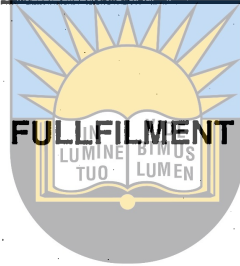


**HOW TEACHERS ARE MANAGING THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING
THE CURRICULUM POLICY: REVISED NATIONAL CURRICULUM
STATEMENT: AN ACTION RESEARCH / CASE STUDY OF A RURAL
PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE EASTERN CAPE, IN THE KING WILLIAMS
TOWN DISTRICT**

MINI – DISSERTATION



**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF**

MASTER OF EDUCATION
University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

**IN THE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND POLICY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

**BY
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DECEMBER 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
Title	
Abstract	(i-ii)
Declaration	(iii)
Acknowledgement	(iv)

CHAPTER I

1. Historical background of the study	1
1.1 Introduction	1-3
1.2 Statement of the research problem	4-5
1.3 Critical Assessment Questions	5-6
1.4 Objectives	6
1.5 Operational definition of key terms	6-7
1.6 The structure of the study	8



CHAPTER 2

2. Literature review	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Action research	9-10
2.3 The purpose of action research	10-12
2.4 Categories of action research	12-14
2.4.1 Teachers and the action research	14-15
2.5 School culture and professionalism	15
2.5.1 The South African situation before 1994	15-16
2.5.2 The conditions after 1994	16-17
2.5.3 Teachers professionalism	17-19
2.5.4 Schools as learning organizations	19-21
2.5.5 School culture	21-26
2.5.6 Conditions for professional development	26-28
2.6 The value of lesson based development power	28
2.7 Conclusion	29

CHAPTER 3

3. Research Methodology	30
3.1 Introduction	30
3.2 What is action research	30
3.3 Action research and OBE	31-34
3.4 Selecting subjects	34-36
3.5 Data gathering	36
3.5.1 Audio tape recorder	37
3.5.2 Interviews	37
3.6 Data analysis	37-38
3.7 Conclusion	38

CHAPTER 4

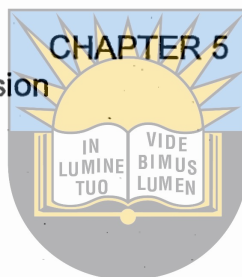
4. Case study	39
4.1 Introduction	39
4.2 The situation analysis of the school	40
4.2.1 School location	40-42
4.2.2 Physical Facilities	42

4.2.3 Resources for teaching and learning	43
4.2.4 The school organization	44-46
4.3 The need for improvement	47-48
4.4 The process of introducing action research	48
4.4.1 Negotiation stage	48-49
4.4.2 Introduction of action research initiation stage	49-54
4.4.3 Implementation stage – taking action	54-60
4.4.4 Reflection on action	60-64
4.4.5 Reflection on Diary use	65
4.4.6 Reflection on Conversation	66
4.4.7 Observations	66
4.4.8 Interviews	67
4.4.9 Questions	67-68
4.4.10 Rational for excluding a tape recorder	68
4.4.11 Difficulties experienced	69
4.5 Conclusion	70

5. Recommendation and conclusion	71
5.1 Recommendation	71-73
5.2 Conclusion	73

References	74-75
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Appendices	
Appendix A	76-77
Appendix B	78

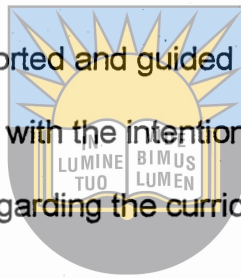


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ABSTRACT

This is a small scale research project carried out by teachers in their own working place. The aim of this action research is to develop teachers professionally as they collaboratively plan and implement C2005 in the revised form. Teachers in this case are regarded as self-developers and teacher-researchers who are responsible for their own professional development.

Teachers have been supported and guided by a facilitator, one of their colleagues who took a risk with the intention of improving teachers' knowledge and practice regarding the curriculum management.



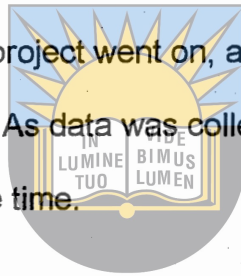
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The process has not been free from tensions and constraints. The implementation took place within the existing constraints of a natural primary school in the Eastern Cape Province in the King William's Town District. Teachers have managed to collaboratively improve their practice to a certain extent by successfully plan and implement a single lesson plan.

The process of collaborative work has been one of spiral of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Action research assumes that teachers are aware of their own situation, and they are willing to improve the situation as they are affected by it.

As teachers were engaged in the project they felt that they were empowered, have acquired a certain amount of reflection skills and that the process had impact to the culture of their school as the school became a learning organization.

This is a case study and the data has been collected by means of unstructured interviews and purposeful conversations which were guided by formal and informal observations. The diary on Journal has been used to keep the record of progress as the project went on, and has been an excellent source of evidence in this project. As data was collected it was analysed and reflected upon at the same time.



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The case study describe the situational analysis of this particular school under study in depth, the process of action research and the kinds of models used to drive the project and their impact to the project as a whole.

In chapter 5 recommendations and suggestions are made about the important hints on how one can successfully use action research, a school-based professional development.

DECLARATION

I declare that this action research topic:

HOW TEACHERS ARE MANAGING THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING
THE CURRICULUM POLICY: REVISED NATIONAL CURRICULUM
STATEMENT: AN ACTION RESEARCH / CASE STUDY OF A RURAL
PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE EASTERN CAPE, IN THE KING WILLIAM'S
TOWN DISTRICT.

Is author's original work and has never been submitted by the author or any
one else at any University for any degree. All the resources that have been
quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete
reference.



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MANDISA I MULUSE

DECEMBER 2004

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CHAPTER 1

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

“Until 1990 the production of education policy in South Africa was a relatively simple matter. The state maintained control in ways that were bureaucratically centralized and racially exclusive and politically authoritarian. This pattern was firmly established after the electoral victory of the National Party in 1948. Despite occasional challenges to, and disruption of, state schooling during the 1970’s and 1980’s there was only one policy player within South Africa education: the apartheid state”(Jansen 2000:13). Under apartheid the curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality. All this illustrated Jansen, changed on 2 February 1990, after the unbanning of the liberation organizations was announced, and political prisoners were released.

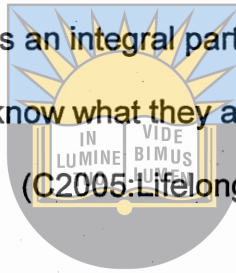
According to Jansen, as early as 1980’s informal negotiations with the apartheid state were being initiated through senior African National Congress officials which were in exile. After 1990 there was a shift in geopolitical strategy in South Africa and the negotiations between the National Party government, the ANC and other organizations led to the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

A working group was established in 1993, to investigate and report on the work of NQF in April 1994. The NQF was found to be a National Framework that integrated both education and training. It focused on the life- long learning and allowed for the development of a new curriculum framework for all General and Further Education and Training in South Africa.

In line with modern international approaches the curriculum was now designed in terms of learning outcomes. This new curriculum was called Curriculum 2005 (C2005). C2005 was launched in 1997 and was planned to be implemented in 1998 in Grade 1 classrooms. The principles of C2005 were:

- * the integration of education and training
- * that all learners will succeed
- * outcomes will be assessed on an on-going basis.
- * that assessment is an integral part of the whole system and
- * that learners will know what they are learning and why

(C2005:Lifelong learning 21st Century :1997:12)




When the researcher arrived in this particular school in 1999 having been redeployed following the closure of the college where she had been a lecturer, she found that the Foundation Phase (FP) teachers were facing the challenges of C2005 implementation. The language in the policy documents was difficult to understand and teachers couldn't implement Outcomes – Based Education (OBE) effectively in their classroom. Again teachers were unable to unpack the design features of C2005 which were Learning Areas, Learning Programmes, Critical Outcomes, Specific Outcomes, Assessment Criteria, Range Statements, Performance Indicators, Phase and Programme Organizers (RNCS:DOE 2003:3). Teachers, therefore were unable to develop learning activities and the kind of citizens envisaged by the curriculum developers. In 2001, the Minister of Education convened a committee to review C2005 and see whether it was in fact developing the kind of citizens it expected to develop.

The committee found that the design features of C2005 were too complex and recommended that the curriculum be streamlined. It also recommended that there needed to be greater emphasis on progression of learning.

This process resulted in a reworking of the initial C2005. The streamlined Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for Grades R-9 was released in May 2002.

The RNCS tries to realize the goals set out in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. It aims to develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. The principles that underline the RNCS are:

- 
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- * Social Justice, A Healthy Environment, Human Rights and Inclusivity: RNCS intends to promote human rights, social and environmental justice and to be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality, race, gender, age, disability and sexual preference.
 - * Outcomes – based education: aimed at activating the minds of young people so that they are better able to take part in economic and social life.
 - * A high level of skills and knowledge for all: this is part of the goal to achieve social justice, equity and development. Social justice requires that those sections of the population previously dis-empowered by the lack of knowledge and skills should now be empowered.
 - * Clarity and Accessibility: the language used in the RNCS is simple and free of jargon.

* Progression and Integration: integration is achieved within and across learning areas, and each Learning area demonstrates how conceptual progression is to occur through the assessment standards (Department of Education, 2001:17-20).

It was decided that the Curriculum policy (RNCS) would be implemented in the Foundation Phase in 2004. Foundation Phase teachers were therefore organized into clusters and were trained by district officials by October 2003. The training lasted for a week and was followed by guidance and monitoring sessions as teachers were developing Learning Programs, Work schedules and Lessons plans.



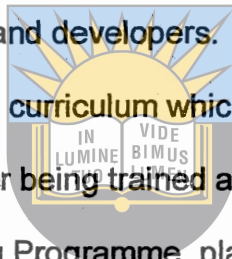
Although teachers of this particular school managed to produce the Learning program and work schedules together as a Phase, there was lack of co-operation. Teachers showed lack of interest in the planning. Time was wasted on arguments, teachers were moving up and down during planning sessions, and some decided to be absent from school while planning was in process. This attitude delayed the process as further planning was required, i.e. the development of a lesson plan. The researcher will investigate the reasons why the planning and implementation of C2005 in the revised form was not done effectively and try to find solutions.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

Under apartheid, different laws were passed to provide separate education for different population groups. These included Bantu Education Act of 1953 C Persons ationduc Act of 1963E and the Indian Education Act of 1965 (Parold and Butter (Eds) 1989 : 161) .

After the introduction of Bantu Education, teachers had to use a prescribed syllabus. There were prescribed rules and regulations which limited teacher's creativeness and teacher independence in class. Teachers were not permitted to add or remove anything from syllabus.

With the introduction of Outcomes-based Education (OBE) approach and the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) teachers are seen as curriculum designers and developers. Teachers are now given the opportunity to design their own curriculum which will cater for the needs and the interests of their learners. After being trained and monitored, teachers are expected to be able to design a Learning Programme, plan Work Schedules and develop Lesson Plans.



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From what is happening at schools, teachers seem to experience problems regarding the management of the process of planning and implementing RNCS. The planning and the implementation of Learning Programme, Work Schedule and Lesson Plan in the Foundation Phase (FP) has not been done effectively, it is believed that the process has been affected by teachers' behaviour and negative attitude. The researcher wants to investigate how teachers are managing the process of implementing the curriculum policy (RNCS).

1.3 Critical Assessment Questions

The following are the questions which I will be trying to answer as I proceed with the research:

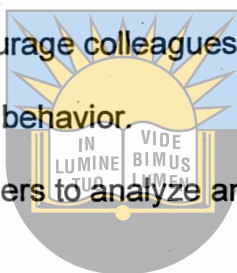
- * What are the problems of teachers around the process of managing curriculum policy (RNCS)?

- * How can we support one another in resolving these problems so that we can achieve effective curriculum planning?

