show that these graduates believe in their learners' abilities to improve regardless of any barriers to learning they may encounter, and they take it upon themselves to be active in ensuring the improvement. These transcripts are evidence of the reflective thinking of these graduates about their choices and actions. Purkey & Schmidt 1990:13 say "good teachers can also be clearly identified from poor ones on the basis of their perception of themselves, others, and the world". What I also discovered from the journals was that learners, be it rural or urban are faced with more or less the same problems. Problems like having child headed homes, use of drugs and abuse in all forms were evident. These graduates together with

other teachers were taking it upon themselves to make a difference in these learners' lives in response to these problems.

As professionals the B.Ed graduates are realizing that of all the perceptions we have in life, none is more instrumental in our success and failure than the perceptions we have of ourselves. They continue to work at developing their own self-concept, which serves as "a perceptual filter and thus guides behaviour".

(Purkey & Schmidt 1990:13)



As discussed in this chapter, there is evidence that the Fort Hare B.Ed graduates have improved their classroom practice. This improved practice continues to be sustained and has extended to be more than just the development of their own classroom practice.

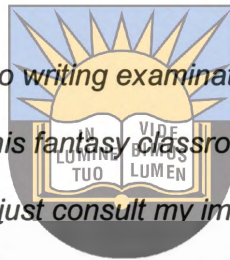
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When I selected the participants for this study, I categorized them as follows:

- graduates from urban and rural areas
- graduates who have continued for four years to get merit in their studies and those who at some stage in their studies were regarded as learners at risk/review cases,

During the whole study all those who were merit students continued to prove themselves as such. These graduates showed a lot of professional competencies and commitment. But it is true that there is no such thing as a complete teacher as one of the merit student (graduate 2) and one review case (graduate 3)

showed to have some gaps in the effective grouping in class. What emerged from this study is that there was not a major gap between those who were merit students and the review cases because the graduates have now internalized the learnings from the B.Ed course and are working at their own pace. To add to this one graduate I had selected to participate who was also a review case could not be part of this study because he is now a subject advisor. But I interviewed him and his colleagues and I was impressed by his practice. This is what he and his colleague had to say:



The graduate: I was used to writing examinations and pass. The moderators caught me because I had this fantasy classroom. I almost missed on something so valuable. Here at work I just consult my imithamo and they provide me with such valuable information on issues of schools and teaching. I also consult and invite my colleagues from Fort Hare to help me in some of my workshops.

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His colleague: I always make sure that I am in the same training team as him. I learn a lot from how he does things. He still keeps imithamo and he lends me some of them. But one thing for sure, if in your workshops you have the Fort Hare teachers you are safe. They are willing to help.

Having also categorized the graduates in terms of rural and urban, I discovered that it does not matter where the school is. Communities and schools create each other. There is evidence from what the B.Ed graduates are doing that nurturing a culture of communication and participation in schools means opening up channels of dialogue with parents and other educators. When you open

communication as a teacher you begin creating a community that will begin to value and respect what is happening at school. It is through this open communication with their communities that the B.Ed graduates earned respect from parents and other educators.

The continued sharing of information with other people that is evident in the classroom management practices of the B.Ed graduates has proved to be very central to their successful development. Sharing the school's 'normative glue' through a dialogue helped the B.Ed graduates and their schools to have communities working with and for the schools. While I was doing this research, I observed parents visiting the schools for different reasons. In the rural areas some came to find out what was happening because they had seen a car arriving at the school. At one urban school some parents were mending the fence and in one school, one parent had come to report some boys he saw smoking outside the toilets.

I found out the only difference between rural and urban is in the availability of bought resources and the condition of uniform that most learners were wearing and this was due to the difference in learners' social and financial background. But with teachers like the Fort Hare graduates who use all means to create resourceful classrooms, the absence or scarcity of bought resources had no impact on teaching and learning. In all the schools, rural and urban they have policies and provisions as guided by umthamo 42 on developing learners'

emotional intelligence as their learners are faced with the same barriers to learning that challenge them emotionally.

In the following chapter I will summarise the findings of this study and draw some conclusions and make recommendations to take this study further.



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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research question for this study was “*What is the impact of the B.Ed professional development programme in managing classroom practice?*” In trying to answer this critical question there were three sub-questions:

- How do the B.Ed graduates manage classroom teaching and learning two years after completion?
- What are the real changes in their classroom practice versus the claimed changes?
- What practices characterized in the imithamo prevail and are still evident in the changed practice without support from UFH?

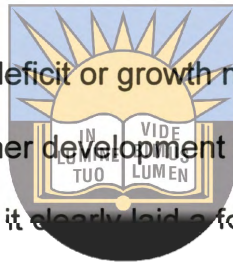


This study clearly indicated that there were many interrelated factors that influence the translation of learnings from a development programme into long term practice. The following factors were addressed in the literature:

- the nature of the professional development programme.
- insight of what is good classroom practice.
- ability to self monitor own performance.