1.4 Objectives

The major aims and objectives of this study are to:

- * Investigate major problems associated with Curriculum Planning in the FP and to seek in school means to alleviate them through Action Research.
- * Inspire and encourage colleagues to produce and maintain their best performance and behavior.
- * Encourage teachers to analyze and investigate their own professional development



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1.5 Operational definition of key terms

Foundation Phase – FP

According to discussion document on the National Qualification Framework produced by the National Department of Education (1996), the General Education and Training band comprises three phases, namely Foundation Phase, Intermediate and Senior Phase. The Foundation Phase includes the reception year as well as, Grades 1, 2 and 3.

Foundation Phase teachers are involved in teaching these Grades in an Outcomes – Based approach (OBE). According to the Draft Policy/Phase documents on the Foundation Phase (National Department of Education, 1997:6), the Outcomes-Based Education approach is defined as “an approach, which should be driven by the outcome displayed by the learner at the end of the educational experience”.

A working document on the National Qualifications Framework (National Department of Education 1996) distinguishes between three types of outcomes – based approaches, namely traditional, transitional and transformational. According to this document the traditional approach is content dominated. The transitional approach gives priority to higher – level competencies, such as critical thinking, whilst the transformational approach is collaborative, flexible and transdisciplinary.

Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)

The Revised National Curriculum Statement is a curriculum policy emerged after C2005 was revised and builds on the vision and values of the constitution of South Africa. Education for social justice and citizenship are the hallmarks of this curriculum. The Revised National Curriculum Statement sets up expectations of teachers and educators that require a new and prolonged emphasis on professional development education and training at all levels.

Outcomes-based Education (OBE)

Outcomes –based Education is a flexible, empowerment oriented approach to learning. It aims at equipping learners with the knowledge, competence and orientation needed for success after they leave schools or have completed their training.

1.6 The structure of the Study

Chapter 1 - The introduction, statement of the sub-problems, critical assessment questions, objectives of the study and definitions of terms.

Chapter 2 – Review of related literature and conceptual framework – to familiarise the researcher with the latest developments in the area of research as well as in related areas.

Chapter 3 – Research design and methodology – Action Research is a study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within. Action Research has been chosen as one that will be suitable to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as the conditions of the school where I am working. Data will be collected by using a combination of tools such as observations, interviews, questionnaires, documents analysis and by participating fully to be able to validate and cross – check findings.

Chapter 4 – Findings and discussions – Data will be critically interpreted and carefully analysed.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations – Major findings will be outlined and recommendations will be suggested to open a chance for future research.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter is written with two main parts. Firstly I explain what I have found out about action research. Participation action research is the research paradigm I have chosen as appropriate for this case study of an attempt to improve practice in a school that is struggling to implement a new curriculum.

Secondly, I deal with issues of school culture and professional development, and how school culture, as the key to productivity can affect professional development negatively as well as positively.

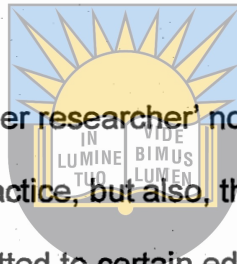
Finally I deal with the idea from Japan of the power of a lesson based form of teacher development.

2.2 ACTION RESEARCH

“The origins of the term “action research” are normally associated with the work of the social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s” (Bridges and Kerry 1993:39).

Noffke in Bridges and Kerry identifies the use of action research to describe the practical anthropology of John Collier, a US commissioner for Indian Affairs. The basic aim of action research was that of democratic self-determination on the part of a minority group. The idea was to increase worker participation in decision making through action research and to enhance industrial productivity. “Thus, action research constituted a form of investigation into the most ‘effective’ and ‘democratic’ ways of socially organizing the means of production. It involved ‘carefully collecting information’ on the effect of social action and ‘then evaluating them” (Bridges and Kerry 1993:40).

Noffke in Bridges and Kerry, argues that the emergence of action research originated from educational developments in the US, from the curriculum study under the influence of John Dewey's ideas. The emergence of action research in the UK, stimulated by Stenhouse and others working with teachers to realize curricular innovations in the schools of the 1960s and 1970s, can be seen as an important development (Bridges and Kerry 1993:40). Noffke also argues that action research emphasises the role of the teacher as a researcher and this notion has emerged in the UK.



The idea was that, the 'teacher researcher' not only participates in the development of educational theory and practice, but also, through such participation, develops as a person who becomes committed to certain educational values and their realization in practice. Stenhouse is quoted as stressing that there is 'no curriculum development without teacher's development'. Stenhouse also believes that in-service education should help teachers to undertake 'practical research' in their classrooms and schools (Stenhouse quoted in Bridges and Kerry 1993:38).

2.3 THE PURPOSE OF ACTION RESEARCH

Action Research has been defined by John Elliott (1991) quoted by Altrichter et al (1993:4) as "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it", and by Janet Soler (2001:64) it is defined as that "cyclical process whereby teachers investigate their own practice, typically involving data collection, reflection and the reformulation of practice". Both definitions direct attention to one of the most essential motives for doing action research: as teacher-researchers are engaged in the process of investigating their own practice the quality of action is improving.

The power of action research lies in the will to improve the quality of teaching and learning through critical enquiry. Action research is intended to support teachers, and groups of teachers, in coping with the challenges and problems of practice and carrying through innovations in a reflective way.

Altrichter et al (1993:74) suggest four important objectives in action research:

- to develop and improve practice through research in the interests of all those concerned;
- to develop the knowledge of those involved in the research process;
- to develop the professional knowledge of teachers as a whole;
- to develop and improve education as a discipline.



By choosing action research as a process of investigating their own practice, teachers' knowledge is improved as well as the quality of teaching and learning. According to Flanagan (1991:31), action research aims at improving morale as teachers continue with the conversation. She states that:

“action research is a process of refining understanding through the implementation of strategic change. Teachers undertake action research, observe and record lessons (or other instances of practice) and then use these recordings as an aid to careful reflection concerning how events matched their aims. From this reflection a strategy is designed to improve the study in practice. This is then implemented and again, recorded. This cycle of action, recording, reflection and planning is repeated over a period of time and, ideally, it becomes a normal part of the teachers' practice. The tendency of the action research cycle is to cause those who engage in it to question deeply their own justification and habits of understanding.”

Flanagan implies that this process of being involved in action research will help improve the participating teachers' attitude to work and boost their motivation to do better.

These teachers argues Altrichter et al, are ordinary teachers who reflect on their practice to strengthen and develop their professionalism. "They are not prepared to accept blindly the problems they face from day to day, but instead they reflect upon them and search for solutions and improvements. They are committed to building on their strengths and to experimenting with new ideas and strategies rather than letting their practice petrify"(Altrichter et al.1993:5). This is what the Foundation Phase in my school really needs.

2.4 CATEGORIES OF ACTION RESEARCH



The original conceptualisation of the process of action research has been developed by Taba et al, (1952) Elliott (1981;1991), Ebbutt (1983), Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1981;1988) and Zuber – Skerritt (1992) amongst others. The Action Research categories may be divided into three types.

Type 1 – scientific action research

Type 2 – practical deliberative action research;

Type 3 – critical- emancipatory action research.

The categories are explained in more detail below. I feel that my research will involve a combination of aspects of all three.

Type 1 : Scientific action research

The scientific – technical view of problem solving is known as Lewin’s model of action research. Action research for Lewin is composed of a series of action steps including planning, fact–finding, execution and analysis (Mc Kernan 1996:17). The key idea for Lewin was that a social process can be studied by introducing changes and observing scientifically the effects of these changes on the process.

Scott and Usher (1996:11) further argue that technical action research is concerned with the effectiveness of practice and is used to help sustain the commitment and collaboration of participants.

Type 2 : Practical – deliberative action research

Practical action research is tied up closely with human deliberation in curriculum matters and is associated with Stenhouse in the UK. This category focuses on the practical and on the school – based nature of curriculum development. Action researchers argue that the reflective – deliberative action is a practical activity which is important and must not be controlled, but allowed to unfold naturally and free of constraints (Mc Kernan 1996:22). Here, the concept of the 'reflective practitioner' is acknowledged and important.

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Type 3 : Critical–emancipatory action research

In Australia, Stephen Kemmis and his colleagues at Deakin University have postulated a category of critical educational action research. Kemmis and colleagues combine practical and emancipatory categories and see them as critical and as a process of series of reflective spirals in which a general plan, action, observation of action and reflection on action cycle is developed and then moved to a new and revised plan with action, observation and further reflection (Carr and Kemmis 1986 cited in Mc Kernan 1996:26). Teachers are seen as taking responsibility as a group as they improve their practice.

What Carr and Kemmis offer is a return to the self-reflective spiral in which each loop has four elements: the general plan, the action implemented, the action observed, and the reflective critical- evaluational element which are necessary to revise the plan or problem. (Mc Kernan 1996:27).

Critical action research is seen as a process that is politically empowering for participants. As a theoretical activity it invites teachers and other participants to consider not only the curriculum and other educational domains, but also the totality of relationships with the social system and structure of the society in which they live and work (Mc Kernan 1996:27). In this category, teachers are seen as social developers of education within the wider society. Through my involvement in the action research process with colleagues, we shall investigate whether these conceptions of action research are appropriate for professional development in the South Africa context.



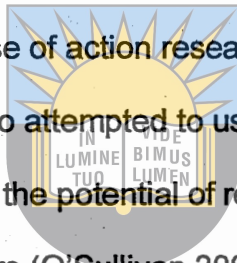
2.4.1 Teachers and the action research

Mc Kernan (1996:27) argues that a curriculum contains elements of practical as well as technical and critical attempts to improve or change practice , “in which means and ends are negotiated through complex human interaction and decision–making which is shared by a wide range of participants: teachers, administrators, parents, policy makers and others”.

In such a system it is necessary that teachers should have technical skills (e.g. how to define instructional objectives) as well as practical skills (e.g. making judgements, being self-reflective, monitoring, action and skills in small group work), but most especially curriculum development and research skills. Will the teachers I plan to work with have the potential to develop these skills?

Action research therefore is considered as a practical, technical, critically reflective process and the teacher is seen as a change agent. A change agent needs to interact with other stakeholders. Teachers therefore are advised to consider the involvement of parents, teachers and learners in their action research process.

In my case I will restrict the involvement to the teachers and the improvement of OBE style planning in Foundation Phase. All these models have been initiated internationally. Scientific action research was pioneered in the USA, practical-deliberative in Britain, and critical-emancipatory in Australia. This leads us to a consideration of the extent to which these models as conceptualized in the West, are appropriate to and can be successful in the context of a developing country like South Africa. My literature review indicates that Walker's advocacy, cited in O'Sullivan explored the use of action research, underpinned by reflective practices, in teacher development. Her use of action research was collaborative, in that she acted as a facilitator to teachers who attempted to use action research to improve their practice. Her study indicates the potential of reflective teaching, but only if adequate support is provided to teachers (O'Sullivan 2002:6). Will my support be sufficient to change the attitude of my participant colleagues?



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In my study I will be both the researcher and the facilitator of my colleagues as I attempt to use action research to improve their practice. I hope to be able to give my colleagues the kind of support they need in a professional development of this nature as I am also their colleague. One limitation will be time available as I only have the third term in which to complete the research process.

2.5 SCHOOL CULTURE AND PROFESSIONALISM

2.5.1 The South African situation before 1994

During the previous decades, education in South Africa experienced a crisis. The crisis was characterized by, among other things, major inequalities, high drop-out and failure rates, relatively poorly qualified teachers, and an examination orientation, with a major emphasis on learning by rote and unimaginative teaching methods.

Under apartheid, South Africa had nineteen different education departments separated by race, geography and ideology. This education system prepared children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under apartheid. In each department, the curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality (Department of Education 2001:10). The prescribed syllabus promoted a deskilling of teachers and reduced the role of teachers as they were not involved in the curriculum development process. Teachers had no say in the educational decision which affected them. This goes against that idea of professionalism which suggests that all teachers should be involved when the curriculum is developed (Flanagan 1991:29).



Flanagan further states that African schools had overcrowded classrooms, i.e. 90 children or more per class per teacher, particularly in rural schools. Teachers were unable to cope with these classes as they themselves were poorly trained. Schools in townships and in rural areas were dilapidated and poorly resourced. Under these conditions, the quality of education available to the majority of the population in South African was poor.

2.5.2 The conditions after 1994

Since the democratic elections of 1994, the restructuring of the education system has been one of the top priorities of education authorities. The new government is faced with the challenge of creating a system of education that would fulfill the vision of opening the doors of culture and learning to all. "The paramount task is to build a just and equitable system which provides good quality education to young and older learners throughout the country" (Steyn 1998:203).

Before 1994, a number of proposals were made by organizations such as the ANC and the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI) as part of a struggle against apartheid. Through discourse and negotiations on the part of various stakeholders, two discussion documents were developed. These were *A Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training* which was released in December 1995, and *Lifelong Learning through a National Qualifications Framework* which was circulated in February 1996.

Following the revision of these documents, the National Department of Education published its first official statement on Outcomes Based Education in 1997, entitled *Curriculum 2005: Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century* (Gultig et al 2002:30). The new curriculum was a shift from one which has been content-based to one which is based on outcomes. This aimed at equipping all learners with the knowledge, competencies and orientations needed for success after they leave school or have completed their training (Doe 1997:1).

In 2000, Curriculum 2005 was reviewed to assess its structure and design, accompanying teacher development processes, learning support materials, provincial support to teachers in schools and implementation time-frames (Doe 2001:10). The review process of C2005 gave birth to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for Grades R-9 (C2005 RNCS 2002:1). This is the curriculum document that outlines what is currently required of teachers and schools.

2.5.3 Teacher Professionalism

C2005 in the revised form sees teachers, teaching and learning in a perspective which is very different from one experienced prior to 1994.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement regards teachers as lifelong learners, learners as researchers, schools as learning organizations and teaching and learning as an on-going life long process. The RNCS, according to the Department of Education Document(2001) 'is based on the vision of a teacher who is socially and politically critical and responsible, professionally competent and in touch with contemporary developments'(2001:28), and learners as able 'to reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively'(2001:13).

Wally Morrow cited by Aderndorf et al (2001:43) argues that in the wake of apartheid, apartheid education and the struggle against apartheid, it is absolutely vital that South African teachers rediscover their professional responsibilities and a sense of their ability to make a difference. Morrow further argues that this is not an individual teachers' responsibility, teachers should work collaboratively as true learning is known as involving many teachers or individuals. This points to the need for something like participation action research as the catalyst for change.

Teachers, therefore, are expected to have a considerable degree of skill and competence, to be able to make decisions that involve considerable risk, and to take a high level of responsibility for those decisions. Teachers are further given a role as curriculum developers as they are now expected to be involved in curriculum design and development.

Flanagan (1991:39) argues that action research is the most promising means by which teachers can begin to take control of their working lives, and rediscover their professional responsibility. She explains that teachers should now be seen as what Zeichner and Tabachnick term 'reflective practitioners' and should be familiar with words such as 'action research', 'reflective teaching', and the 'teacher as researcher'.

Teachers should facilitate their own development. Thoughtful teachers who reflect on their practice are more desirable than thoughtless teachers who are primarily ruled and guided by traditions and circumstances and are teachers who resist change (Soler et al 2001:72-73). Teachers should adopt what Maclure calls a “holistic ideology of self-discovery or self-improvement which aims to help teachers to ‘recover’, ‘reintegrate’ or ‘emancipate’ a lost professional self” (Bridges and Kerry, 1993:47). This is a challenge that this research study hopes to begin to explore.

2.5.4 Schools as learning organizations

An under-appreciated fact in educational change is that every recommendation for improving teaching requires teachers to learn (Cohan and Barnes, 1993, cited in Hiebert and Stigler 2001:14). From the principles for improving complex human practices, such learning makes most sense in the context of practice.

This points to schools as the ideal sites for learning (Eisner 1979; Sarason 1983; Schacter 1967 in Hiebert and Stigler 2001:14). But the concept of a school as a learning organization is foreign in South African education.

Teachers never had an opportunity in the past to carry out research in their own classrooms and schools, with the intention of developing both themselves and their schools. Their position, as well as the conditions of their schools, didn't allow for such practice. Flanagan has argued that their classrooms were overcrowded, and that teachers were under-qualified, not competent, deskilled and frustrated (Flanagan 1991:7). With the development of the new curriculum, C2005, teachers are given an opportunity to design different types of Learning Programmes, and are expected to be critical, responsible, and professionally competent.

This means that the door has been opened to let a process like action research play a role in the management of change in a school. It is further suggested that as teachers design these Learning Programmes, they should reflect on learners' needs and work collaboratively as they plan a Lesson Plan, continually modify it, reflect, revise and refine the Lesson Plan (Teachers guide for the Development of Learning Programmes:FP, 2003:13). This process is definitely referring to an action research approach which is often the methodology used for school-based teacher inquiry because it aims to give teachers an opportunity to investigate and improve their practice within the context of practice.



In order for schools to become sites for teacher learning, Hiebert and Stigler(2001:15) suggest that numerous changes are needed, changes that must be supported by School Management Teams, parents, principals, district officials and School Governing Bodies.

According to Hiebert and Stigler (2001:14), schools will not become learning organizations for teachers unless teachers have time – time for collaborative planning and investigation: and time to work together to analyze and design and test new lessons. This time must be built into their weekly schedules. Districts have to restructure schools to provide time for teacher collaboration and opportunity for in service growth. Hiebert and Stigler further suggest that only if districts take the lead it is likely that schools will be able to implement the changes needed to enable teachers to collaborate productively.

District-wide support would provide teachers with a critical but often overlooked opportunity for professional growth. The system that Hiebert and Stigler propose ask teachers to take on a challenging task – to improve the quality of teaching.

This means more than improving teaching in their own classrooms; it means raising the standard of good teaching within the profession. This demands that teachers work together, sharing what they learn in their classrooms to influence improvement on a wider scale. Improving the professional norm requires that teachers see themselves as part of this larger effort, as responsible for building the knowledge base for teaching. In my study I will make a first attempt to see if this type of demands can be met.

Teachers must have the opportunity to enlarge their horizons to see beyond their own classrooms and even beyond their own schools. This could be done by teachers themselves by being willing to improve their practice in their schools and by organizing clusters to share their knowledge.

Teachers must experience the power of sharing knowledge across schools through clustering and networking (Hiebert & Stigler 2004:15). Brown & Macatangay (2002:1) also suggest that through the establishment of a teacher inquiry culture, schools can become learning environments where teachers continuously plan and evaluate for school improvement and effectiveness. The districts can help teachers organize clusters according to teachers' needs and provide opportunities for in service-growth. But we don't see this happening yet in any organized systematic way.

2.5.5 School culture

It is important that at this stage the researcher should be concerned about norms and values, or the concept of culture, for several reasons. Firstly, the present school culture should be able to meet the challenges of modern society. Secondly, we should know what parts of the school culture may hinder meaningful and desirable changes (Dalin and Rolff 1993:98).

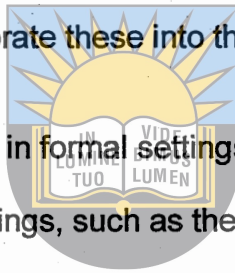
Peterson and Deal 2002 cited in Strahan (2003:129) describe school culture as the key to productivity, and have noticed that 'teachers and students are more likely to succeed in a culture that fosters hard work, a culture that is commitment to valued ends, that has attention to problem solving, and a culture that focus on learning for all students'. By learning more about school culture, researchers can begin to understand the human dynamics that nurture and sustain meaningful changes in learning and teaching. Based on these views, Wolcott (1999) cited in Strahan(2003:129) defined culture as 'how people conduct their lives and the beliefs related to their behavior'. Peterson and Deal (2002) identified three key elements in the study of culture:



- a) values – the standards set for what is good,
- b) beliefs and assumptions – systems of perception that guide behaviour and
- c) norms – unstated rules that participants and students are supposed to follow.

Langer 2000 cited by Strahan (2003:129) suggests that a critical aspect of school culture is the extent to which teachers create a professional learning community. Langer found that key characteristics of successful schools were that those schools are highly organized, connected, and are committed to increase students performance. These schools have coordinated efforts by teachers and administrators to identify needs, to investigate and develop strategies for improvement, and site-based staff development is initiated and designed to help teachers learn to incorporate the new practices into their daily routines. These professional development efforts encouraged a stronger sense of belonging among teachers-the shared belief that they could improve achievement (Strahan 2003:129).

“A useful means of understanding how professional learning communities affect the culture of a school is the construct of collective efficacy, defined by Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) in Strahan (2003:130). The school’s staff has to believe in themselves. They have to have the collective belief that if they work together they can make a difference. These beliefs emerge over time from the shared perceptions of teachers, and shape the normative environment of the school”. According to Strahan (2003:130) this process continues and occurs as teachers discuss their work with each other. As teachers hear about their colleague successes as well as those of other schools, they incorporate these into their beliefs in a positive way.

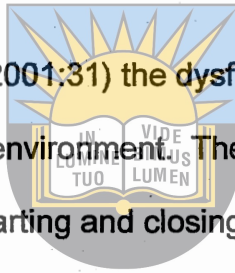


Teachers share these stories in formal settings, such as staff development work sessions, and in informal settings, such as the staffrooms. When these conversations are positive and persuasive, the culture of the school grows more optimistic and encouraging. Even in my case, some teachers believe that we teachers do have the ability to change our school culture for better.

These studies have documented the powerful role of professional learning in school context. Strahan suggests that a “recurring spiral of reform activities is a characteristic of many successful initiatives. Teachers work collaboratively to identify priorities for school improvement, and initiative conversations about instruction”(Strahan 2003:130).

As they interact, teachers target areas for improvement and negotiate their efforts to implement shared strategies. These negotiations will enhance student achievement and strengthen the professional development. As the school provides more social support for learning, school culture grows more collaborative, and teachers develop stronger collective effectiveness.

There are some parts of a school culture that may hinder meaningful changes. Strahan(2003:133) has identified four core values of education which guide participants, teachers, parents and students. These are: integrity, respect, discipline and excellence. These values show themselves in beliefs, in theories of learning in the up bringing of people, and are valued by the behaviour of participants (Dalin and Rolff 1993:8). Each school has a wide variety of values and if these values are not shared among the participants, the school will be unproductive and will be what Adendorff et al characterises as 'dysfunctional'.

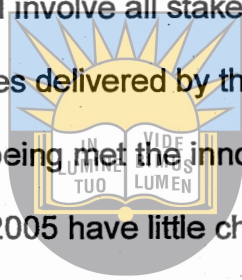


According to Adendorff et al(2001:31) the dysfunctional school is characterized by disorder, and a chaotic work environment. There are continuous interruptions in the schools daily programme. Starting and closing times are never consistent. The shortened school day becomes more of a norm than an exception. Regular late-coming on the part of students and teachers is a continuous problem. Bunking by students, who either do not come to school at all, or are absent in the middle of the day, prevents teachers from establishing learning continuity. It will be seen in my subsequent chapter just how true this is in my description of the context of my research.

The willingness to generate a healthy learning culture is frustrated by the absence of a consistent and stable routine in the learner population. In communities with low social economic levels, the schools experience high levels of adult illiteracy. Parents lack confidence to intervene in school matters because of their unfamiliarity with the school, and because of their deference to the academic status of teachers. Teachers are faced with the difficult task of having to innovate and implement system changes against this background.

There is potential for teachers who conduct their activities in such an environment to be highly pressured (Mail & Guardian;12-18/6/98 cited in Adendorff et al 2001:31). Aderndoff et al argue that teachers in the dysfunctional school may adopt a negative opinion about being able to improve their schools' functioning and about their schools' ability to deal with system change.

Innovations, they believe, can succeed in their impoverished schools only if, programmes such as school-based professional development can be introduced to these environments which will involve all stakeholders as well as through vast increases in learning resources delivered by the Education Department. It is believed that without such conditions being met the innovations envisaged in the South African Schools Act and Curriculum 2005 have little chance of success (Aderndorff et al. 2001:32).



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Having accepted the difficulty of their situation, these teachers view their work in terms of what may be called a 'moral minimizing' approach (Fataar and Patterson, cited in Aderndolf et al 2001:32). This refers to the "development among teachers of an identify that is rooted in the helplessness that derives from the apparent impossibility of changing their school context".