The participants revealed the significant role of the B.Ed programme in their changed classroom practice. The fact that this programme offered a supportive environment through abakhwezeli and ESSOs to its teacher learners helped them in the process of change. Teacher learners gathered in face to face sessions and shared experiences of classroom practices through a system that

involved a commitment to systematic questioning of one's own teaching as basis for development. This was an outstanding characteristic as it provided the teacher learners with the capacity for autonomous professional self-development through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures. I believe this led to the teacher learners knowing that they are not alone and teaching thus stopped being a lonely profession.



The B.Ed's adoption of a non-deficit or growth model that is based on a constructivist approach to teacher development continues to have a significant impact on teachers' practice as it clearly laid a foundation for long term quality teaching. From the study this approach unleashed the graduates' potential and boosted their confidence. Because there was a link between the programme's declared intentions and the reality of the teaching world, this contributed to the B.Ed graduates not having any feelings of inadequacy

Yes, the graduates have developed professionally and their development is extensive. In my opinion there is consistency between the claimed changes and the real changes. From the research I found out that their professional development practice was more than the development of their own classroom practices. The changed practice is characterized by a classroom practice that has clearly improved and an extensive and continued involvement within the

school and in the community. These observations are endorsed by the data from interviews with colleagues.

Their classroom management practices are evidence of an understanding of the current theories about learners and learning. The use of learner centred approaches has become the culture in their classroom management practices. From the observations it is very much part of the 'normative glue' that teachers establish a classroom culture that uses teaching strategies that maximize learners' participation.



It is clear that these graduates continue to adopt a critical and reflective stance in their teaching. They exercise some autonomy in their classrooms. The practices characterized in the imithamo ~~to still prevail and are evident~~ in class. **But** the graduates are not mindless functionaries who blindly and uncritically follow the theories, patterns and ideas suggested in the imithamo. It is clear that they modify and adapt teaching and learning strategies to suit their classroom contexts.

From the classroom management practices I observed the graduates have adapted and built upon the learning experiences in imithamo in 3 ways. Firstly, I saw evidence of them developing an umthamo focus in more depth and in a more relevant context for their learners. Secondly, they adapted the structure and strategies of imithamo activities to new topics not described in the imithamo.

Finally, I saw examples of teachers taking a teaching strategy that was suggested in one umthamo as appropriate for a specific learning area and applying that strategy effectively in another learning area.

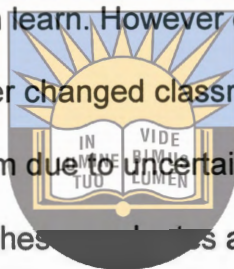
However it is very crucial to point out that these graduates are still on a learning curve. They are not complete as there is no such thing as a complete teacher. I saw some teachers who still struggle to interpret and implement with meaning the RNCS assessment practices. I observed teachers who would benefit from a focused professional development workshop on the use of group work.



Morrow (1989:2) in his quotation of Boyce said "in South Africa there is no alternative to external monitoring and bureaucratic control... one wonders whether teachers would be able to develop the capacity to self monitor their performance." (See page 7 of this study). Having completed this research, what I heard, observed and critically analysed contradicts Morrow's belief. I feel strongly that Morrow must stop being pessimistic. The UFH B.Ed graduates are proving that they can monitor themselves. They have developed a powerful self-concept, which "serves as a perceptual filter and guides their behaviour" (Purkey & Schimdt 1990:13). Having participated in the B.Ed programme has helped them in assigning meaning to the crucial social function they play as teachers. The programme helped in creating a culture of accountability and responsibility, which manifests itself in professional commitment. I heard from interviews with their colleagues, and observed for myself a community of professionals whose

professional competencies go alongside with a renewed professional commitment.

Although about three graduates are facing re-deployment, two of them who are still young are taking the challenge in line with what was suggested by Fullan (2001:14) "...rapid change is inevitable...attempts to manage change cannot assume a stable environment in which to do this...". This is a crucial lesson I feel strongly that other teachers can learn. However even the elderly graduate facing redeployment continues with her changed classroom practice despite lacking the zeal to go beyond her classroom due to uncertainties of change. But what is important is that the challenge these graduates are faced with has not led to non-implementation and behaving dysfunctionally.



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As found during the research, the graduates' development as professionals is more than the development of their own classroom practice. Their professional management practices involve acting within multiple domains concerning the child, the subject content and the context. The context involves the community in which the school is located. The B.Ed graduates continue to participate in a range of community groups as change agents, to renew and extend their professional growth and push forward towards greater self actualisation. This boundless potential has now earned them respect in their communities: among parents, learners and other teachers.

There is evidence that these graduates continue to nurture a culture of communication and participation in their schools. This has resulted in schools and communities creating each other. The schools nurture a culture of communication with their communities. This has led to the communities being aware of their role in creating the type of a school they want, a school that they own and are proud of. I believe that if you can make a difference in people's lives you have a life worth living. This is seemingly truly so for the B.Ed graduates. Their teaching life has now become a life worth living.



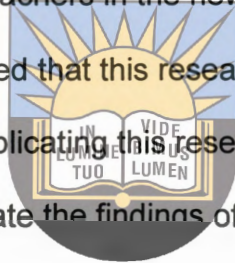
For me, as I carried on with this study, I found out that among the successes that are worth being celebrated the B.Ed programme has helped in counteracting the stigma and low status that has been attached to being a primary school teacher and the negative ripple effect it had on the morale of primary school teachers for decades. This is surely the beginning of a new era for primary school teachers.