"Teachers conclude that the impoverished environment within which they work allows for a minimum participation as far as schooling processes is concerned. This does not necessarily mean that teachers deliberately take decisions about radically reducing their work output, but their decreased commitment, is based on their own self- definition as 'victims', which in turn justifies low levels of participation and soft commitment almost as a moral right"(Adendorff et al. 2001:32).

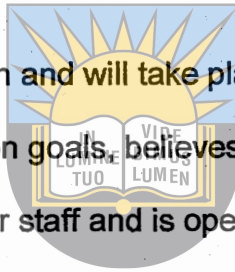
Teachers who have been trained and spent years teaching during the apartheid era could be expected to think that they are unable to improve their achievement. They are still conditioned by the power of the apartheid state, which reduced their critical thinking and negative attitudes and behaviours that these teachers shown are their way of coping with the stress produced by policy changes that took place after 1994, changes they think will never occur. The fact that other schools are believed to be coping under these bad conditions is also demotivating if the teachers do not see that they have the means to make changes on their own.

2.5.6 Conditions for professional development

Who is in control of the professional development is the first issue that needs to be considered. Soler has identified three main possibilities that need to be considered when we think about who controls the development. Firstly, there are the **individuals** themselves. According to Soler et al (2001:65), the individual is the key to any development, and this includes professional development. It is assumed that the individual is a willing and able participant in developmental programmes. Christie and Potterton (cited in Adendorff et al 2001:32) have reported in their research that there are schools that have shown a sense of responsibility for themselves and their functioning.

Teachers in these schools have shown a significant manifestation of willingness and ability to take initiative. Christie and Potterton indicate that these schools are able to recognize what sort of things they are able to do for themselves, prioritize their problems, and act. The key point here is a preparedness to act, a move from passivity and victimhood to be active. Schools should therefore be prepared to take responsibility for themselves by doing small and sometimes big things for themselves.

A second group of necessary conditions can be described as management. The lack of commitment in many South African Schools can be traced directly back to apartheid and the years of opposition to it. The apartheid system denied the democratic rights to black people, reducing their creativity in many ways. Christie and Potterton found that under apartheid education, school principals had little influence over the hiring and firing of staff, and almost no curriculum decision – making power (Adendorff et al.2001:67).




Professional development can and will take place only if the School Management Team is committed to common goals, believes them to be important and if the principal has trust in his or her staff and is open to new ideas and has learned to work closely with all the stakeholders (Dalín and Rolff 1993:121). Dalín and Rolff clearly indicate that a principal should have a vision for her or his school, that is shaped and developed in close co-operation with staff, students and parents. Professional growth, therefore will be successful if the atmosphere in which it is presented is conducive.

The third option for professional development is suggested as situational. The agent of change here is seen from a situational view point of the school (Soler et al 2001:65). Schools according to Dalín and Rolff (1993:105) do experience challenges from the environment that can control professional development. Dalín and Rolff argue that school is not an island, it is responsible and accountable to parents and to the society at large. The decision about the school cannot be made by the School Management Team only, all the stakeholders should be involved. The involvement of the stakeholders is a good idea only if all these stakeholders have a common interest about the school and if they want to build the school.

The parents of the school where this study is taking place want to use the school for their own benefit. The school has been used for church services by the community and for discos by the youth, something that is not approved by teachers. This has resulted in unhealthy relationships between the community and the teachers which affect teachers as well as learners. We are now going to look at researchers who managed to cooperatively achieve their professional development despite the conditions that seeks to control these professional development.

2.6 THE VALUE OF LESSON BASED DEVELOPMENT POWER



The Japanese experience of using a Lesson Plan as a way of developing teachers professionally suggests that teachers can learn even if they are experiencing difficulties. These teachers can learn more general knowledge and skills, of exactly the kind they need, by working as a team deeply with a few lessons. These teachers focus mainly on hand-on activities in their cooperative learning. Their goal is not just to produce lessons but to produce knowledge on how to develop and design a lesson. They believe that knowledge grows as teachers reflect on an improvement of what they have done (Hiebert and Stiglet 2001:12).

According to these Japanese teachers, improving teaching does not depend on planning 182 lessons, but on engaging intensively with the issue involved in teaching any lesson. For them, the year long process of designing a few lessons helps them teach other lessons more effectively (Lewis & Tsuchida 1998; Takemura & Shimizu 1993 cited by Hiebert and Stigler 2001:17). In my study I hope to make this a form of the action research.

2.7 CONCLUSION

There have been important developments with regard to Lawrence Stenhouse's (1975) vision of teachers integrating research into their classroom practice. Teachers have contributed as practitioners, researchers and writers to some classic collaborative action research project. The review of literature establishes that action research can be used to develop teachers professionally in their practice context. In service education should be school based so that all the teachers can become involved. Teachers should not be taken to a totally different environment and shown methods that are demonstrated with 20 children when in reality they are faced with 40 children. Professional development should happen in their schools so that they can put what they learn into practice immediately.

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If teachers are engaged in school-based in services, as suggested in the literature review, and are willing to participate and reflect on their own practice gradually a change will show. Changes will not come quickly, they will take time and teachers need to be consistent and patient. In Chapter 3 of this study we will look at the appropriate research methodology which will be utilized and which will help teachers of this particular rural Primary School experience professional growth.

CHAPTER 3

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Action research according to McGill and Beaty (2002:11) is a continuous learning process which is supported by colleagues, with an intention of improving their practice. Through action research teachers learn from each other by working on real problems and reflecting on their own experiences. This process of working and collective reflection helps teachers to take a positive attitude towards life and helps them overcome the tendency to think, feel and be passive towards the pressures of life (McGill and Beaty 2002:11).



3.2 WHAT IS ACTION RESEARCH

Cohen and Manion in Scott and Usher (1996:108) see action research as a “style of research which is situational, collaborative, participatory and self – evaluative. They also see it as a ‘method’ which is dedicated to adding to the practitioner’s functional knowledge of the phenomena”. These authors have compared action research with applied research, and their statement is that they:

Both utilize the scientific method... action research, by contrast, interprets the scientific method much more loosely, chiefly because its focus is a specific problem in a specific setting. The emphasis is not, so much on obtaining generalisable scientific knowledge as on precise knowledge for a particular situation and purpose
(Scott and Usher 1996:108).

Kemmis (1993) in Scott and Usher (1996:110) sees action research as a “form of research carried out by practitioners into their own practices. It is a participatory democratic form of educational research for educational improvement”.

Kemmis further explains that action research is seen as a form of practical enquiry which is characterized by a 'self – reflecting spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting'. Kemmis sees action research as an 'approach' rather than a 'method', which emphasises its potential as:

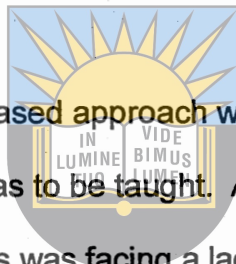
An embodiment of democratic principles in research, allowing participants to influence, if not determine, the conditions of their own lives and work, and collaboratively to develop critiques of social conditions which sustain dependence, inequality, or exploitation in any research enterprise in particular or in social life in general
 (Kemmis 1993:179 cited by Scott and Usher 1996:110).

What is clear from my reading is that action research is an elective form of research that is done by educational practitioners to stimulate their existing professional skills and practical experiences and develop them as reflective practitioners. This kind of enquiry sees educators as self – reflective, and self – critical. As educational professionals they need to see themselves as practitioners who are committed to the improvement of their practice and to improving the educational circumstances of their learners. Teachers are seen as responsible and committed to their practice and deliberately involved in their own professional development. This leads us to the purpose of action research.

3.3 ACTION RESEARCH AND OBE

The purpose of action research according to Altrichter et al (1993) is to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as the conditions under which teachers work in school. Action research is intended, continues Altrichter et al, to support teachers, and groups of teachers, as they cope with the curriculum challenges and problems of their practice teaching and their professional development.

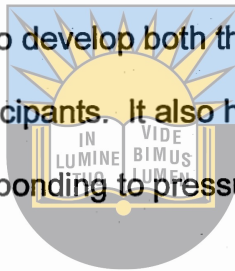
Over the past decade, teachers in the Eastern Cape are experiencing rapid changes of the educational systems. The introduction and the implementation of Curriculum 2005 has been highly problematic. Teachers have not been actively engaged with the new curriculum. The interim core curriculum remained in place for a significant period. Teachers felt that the new curriculum was put in place from top – down, that they were insufficiently prepared for the outcomes – based education approach and that the resources in their schools were inadequate.



Besides the new Outcomes-based approach which was a great challenge teachers were uncertain about what was to be taught. Adendorff et al (2001:1) argues that a significant number of teachers was facing a lack of professionalism. This included being unable to react and adapt themselves in the schools that did not function well. Despite the problems that teachers are experiencing, teachers have core duties and responsibilities. The key roles of teachers include caring for the whole child, working with parents and teaching in a learner – centred way. Our education system has to prepare learners and teachers to compete in an increasingly global economy through the curriculum (Curriculum 2005:life long learning for the 21st century :1).

The introduction of the Revised National Curriculum Statement has been seen as a solution to teachers existing problems. Teachers should face the problems originating from the implementation of C2005 in the revised form as challenges. They should be prepared to accept these problems, reflect upon them and search for solutions and improvements (Altrichter et al 1993:5).

Through the action research, teachers are able to identify problems related to teaching and learning, to develop strategies to bring about improvements, and to evaluate the outcomes of their efforts. Altrichter et al argues that action research is carried out by people directly involved in the social situation that is being researched. In the case of the social situation of a classroom this means teachers take professional responsibility for what is going on in their classrooms. Altrichter further explains that action research starts from practical questions arising from everyday educational work. Its aim is to develop both the practical situation and the knowledge about the practice of the participants. It also has the potential to put the teacher in a more powerful position in responding to pressures for change.



The researcher has identified the area of concern in the school where she is working. The planning in the Foundation Phase (FP) has not been done effectively. Teachers show a very clear lack of interest in the planning . There is a need for us as teachers to collaborately reflect upon the situation, analyse the functioning of our school, look at its strengths and weaknesses and develop actions and structures to improve the situation .

As the researcher is engaged in action research, the following cycles which are suggested by other researchers will be followed. These are :

- planning a change – a number of ideas will be tried, attempts at collective planning and a critical reflection will be done on these ideas which will be followed by alternative plans of improvements.
- acting and observing the process and consequences of the change.
- reflecting on these processes and consequences

- replanning – alternative plans or improvement is done
- acting and observing again
- reflecting
- and so on and so on

It is intended that the cycle will be completed twice and then a report will be written, but it should be clear that the participants would continue to review, evaluate and improve practice. The process should not stop because this small scale research project has been completed. Teachers are expected to continue with the cycles. The aim is to study reality as it is and to change reality so as to improve it. Through informal and formal conversations, interviews, keeping diaries, using tape recorders, participant observation and reflection and triangulation the information will be collected, the situation will be clarified, action strategies will be developed and put into practice as an ongoing part of this case study. The case study will report on the initial stages of setting the stage for better planning and better practice in the FP of this particular school.

3.4 SELECTING SUBJECTS

The focus of this action is to support Foundation Phase teachers in my school as they struggle with the implementation of C2005 in the revised form. This is a learning process which will be taken through a repeated cycle of reflection and action. As a group of teachers we will learn from these experiences and there is an opportunity for professional development. As teachers are developed so is their school, at the same time learners benefit, the school community is better served and social benefit should result over time.

The participants therefore in this study are all Foundation Phase teachers of a particular rural primary school. All eight teachers, including the researcher are expected to be fully involved and benefit in this exercise. The learners will also be involved as teachers will practise planned activities in their classrooms. Although the learners are not directly involved in the research, the researcher assumes that in the process, some kind of improved learning environment for learners will take place and may take account of anecdotal feedback of their comments and observations.

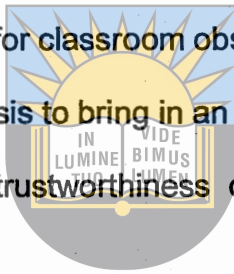
The teachers have been selected as research subjects for two reasons. Firstly they are the people who are meant to be directly involved in the planning and implementation of C2005 in the revised form. Secondly, only Foundation Phase teachers had an opportunity to be trained, to plan and implement the RNCS. Other phases the Intermediate and Senior Phases have not been trained yet and therefore are not in a position to implement to the same extent.

The research report will probably be in the form of a case study of a single school. The report will give a great deal of detail about each stage of the process. The purpose is to provide rich information based on the specific instances and practical outcomes. This will allow the researcher to be reasonably confident of the validity of the data that emerges

A case study research approach is usually regarded as a form of qualitative research, that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Educational case study is defined as a critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgments and decisions in order to improve educational action.

Data will be collected by asking questions, observing actions, referring back to diaries and by extracting evidence from documents. The researcher will take an initiative in the organization of phase meetings and teachers will be observed as they plan, implement, discuss and reflect on their actions.

Meetings will be held between 13h00 and 14h00 while learners are away. Teachers will be accommodated in researcher's class as it is private and more comfortable. The meeting will be well planned with an agenda to avoid boredom. Days will be negotiated with the teachers for classroom observation. It will also be possible to confer regularly on casual basis to bring in an element of triangulation as a means to sharpen the authenticity and trustworthiness of the emerging data and findings.



3.5 DATA GATHERING

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The participants in this study have been chosen because of their position: being teachers in the Foundation Phase. Teachers will be observed in their formal and working group meetings. Participant observation by the researcher will ensure reliability of the evidence. Observation as a source of data collection for the naturalistic researcher will be utilized and it will lead to a description of the event.

The researcher will be able to see the world as her collaborating subjects see it. Significant, in-depth data will be obtained through careful observation. During observation notes will be written in a journal which has been prepared for that purpose. The other teachers will also be encouraged to do the same as a means of capturing their emerging and developing thinking.

3.5.1 Audio tape recorder

Another source of data collection which will be used in this study is a Audio tape recorder, to record conversations. Christine Macintyre (2000:63) argues that audio tape records, can be important if the real meaning within any interaction is to be clear as the actual spoken words will be listened and interpreted again and again. The information recorded will be interpreted and analysed and this will reduce bias. Taped events and transcriptions of talk allows for a deeper process of integration of purpose. It also allows for specific revisiting to clarify emerging understanding as what appears to be the case activity is supported by verbal evidence.



3.5.2 Interviews

"The interview is a face to face interaction which allows the interviewer to ask carefully prepared questions and in addition to probe the respondents so that, further information is obtained Macintyre (2002:84). While the researcher is engaged in observation, the interviews or questions will be asked to get more information on issues. Some more interviews will be scheduled if necessary. These will be more purposeful conversations between the researcher and the individual teacher as they try to understand their social situation. In this way more qualitative information will be gathered. Questions will be prepared and piloted with friends (teaching colleagues from different schools) before the actual interview to reduce bias. If necessary the questions will be revised.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected by means of interview, diaries, questionnaires or any other method mean very little until they are analyzed and evaluated.

In an action research approach data analysis takes place throughout the entire research process. Analysis begins with the first data collected, and the emerging insights and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection. This leads to refinement of interview, collection of more data, which leads to more insight. The interactive refining process never really ends until the final report has been written (Erlandson et al 1993:111).

As a group of teachers who are directly concerned about the situation in our school, i.e. planning in the Foundation Phase that has not been done effectively, we will plan and experiment with new ideas and strategies with the intention of improving the situation. These new ideas and strategies will be observed, and monitored. Data will be collected through formal and informal conversations, interview, tape recording and journal entries, and through analysis of the information gathered, the situation will be clarified. The reflection on the process will lead to alternative plans as it is not expected that actions will solve the problem immediately.

Further action strategies will be developed and put into practice. The process will be observed and monitored, and information gained will be analyzed. The cycle will be completed twice and thereafter the whole process will be analyzed and a report will be written. It is hoped that this research process will act as a catalyst for a commitment to ongoing improved practice.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In the next chapter we shall describe how action research approach was used by teachers in their school as a way of collaboratively developing their professionalism. The chapter will reveal the appropriateness and action research for teacher development and some difficulties experienced.

CHAPTER 4

4. CASE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Action research has been defined in the Literature Review as the systematic study of attempts done to improve teaching practice by groups of teachers by means of their own practical actions and by means of their own reflections upon the effects of these actions. It has also been defined as the study of a social situation with the aim of improving the quality of action within it (Ebbutt 1983 and Elliott 1981 cited by Kelley 1989:138). "The important aspect of this notion is that it represents a claim that the only productive form of educational research is that which involves the people actually working on an educational problem or problems and is conducted with the intention of developing solutions to that problem or problems". Kelley (1989:138) argues that action research is a view which has developed out of a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the kind of research which has been conducted outside the field of practice and which has produced generalized findings which failed to support teachers in the development of their practice. The idea of action research according to Kelly is offered as an alternative form of research and one which should provide teachers with a proper kind of support.

Kelly further argues that the central purpose of action research is to bring the researcher from the outside to the inside of the activity in order to ensure that he or she understands that her/his research efforts do make a worthwhile contribution to improving the practice of the teachers. This approach to research requires teachers themselves to be actively engaged in the activity. They must, said Kelley, "be constantly evaluating their work, critically analyzing it with a view to its development and improvement".

It is this feature which brings in Lawrence Stenhouse's associated notion of "the teacher as researcher" (Stenhouse 1975 cited by Kelley 1989:138). This argument is in favour of a school-based professional development by the teachers for the teachers. This leads us to the situational analysis of the school being studied and whether the conditions are favourable for the implementation of innovations within this school. It is argued that the organizational health of the school determines whether innovations will or will not happen, since only a healthy school climate can absorb a new development.



4.2 THE SITUATION ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOOL.

4.2.1 School location

This is a rural school located between Kei Road and King Williams Town. It is situated in the area that used to be a Border Post during the period of Ciskei government. The Border Post buildings have been vandalized by people who have decided to reside in this area coming from Stutterheim, Komga and Kei Road farms. These were farm workers who are predominantly illiterate, and who have a poor socio-economic background, because they lost their job security in the political upheavals of the 1970's and 1980's.

When these people were removed in 1991, from Ndakana area (near Stutterheim) to Border Post, they came with three teachers who were to establish a school for their children and this is how this school started.

The school operated without buildings until 1993 when the Department of Education decided to build 12 classrooms, one office and a staff room. The enrolment increased and by 1999 it went up to seven hundred learners. This led to the upgrading of the school to Grade 7 and more teachers were appointed. Currently the school has eighteen teachers, the head, the deputy head, two heads of department and fourteen teachers. The majority of the teachers, especially those who were appointed during 1999 are those teachers who were declared in excess in their schools by the Department of Education, and therefore are experienced teachers who have been teaching for years.

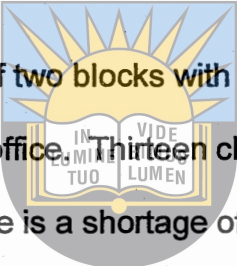


Focusing on the eight teachers who constitute Foundation Phase, their teaching experience ranges between eleven and twenty eight years. The information gathered through interviews indicate that the Foundation Phase (FP) teachers are all qualified teachers who have been continually upgrading themselves with certificates, diplomas and degrees that are available from tertiary institutions of the Eastern Cape Province. Their form of upgrading was both part-time and through correspondence. As experienced teachers it could be assumed that they have the knowledge and competence required professionally, as well as the ability to promote curriculum innovations, innovations that are initiated within the school.

The researcher is fully aware of the fact that these teachers have been affected by, and see themselves as victims of apartheid; both of the upheavals of the past and of the current attempts in the province to rationalize and re-organise the service delivery of primary education.

They are in desperate need of a solution which will transform them into effective and efficient teachers. According to Flanagan (1991:108) these teachers are lacking something, be it knowledge, skills or some quality in their professionalism. The solution is seen to be in a process of being reflective practitioners, as illustrated in the official policy documents (Draft Review NCS for grades R-9) (2001:80)).

4.2.2 Physical Facilities



The school building consists of two blocks with six classrooms in each block, a Staffroom and the Principal's office. Thirteen classrooms are occupied by pupils including the staffroom as there is a shortage of classrooms. All the classrooms are in good condition as the school was built in 1993 by the Department of Education and Training. Windows and doors are still intact, despite several break-ins experienced by the school in the past. The school is responsible for its own maintenance as it has been identified as falling under section twenty one.

All the classrooms have blackboards that are mounted on the wall, but some of them are not in good condition as they shake while teachers are writing. Toilets are available for boys and girls as well as teachers. Facilities such as electricity and drinking water are also available. The school yard is fenced, there are two big gates and a small one and there are two men who are working as security guards although the security is not so tight. People as well as learners go in and out in the presence of these guards. They fail to maintain order.

4.2.3 Resources for teaching and learning

The outside view of the school is different from the inside one. From outside, the school looks beautiful with burglar-proof doors and windows. From inside the situation is not so good. The continuous break-ins have left the school short of chairs and desks. Learners sit in fours instead of twos because of the shortage of chairs. Some sit on the floor and some on top of desks while writing and this results in a poor hand-writing as some are still young and need more space as they learn to write. The built-in cupboards have broken doors and some doors have been removed.



Various requests have been made to the Department of Education and Training to replace stolen furniture without response. Recently, the deputy principal has requested for sponsorship from outside the Department of Education, but instead of tables and chairs the school was assisted with ten computers which the school has seen as a need. There is a school telephone and fax machine which are not open for use by teachers. The school has no television set or video recorder and negotiations regarding these resources continue as they can be useful to teachers and learners.

The condition of the school has been affected by the school environment. The community has been "occasionally" using school furniture and the school itself during weekends and holidays. The chairs have been borrowed for funeral services and some were brought back broken and some were never.

In some cases, the school hall which is formed by opening up of two partitioned classrooms has been used for church services and during weekends. Events such as discos are organized by the community youth in the school premises. It is sad that there is not responsible use of the school after hours.

4.2.4 The school organization.

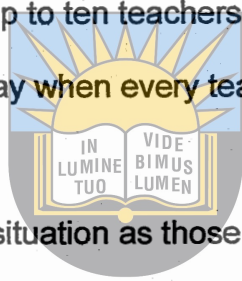
The quality of an organization is often reflected in the relations among people, between groups and between the leaders, and those who are led. The school has managed to collectively decide on a school policy which provides a clear vision of the purpose of the school. The primary mission and goal of the school has been emphasizing a commitment to meeting high expectations. All the stakeholders were involved when this decision was made. What is meant by the mission statement of the school doesn't match what is actually happening at school.

Both teachers and the community have been showing lack of commitment. For some reasons the community is reluctant to involve itself in school matters. When parents meetings are organised, generally very few parents turn up and in some instances, those responsible for the organization of such meetings would end up postponing these meetings. The relationship between teachers and parents is poor although parents are represented in the School Governing Body, a body that is supposed to support the school. The relationship between teachers and parents in this particular school could be affected by the behavior shown by those teachers who happen to stay locally. These teachers have failed to behave like professionals at all times whereas it has been stated in code of conduct for educators that:

the educators who are registered with the SA Council for Educators should act in a proper and becoming way such that their behaviour does not bring down the teaching profession into disrepute

(Source: Code of Conduct for Educators. Pretoria :SACE)

The situation of this particular school is what Fataar and Patterson cited by Adendorff et al (2001:31) characterize as disorganization or dysfunctional. The culture of teaching and learning is lacking. There is an extremely high rate of absenteeism of staff at school. Some times up to ten teachers are absent over a period of a few days, and seldom is there a day when every teacher is present at school.



This has resulted in a chaotic situation as those learners without teachers will make noise, fight and roam around the school. Late coming by learners and teachers is another problem. Bunking by learners, who either do not come to school at all, or absent in the middle of the day, prevents teachers from establishing learning continuity. This kind of behavior by the learners has been motivated by teachers as they have the tendency of leaving the school premises during tuition time to attend to private matters elsewhere although it has been stated in the school policy that is displayed in the principals office that 'no teacher should leave school premises during tuition time'.