Recommendations for further research

- Good work continues to be done by the UFH B.Ed and this research found out that the practices continue to be translated into practice by those who graduate from this programme. This programme has produced communities of reflective practitioners, change agents who continue to grow professionally and whose growth extends its influence to change other people's lives. But how can this filter to other teachers not registered in the programme or even fortunate enough to be among the communities

where the B.Ed graduates work? That is the challenge I found to be facing the University of Fort Hare if it is to be a significant player in the transformation of primary education in the Eastern Cape.

- Recently there has been a move to phase out this in-service programme. The effective impact of the B.Ed programme I believe may provide a lever for further research on how this approach can be used or adapted to inform policies in the Department of Education as this department is faced with having to re-train teachers in the new curriculum.
- It has been acknowledged that this research focused on eight graduates from the first cohort. Replicating this research with a larger and varied sample would substantiate the findings of this study.



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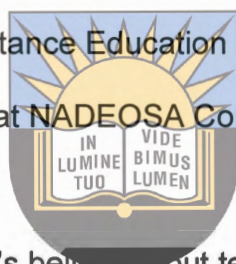
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Talks and Presentations

1. Manganyi (2001:28) from the notes of a speech by Nxesi, S. RNCS
Workshop, East London, August 2004.



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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

167 Sunnyside Road
Haven Hills
East London
Tel: 082 6768 298

The Principal
.....



Dear

Thank you for agreeing to be involved in my research project which is focusing on the classroom practice of the teachers who have completed the B.Ed degree with the University of Fort Hare

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As per our telephone conversation, I will be at your school on the..... and also on the..... . As we discussed on the telephone, this research project involves the following stages:

- Day 1: Interviewing at least three SMT members and two other teachers.
- Day 2: Classroom observations. Miss/ Mr..... ..class will be visited.

Just a reminder to ensure confidentiality, no specific information will be published and collated results will be fed back to you and your staff for information and checking.

Thanking you in advance for being prepared to spend your valuable time with me. I will phone you again to confirm arrangements.

Namhla Sotuku

APPENDIX B: Summary of findings from initial research

1. Learning Environment

- engaging learner centred experiences
- encourage learners to take risks, share ideas and be free to talk
- the creative use of resources to enhance teaching and learning
- classrooms rich in displayed print literacy which is mostly learners' work
- both teachers and learners are motivated and enjoy their classroom experience
- learners working in groups
- good relationship between learners and their teachers
- accommodates and has strategies of dealing with learner diversity



2. The teacher

- improved confidence
- shares information from imithamo with colleagues
- involves colleagues in development initiatives
- demonstrates an understanding of OBE

3. The teacher , the community and school

- teacher working in partnership with a range of community groups such as.....
- helped to initiate the following in the school: school policy,.....
.....

APPENDIX C: Classroom observation

CATEGORY	TALLY	COMMENTS
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1. Teacher & learner interactions

- . praises & encourages
- . accepts learners ideas
- . criticizes
- . learners talk when talked to
- . gives direction
- . lecture(giving facts)
- . offer clear presentation
- . learners taking a leading role

2. Grouping procedures

- learners working in groups
- peer tutoring
- grouping – ability , gender, flexibly
- learners just sitting in groups



3. Classroom arrangement and environment

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4. Assessment: Base line

Formative

Summative

5. The content of learning: how is it structured, does it take into account the learners CLD, is there scaffolding to the ZPD, are learning outcomes explicit? etc

APPENDIX D: Follow up interview after classroom observations

- What in your opinion typifies good classroom practice why?

- Tell me about what your learners were learning today and what you were doing.



- What will be your follow up lesson?

- I saw this happening when you were conducting a lesson, can we talk about *University of Fort Hare Together in Excellence*.....

- If you were to teach this lesson again what would you change and what would you keep the same?

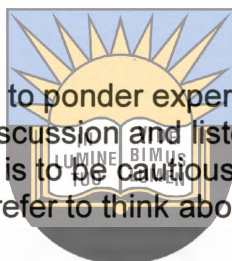
APPENDIX E: Learning styles--- General Descriptions

1. ACTIVISTS

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They are open- minded, not skeptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new. They tend to act first and consider the consequences afterwards. Their philosophy is: ' I'll try anything once. They thrive on new challenges. They center all activities on themselves.

2. REFLECTORS

Reflectors like to stand back, to ponder experiences. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussion and listen to others before making their own points. Their philosophy is to be cautious. They collect data, both first hand and from others, and prefer to think about it thoroughly before coming to any conclusion.



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3. THEORISTS

They think problems through in a vertical, step by step logical way. They assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic. Questions they frequently ask are: 'Does it make sense? How does it fit with that? What are the basic assumptions?'

4. PRAGMATISTS

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are essentially practical, down to earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems as challenges. Their philosophy is: 'there is always a better way' and ' if it works its good.

Adapted from EDUTEL training manual, 2004