There is a freedom of movement as teachers fail to honour their periods as they loiter around the school as if they have nothing to do. Whole school days are cancelled for sporting activities and the school closes early for sporting events. The breakdown of management and leadership within such schools is an important part of dysfunction.

Staff meetings are not scheduled after hours but held for the whole school day, and only when there is a burning issue and are usually organized by the school's principal even though it means that learners are left neglected for the time.

In schools the real decision-making power rests with the principal. Such persons see themselves as approachable and pleasant, but teachers on the whole often perceive a principal to be authoritarian, rigid and rather dogmatic in character. This leads to poor relations and a principal can be seen as extremely defensive when staff members are confrontational or raise important issues.



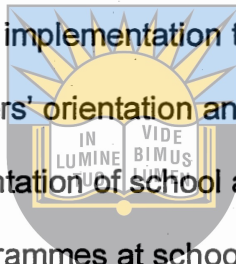
Teachers have been complaining about the issues such as unfair treatment of other staff members. Many teachers express frustration at the lack of direction of the school and there is a tendency to identify problems and issues without the commitment to finding solutions to them. The management style is one which lack consistency and accountability. Similarly staff don't see it as their responsibility to be constructively supportive.

There is no specific staff development programme at the school. Professional development depends entirely on the commitment of individual teachers. Now that the Department of Education has introduced an Integrated Quality Management System for School-based Educators (IQMS), teachers are expected to be engaged in professional development programmes which are school-based. This is a formal appraisal programme which involves self-evaluation and participation in professional activities that will hopefully improve the culture of teaching and learning in this school and in all the schools. This research that I am going to describe in this chapter is my small contribution to a bottom – up step in that direction.

4.3 THE NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT

After C2005 was revised by the review committee there was a need for training of teachers by district officials. The training process started with the Foundation Phase teachers and this is why our focus will be on this group of teachers.

During 2003, the planning and implementation training of RNCS focused on Foundation Phase (FP) teachers' orientation and development, development of learning support material, orientation of school and district-based management and development of Learning Programmes at school level. By 2004 FP teachers were expected to be at the implementation stage of RNCS.



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In 2003 district officials organized schools into clusters and work-shopped teachers on how to plan and implement RNCS. The training lasted for five days and was followed by monitoring and demonstration. During the monitoring stage, individual schools developed Learning Programmes and Work Schedules.

The school where the research took place was involved in this process and as teachers began to engage in the process, a lack of co-operation was evident.

Teachers showed a lack of interest in the planning and their behavior and attitude towards the planning and implementation was negative.

The researcher was concerned about teachers' behavior and attitude. She wanted to investigate their major problems which were associated with management of curriculum. She also wanted to encourage teachers to produce and maintain their best performance and behavior. She hoped to help teachers to investigate, analyze and take more responsibility for their own professional development. This collaborative form of inquiry was planned to take place in their workplace as action research. Teachers would decide on the strategic plan for change and improvement, act and observe the process, reflect on these processes and re-plan.



4.4 THE PROCESS OF INTRODUCING ACTION RESEARCH

4.4.1 Negotiation stage

The researcher found herself to be part of this particular school in year 2000 when redeployed from one of the colleges. When she arrived, teachers were struggling with the implementation of C2005 and she worked side by side with them with the intention of supporting teachers. Through this process she managed to get to know her new colleagues and gained their trust. Some colleagues saw her as a resourceful person as she gave them support when they were busy studying for their degrees and diplomas.

Her experience as a college lecturer, and an Umkwezeli (tutor) at the University of Fort Hare Distance Education Project (DEP) has built her confidence of working with teachers at all levels.

As the action research was planned to be a school – based professional development, she took the initiative. This kind of approach has been suggested by Kelley (1989:143) because “to be effective, curriculum development can be based only on initiatives that come from within the school and it must be school–based”.

As a participant observer, my role has been emphasized as that of the facilitator, guide, formulator and summarizer of knowledge, and raiser of issues (Mc Kernan 1991:63). During the stage of advocacy which was towards the end of the first semester I informed my colleagues about my intention of doing action research within the school with the intention of empowering myself and the other FP teachers (source: diary entry, 24 May 2004).

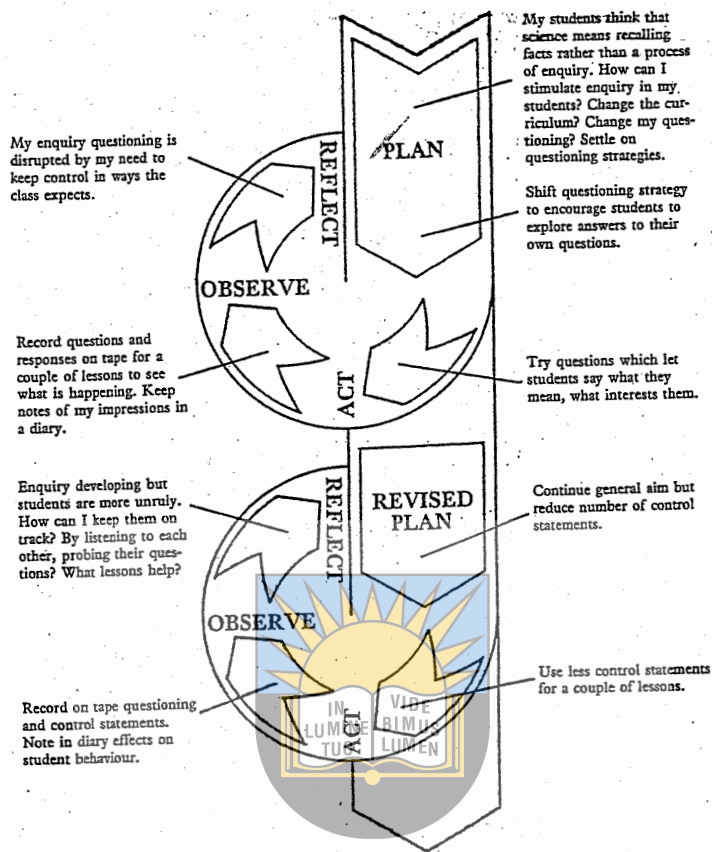


Teachers accepted the idea of working together as a team as we developed one another professionally and promised to co-operate. Later I introduced the idea of undertaking action research to empower one another in a meeting situation. All FP teachers of this particular school were invited as they are the people who were meant to be directly involved in the planning and implementation of RNCS in 2004. The meeting to introduce action research and to gain the co-operation of my colleagues was held on 21 July 2004.

4.4.2 Introduction of action research – initiation stage

The process of action research was explained in depth as understood in the Literature review chapter (page:12). The planning was based on Zuber-Skerritt's four-moment action research model which was very similar to the original action research spiral model proposed by Kemmis in Mc Kernan (1991:25). The following diagram and table was used to explain and discuss the ideas of Action Research.

The action research spiral



Source; McTaggart et al. 1982. Copyright Deakin University Press.
 Deakin action research model.

	Reconstructive	Constructive
Discourse (among participants)	4 Reflect	1 Plan
	Retrospective on observation (reconnaissance and evaluation)	Prospective to action (constructed action)
Practice (in the social context)	3 Observe	2 Act
	Prospective for reflection (documentation)	Retrospective guidance from planning (deliberate and controlled strategic action)

Source: McTaggart et al., 1982. Copyright Deakin University Press.

The moments of action research

After a thorough explanation about what action research is, its purposes, and how it was going to help us improve our practices as a group, the following key principles were formulated and discussed by the group of teachers. These included:

- being willing to participate
- being disciplined (respect time and deadlines)
- being transparent (be honest and open about their feelings)
- being eager to learn by consulting one another when there is a need.
- acting as professionals at all times in terms of approaching one another
- to be flexible
- remembering that we are all equals in status

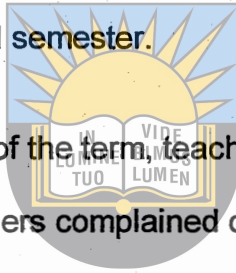


The fact that we were all in the process of learning was emphasized. Teachers were free to ask questions whenever they needed some clarity.

Teachers' Guide for the Development of learning programmes for FP (2003:1-13) was used as a reference and teachers were referred to selected pages for further readings, especially the pages on the Development of a Lesson Plan as this was our major focus (pages 2,4,5 and pages 12-13 of Teacher's guide for the development of learning programmes – FP, 2003). Teachers were advised to keep personal journals in which they will record their progress and reflections.

Teacher's response during our first meeting made me think that everything would go on smoothly, and that their enthusiasm towards this idea was a sign of being prepared and willing to work collaboratively as we monitored our professional growth.

But in reality action research has proved its self not to be a straight forward process. It has its own tension and constraints. According to Dalin et al (1993:43) in any discussion of this nature "it is normal to encounter both positive and negative points of view, scepticism, criticism and barriers against the development process being suggested. It is the task of the researcher to listen to all arguments in the most objective way possible. His or her task is to make it clear to all participants that different opinions are needed, necessary and normal in any development process". Although teachers promised to co-operate, they failed to honour the very first planning at the beginning of the second semester.



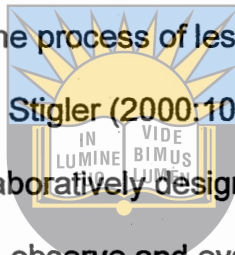
Since it was the opening day of the term, teachers claimed that they were not ready for such meetings. Two teachers complained of being sick and said that they won't be able to listen attentively. We decided to postpone the gathering for the following day. On the following day, out of eight FP teachers, only four were present including the researcher. The group decided to proceed. I became skeptical about their co-operation. In the literature reviewed it has been stated that, teachers are capable of controlling their professional development by simply refusing to co-operate (see page 32). Teachers were showing signs of lack of commitment, attitude that we had to improve as a group. Those who were present during the planning stage decided that :

1. the development of the lesson plan should be done collaboratively
2. the planning should proceed from grade to grade to maintain progression and
3. after planning, the lessons planned will be demonstrated by the teachers

i.e. one teacher at a time, and others will act as observers and later we will all reflect on how the lessons went.

What went well? Why? What didn't go so well and why? Furthermore the lesson will be planned after an intensive reflection. The planning will be done co-operatively and collaboratively. All will decide on the Context and Content of the Lesson Plan, the Learning Outcomes, Assessment Standards, Integration, Learning Activities, Assessment Strategies as well as Resources, as these are required as one is developing a Lesson Plan in a revised form (Teacher's Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes: FP:1).

The procedure is similar to "The process of lesson study" adopted by Japanese teachers, cited by Hiebert and Stigler (2000:10). In this study as indicated in the literature review teachers collaboratively design several lessons, one group member tries them out while the others observe and evaluate what works and what does not. Subsequently they reflect as a group and revise lessons.



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

I was impressed. The interaction went well. Teachers brainstormed openly and freely and ideas were flowing. The idea of developing one another in an action research approach was exciting. Teachers further suggested that we should meet at least once a week, and that planning should occur whether grades are represented or not. It was also decided that those absent will be provided with lesson plans planned by the group as a way of motivating them.

It was difficult for us to meet every Thursday as was decided due to general procedures of the school. This particular school has been involved in music competitions, both as an affiliated competitor and as a venue. Staff establishment is another problem that the school is experiencing at the moment.

The school has to identify two teachers to be redeployed. This is a problematic exercise which brings tension to the whole school. The problem is that the criteria that was used to identify these teachers was not clear to teachers, yet the Department of Education expect the school to come up with the names as soon as possible. Another existing problem is that of the regular death of teachers in the district. Teachers have to organize and attend memorial and funeral services of colleagues, from district and this is taking teachers away from their classrooms. The planning and implementation of RNCS has been affected by the school procedures. Although teachers have made a decision to meet every Thursday they were unable to deal with problematic situations. This showed lack of commitment and inconsistency on the part of the teachers.

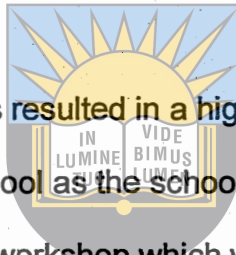


4.4.3 Implementation stage – taking action

The implementation stage faced a number of tensions and barriers which operated at the school level in various ways. Workshops organized by the Department of Education, which do not appear in the school year plan had an impact on the school and on the teachers. A number of teachers would attend different workshops weekly, leaving their learners unattended and this would create chaos in the school and cause stress to the teachers who remained behind.

The pay crisis made a big contribution to the chaotic situation of the school. During the period of my research teachers had to leave the school as early as eleven o'clock to join demonstrations over pay. Unions accept that teachers have responsibilities as well as rights. Teachers have the responsibility to teach, and a duty to provide the best possible results in the classroom. Again, teachers do have the right to campaign collectively for an improvement of their service conditions and salaries.

This is an undeniable tension as teachers are trapped between professional obligations and their own rights as they are expected to be committed to their work. The threat about the full blown strike to follow if negotiations fail was another cause of stress that contributed to the school that was already out of control. Such talks demotivated teachers and reduced their commitment to their work as their attention was divided.



All these tensions and barriers resulted in a high rate of absenteeism. Teachers found reasons to be absent from school as the school climate favoured chaos. After attending a three day first aid workshop which was departmental we had previously decided to continue with our planning. I, the researcher was disappointed to find that three teachers were absent, two were to leave early because of some personal problems and only two teachers were left and these teachers had not been present during our first presentation or discussion.

The researcher had to orientate them briefly, explaining what it is that we wanted to do, How? and Why?. Teachers were shown the plan of action that had been decided by the team during their absence. Teachers seemed to be interested in this notion and claimed that there was a need to be engaged in such an exercise to boost our professional growth. But, they never came for the gathering. By the time I was looking for them they were already gone. This kind of behavior was an indication that teachers are experiencing problems as far as commitment is concerned. They were unable to keep to their decisions and honour their promises.

As teachers came and went, I did what I could do to keep on with the investigation in the form of unstructured conversations. One of the staff members commented that:

“ The idea of planning as a team will really empower us but first we need to work on our attitudes towards school work. We have lost dedication, responsibility and accountability. Maybe the reason that teachers are consistently absent from school is that lessons are not planned, teachers do not have planned activities for their classes, they just do anything to keep learners busy for the day.”

(source: diary entry, 13 September 2004).

This teacher felt that, as a team, we should change our behavior and attitudes for the sake of the 'child', as this situation affected both teachers and learners. Of course it also affected the school standing in the eyes of the local community, but I decided to save this point to see if it would emerge from the participants themselves at a later stage.

The day the designing of a Lesson Plan was done there were six of us at school. When teachers arrived at the venue, books, pens and official documents were ready. Nobody volunteered to be our scribe and therefore I acted as one, as one scribe was needed for one lesson plan. We co-operatively and collaboratively unpacked the lesson plan.

Teachers decided on the Context and the Content of the lesson, selected the relevant Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards, integration, Learning Activities and the resources. As a scribe I deliberately depended on them to feed me with the information. My role was to write.

I wanted them to drive the process, and to see that I should not be considered the only knowledgeable person, I was learning as they were. All teachers participated, they listened to one another and accepted each others views, until there was a call from the office (school) that a broker from one of the companies needed teachers, to advise them on their policy contracts. All the teachers left except one, and only one came back, the others never. The soil was not yet ready to grow the mealie.

I had to target days when most teachers were present at school. I had photocopied the lesson done so that individual teachers could evaluate the quality of the lesson. The lesson plan was distributed to teachers accompanied by four questions to help them analyze the lesson plan. All members were satisfied with the planning and their contribution except one teacher who felt differently. She felt that the exercise was not easy, we needed to continuously come together and work as a team, and do more planning and discussions. She felt that, to be able to improve, more people should be involved as we needed more ideas and suggestions (source: Follow up questions, 11 September 2004). To her the lesson plan was not done well, and more suggestions from participants were needed.

By giving teachers a copy of the planned lesson I was giving them an opportunity to reflect on their own work. Instead of criticizing the lesson plan teachers accepted it without noticing the gaps. Teachers seemed to be lacking knowledge as well as the skill to reflect. They were unable to critically analyze the lesson plan and think about ways of improving the lesson plan. They just accepted it as it was which became a problem for me.

If teachers are unable to reflect on their own performance (self assessment), they will not be able to reflect on their learners performance. They wont try to find out why the learner is progressing the way she is, and how can they improve her performance. Teachers need more exposure in this area of reflection. Their response on the lesson planned made the researcher think of taking teachers back to the key principles negotiated during the initial stage. Teachers had to learn to be honest to themselves and to the team if we were to develop.



Key principles were written on a big chart and were revised before we continued with the implementation stage. Action research cycles were also drawn on a chart to raise their awareness on the journey we were taking. This was another way of reminding teachers that we are committed to the planning and implementation of the lesson plan as agreed and that we need to learn from this exercise as we work collaboratively.

As teachers began to study the lesson plan again, important issues were now raised, and they collectively started to identify areas which needed some changes.

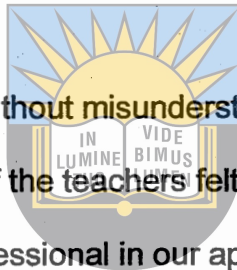
Integration made previously was seen as of a higher level for our Grade 1 class and changes were made. I was impressed that there was a sign that they were prepared to go into the lesson more deeply this time.

This resulted in further changes on Learning Activities, Assessment Strategies and Resources which were affected by changes made. The larger part of the lesson was transformed as teachers critically analyzed the Lesson Plan. In the process some suggestions came out of the team that:

*the lesson will be demonstrated to the whole class and not to a group of twelve or eighteen learner so that we can be able to see whether RNCS can be implemented in a real class of forty learners effectively, and

*that every participant should be in a position to demonstrate the lesson as we were all part of the planning. This meant that a Grade 3 teacher will and can demonstrate a Grade 1 lesson

(source: diary entry, 21 October 2004)



The process didn't proceed without misunderstandings. While the lesson plan was analyzed and reviewed one of the teachers felt that she had been criticized, and that some of us had not been professional in our approach. The teacher has taken criticism personally and in a negative way as she was not the only one who had designed the lesson plan. She had a problem of rejecting other people's views which was the major focus of the project, accepting other peoples' views as we worked collaboratively.

I was worried about the lack of continuity as it took us seven days to come together again. On the next gathering which was the 27 October 2004, one of the participants raised this concern and suggested that, to maintain continuity we should take at least 30 minutes everyday and build up our lesson plan. I was overwhelmed by this teachers' response, there was the beginning of evidence of commitment.

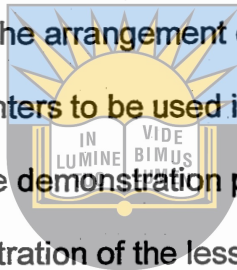
Gradually their attitude towards planning and implementation of C2005 in the revised form seemed to be changing. Our main focus on this particular day was to suggest the activities to be done by our learners.

We managed to reach consensus on the picture to be used, steps to follow, the kind of worksheet to develop and the resources that were needed for the lesson.

Everybody was pleased with the contribution each had made and we all agreed that the Lesson Plan needed to be written again as we had to consider changes made.

The completion of the lesson was a result of great effort shown by the look of satisfaction on teacher's faces. I too was pleased to notice the response.

The demonstration took place the following day. Co-operation was shown by all the teachers as they helped with the arrangement of the class, and the collection of the pictures, worksheets and counters to be used in the lesson presentation. One of the teachers volunteered to do the demonstration part. The first part of our goal, the development and the demonstration of the lesson plan was achieved. Photos were taken during presentation to document our work (see appendix A)



University of Fort Hare
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4.4.4 Reflection on action

Teachers were satisfied with the quality of a lesson plan they developed which was planned, reviewed, re-planned and then demonstrated by them. The quality of the lesson was measured based on learners performance and response. The lesson was not too easy or too difficult for our Grade Ones. They were kept busy right through the period which lasted for forty five minutes. Learners were discussing, counting, associating pictures with concrete objects and drawing. (See appendix B)

When participants were asked what they had learned from this experience, their response was as follows:

"We have learned to work together as a team."

"We have learned to trust and to be open to one another"

"Our knowledge has been boosted as far as the development of a Lesson Plan is concerned"

"our attitude towards the planning and the implementation of RNCS has changed, we now feel that RNCS can be implemented if organized the way we did"

(source, diary entry, 4 November 2004)

Their way forward was that they would like to continue with the planning after the completion of reports and schedules. This was the evidence of being empowered. Setting up principles was another way of shaping our attitude and behavior towards members and towards the project itself. When members were behaving against set principles, the researcher would re-visit them and emphasize those points she felt participants are lacking in. For example on another occasion, the researcher was forced to emphasize that as a team we had agreed that we would be willing to participate, eager to learn and that we had to be honest and open in our feelings about the process. Commitment was emerging and where it was lacking participants could be reminded of their agreement on negotiated principles.

It is not good, I explained, to say something is right yet we know deep down in our heart that it is not. This is not going to take us anywhere. From then, their degree of willingness and preparedness improved. They consistently checked and confirmed the time for our gathering sessions. Teachers were gradually becoming willing participants as they could come up with suggestions that will improve the project.

It was suggested that gatherings should take place daily at least thirty minutes per day whereas in actual fact sessions lasted for more than an hour (source: diary entry, 27 October 2004). The teachers were beginning to give evidence of greater commitment by no longer clock watching in our meeting.

In my observation teachers were showing some commitment and responsibility as this project became their reason for coming to school. Two teachers deliberately postponed their personal commitments to honour our gatherings which were pre-arranged. This showed a big change in attitude. Although teachers were not punctual, they came to school daily, they saw a need to come to school.

Those teachers have all been given time and effort to upgrading their qualification.

But this has not upgraded or improved their commitment.



Attending university courses didn't seem to empower teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to be able to be teacher- researchers, a notion adopted by Lawrence Stenhouse (Kelly 1989:138). It was through action research which was intentional and practical that teachers began to:

- * work together as a team
- * be able to critically evaluate their work (lesson) and make alternatives
- * gain knowledge as to how to plan and implement a lesson plan as well as the integration of learning areas which help teachers reach the child as a whole-socially, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually and academically.

One can also attribute their in-adequacy to the apartheid system which failed to develop teachers' creativity the time they were training to be teachers. At St Matthews College where I trained in 1974 there was little or no group work. we were not taught to work collaboratively. In fact helping one another was seen in a negative light as cheating. Individualism was promoted. Perhaps that is why teachers are still reluctant to work together.

In fact in Xhosa culture people work together very well and co-operate when it comes to organizing and arranging events like funerals or weddings. Why is it something different at school ?



My use of action research has been to begin to support teachers in the planning and implementation of C2005 in the revised form. I brought this about by using Zuber – Skerritts four moments action research model, which includes plan, act, observe and reflect (see page 50).

We only really managed to achieve a single action research cycle which guided us through out the project. The planning stage was done by a group of four teachers including the researcher, who had shown dedication from the beginning where the cyclical process was described. During this planning stage teachers brainstormed and a number of strategies were developed. These strategies were communicated to the teachers who had missed this first stage so that they could be kept on board. In this way we kept the project going.

The project went on to the implementation stage. There, the strategies were followed sequentially. Teachers planned the lesson using the official policy document as a guide. The process was observed by the participants who were sometimes five and sometimes six and reflected upon.

The conversations that took place during implementation led us to modify the lesson planned. The lesson was further observed and reflection took place. It was after this stage that teachers were able to think back and reflect on their actions. It was difficult to make the difference between action, observation and reflection. These stages took place simultaneously or were overlapping. This is where the listening and the observation skill was mostly needed. I feel that the discussion, the decisions taken, the change of attitudes, the critical evaluation of their work, constructive criticisms and the reflections that took place during the process all led to their or our professional development. As such this process was a small success or move forward in the educational improvement of our school.

The positive attitude showed by the deputy principal who is part of the Foundation Phase made a tremendous contribution to teachers' professional development.

With her motivation and support she made it possible for the project to successfully take place in the school. She was and has been acting as a professional in terms of coming to school regularly, being equal to us in terms of status and her contributions she made right through the process. Although she couldn't keep the record of her progress (diary) she supported the idea and continuously motivated teachers to keep theirs. May be she couldn't find time to write notes due to tensions caused by her leadership role.

4.4.5 Reflection on Diary use

The diary was used in this project as a method of collecting data and as a reflective tool. The researcher accumulated notes before, during and after planning sessions.

Writing notes about what was going to happen in our next face to face sessions, during the sessions and reflecting on the actions helped the researcher make sense of what was happening. Through this she was able to guide the process and maintain the participants involvement by reminding them of what had been agreed and recorded.



Reports about formal and informal conversations were entered in the diary on daily basis. The diary has been an excellent source of evidence in our project. During planning sessions, teachers would read the researcher's diary so as to remind themselves of the decisions that were taken previously. They were aware that I was keeping a diary of the process, and therefore there was a need for them to keep a diary as well. But they themselves were not at the stage of doing it for themselves. Everyday, teachers were reminded to bring their diaries which they did, but did not write any notes. This reluctance puzzled me. Perhaps if the research had taken place over a longer period teachers would have begun to see the value of keeping a reflection diary.

I feel that teachers need some guidance on how to keep a diary because if they do not keep a diary the reflection skill will never improve. When I asked them to write notes, one teacher responded by saying: ' I won't write, I cannot write, I will keep everything in my mind' (source: diary entry ,21 October 2004).

4.4.6 Reflection on Conversation

Purposeful formal and informal conversation took place during our planning sessions and during informal get-togethers. Teachers would ask questions, answer questions, make suggestions and propose innovations. On some occasions teachers would reflect on lessons learned. One teacher claimed after the discussion that:

'This is interesting, I am learning a lot in these discussions'. (source: diary entry, 21 October 2004). This is evidence of the beginning of a shift in attitude.

4.4.7 Observations

As a participant observer, I, the researcher was part of the social situation in order to investigate and monitor the professional development, a method usually used by anthropologists and ethnographers (Altrichter 1993:84). Teachers' observable behavior which was continuously changing because of circumstances helped the researcher understand how teachers felt in those particular moments. Unstructured observation gave the researcher an opportunity to reflect on teachers behavior and there was evidence of noticeable change.

At the beginning of the project teachers were enthusiastic about the process, on the way, quite a lot of problems and delays emerged but were gradually overcome, there was friction from time to time, disagreements and differences took place and were also overcome. As time went on teachers were able to take criticism from colleagues, to be tolerant and respect the ideas of others. As a group we managed to form the beginning of a working relationship among ourselves. No great claims can be made but if more time had been available I am certain that we would have gone on improving.

4.4.8 Interviews

Interviews have developed from everyday conversations. Through interviews teachers' thoughts were probed. In most cases teachers were questioned orally trying to get their opinion behind their behaviors. Having observed reluctance in the process, I, the researcher asked one teacher what she thought about the action research project we were engaged in. She responded by saying that we could do it, but we needed to work on our attitudes towards school work first (source: diary entry, 13 September 2004).



This teacher was suggesting that with the action research we were on the right path. Teachers needed more time to be able to shape their behavior and attitudes as we were collaboratively working together, sharing our problems and monitoring practice and change. As teachers we have decided we will continue implement RNCS as we have planned: i. e. developing a Lesson Plan for each grade and reflect on it. This is in the style of the Japanese experience of using a Lesson Plan as the way of developing teachers.

4.4.9 Questions

I didn't use any prepared questionnaires. But I did include four guiding questions when reviewing the Lesson Plan. According to Altrichter (1993:111) "questions are regarded as a quick method for data collection, easy to develop and are administered without any problems". In my case I experienced problems. When teachers were given a lesson plan with questions to help them reflect on the lesson planned, their responses were "it is good", "it is fine", "there is nothing to change" (source, diary entry, 14 September 2004).

My reflection on those comments led me to hypothesise that teachers were dishonest and not trust worthy in this regard. In my opinion, teachers didn't see the lesson plan in front of them instead they saw me and they didn't want to disappoint me. They needed, I thought, some guidance and more practice on how to critically analyze a lesson and answer questions truthfully. When we came to our planning session, I took the comments and the responses to question away and put the same lesson in front of them after revisiting our agreed principles. Teachers reviewed the lesson, took relevant books and policy documents, analyzed the lesson critically and made quite a number of innovations, changes and suggestions. For example it was decided that all the aspects on the picture should be dealt with, and learners should be given a variety of activities within one picture (source: diary entry, 21 October 2004). This shows that they were able to respond critically, but that the questions didn't have the power to initiate this level of thinking in these teachers.

4.4.10 Rationale for Excluding Tape recorder

The use of a tape recorder has not been effective in my case. When I introduced the idea to my participants, I was told by them that they won't discuss in the presence of a tape recording, therefore I decided not to use it. It was their democratic right to refuse the use of it if they were unhappy about its use. Maybe this was because they were not used to this kind of planning. Perhaps with more exposure to this way of working together, they would have gained confidence and seen the value of having a tape recorder of their work to analyze and reflect on. Although I knew that the use of a tape recorder was going to be helpful to us as we were going to retrieve our conversations and reflections, I discontinued its use. I wanted to maintain trust and openness in our relationship.

4.4.11 Difficulties experienced

Lack of time-

Time for a project of this nature was not enough. It came to my attention that teachers needed more time to shape their behaviors and attitudes as learning was taking place gradually, and that learning experience of this kind does not occur overnight. Doing action research as part of a taught course degree with real limits of time is not the best way to proceed. But the point can be made that nothing at all would have happened without the need for me to produce a research report as a requirement of my course.



School culture-

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According to Dalin et al (1993:99) "culture plays a significant role as a determinant of change", they further argue that school culture has a major influence on the quality of school. I do agree as it was the ethos and the climate of the school that prevented the flow needed by our action research project. Not all Foundation Phase teachers managed to involve themselves in the professional development process that took place in their own school.

Two teachers were caught between the unhealthy cultural conditions of the school and missed an opportunity. Each of them attended only two meetings. I have indicated that there is an extremely high rate of absenteeism in this particular school and that there is no day when every teacher is present at school. In such cases no learning can ever take place.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The use of action research has been productive to teachers, learners as well as the school. Teachers have gained some knowledge and in the process their behavior and attitude has improved for better. This has been a small scale research, just a taste in a taught course masters which allows for only few months for the action research project. As indicated before, teachers of this school are motivated and ready to continue with the action research process. Time will tell.



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CHAPTER 5

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Recommendation

Planning and implementation of a single lesson plan in the revised form has provided teachers with a rich context in which they were able to improve their own knowledge and reflection skills. While teachers were sharing their ideas they were engaged in exactly the kind of learning that they need to become effective teachers. They learned collectively to design a lesson, analyze it and refine it. Teachers' learning experience occurred between the three categories originally conceptualized and developed by Taba et al (1952), Elliott (1981:1991), Ebburtt (1983) Kemmis and McTaggart (1981,1988) and Zuber – Skerritt (1992). Teachers were deliberately and practically involved in the action research, observed their work and reflected on it. The use of these categories has resulted to a small extent in teachers' empowerment which is an indication that these categories can be cautiously used in the South African context. A marginal improvement is better than no improvement at all.

Action research is a challenge that needs dedication, time, thorough planning and the knowledge of the people you will be working with. It also needs teamwork. These challenges are accompanied by tension, especially when things are not happening as were anticipated or not happening at all.

Having reflected on what I term as 'tension' I realized that there is no time when one would say nothing is happening in a process of this nature. It is just that what is happening was unplanned and whatever it is it is related in some way to what you intended to prove or investigate. While planning was not taking place I observed teachers' behaviors and attitudes.

Teachers were constantly absent from school, unwilling to participate, loitering around the school and going in and out the school premises. It took teachers time to realize that this kind of behavior was affecting their own professional development negatively.

If the action research process is closely monitored, done collaboratively and practically it will be successful. It is also important that the stage of advocacy is done thoroughly. Preparing the soil before planting the crop has proved to be important.



It is recommended that, although it has been suggested that professional development relies on initiatives and support from within the working place (Kelly 1989:140), the action research process is not a straight forward exercise. It is a journey that is full of difficulties, and challenges which are of-course manageable but requires determination, dedication and monitoring.

To be able to work effectively with teachers one should first build a sound relationship with those teachers. Getting to know them will help one work more smoothly. I have worked with these teachers before as we were implementing C2005, what was different now was that I knew them better than before.

Developing the staff doesn't mean developing some of the staff members. It is important to involve all the participants in a phase in the process of planning, acting and observing and reflecting. All those affected need or must be involved for the sake of the learners otherwise there will be gaps in the teachers knowledge which will affect learners' performance.

Teachers should be entrusted with the power of making real decisions. Although action research is formally initiated by a facilitator, the participants should have 'ownership' of the process. The more participants are free, the more contribution they make and the more learning is taking place which is the facilitator's major focus – learning should take place and this will lead to change in attitude which in turn will lead to growth and development.

5.2 Conclusion

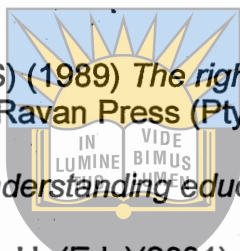
Finally, I think action research is the best approach that can be used to professionally develop teachers in their working place as they collaboratively and co-operatively engaged in the process. What happened at this particular school was important to the teachers and to the school. Considering the conditions in this particular school, it is surprising that teachers were able to embark on a project of this nature. Teachers have not been involved in action research before, but managed to work collaboratively. This experience developed them professionally and to some extent improved the atmosphere of the school. While the participants were engaged in the project they came to school regularly, more teachers were present at school and more teaching was taking place.

Although teachers only managed to complete one Lesson Plan in their cycles, they claimed that they have been empowered. Teachers reached a certain level of reflectivity as they were able to reflect and refine the lesson before testing it. They are now prepared to continue with the planning and implementation of RNCS.

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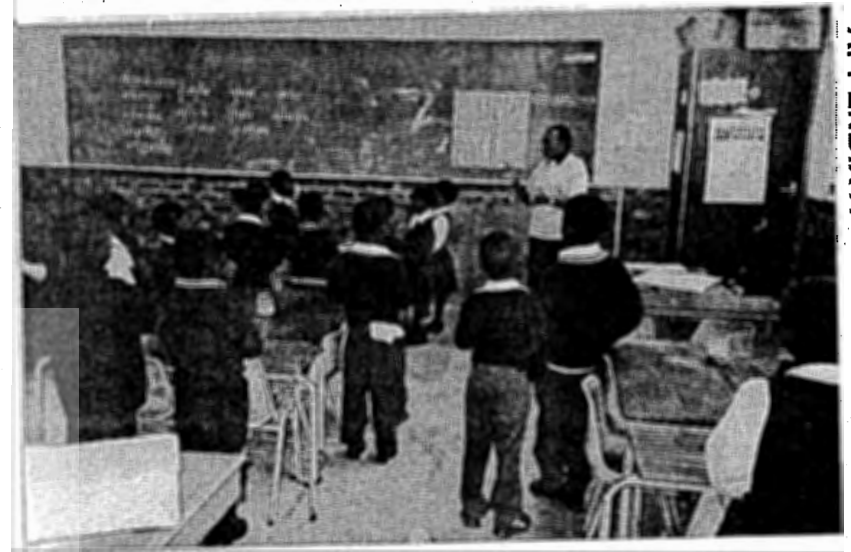
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1: A VIEW OF THE SCHOOL



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3: THE LESSON IS INTRODUCED



2: A TYPICAL CLASSROOM



4: OBSERVERS AND THE TEACHER



7: LEARNERS BUSY WITH AN ACTIVITY



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5: LEARNERS ARE BEING MONITORED



8: THE END OF THE LESSON




6: LEARNERS ARE COUNTING

NUMERACY LESSON PLAN GRADE 1

Date: 03/11/04

CONTEXT: MY HOME

CONTEXT: LEARNING TO COUNT

COs	Los and ASs	Integration	Learning Activity	Assessment Strategies	Resources
1,3	LO 1	AL LO5	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Counting orally from 1-20 backward and forward ❖ Estimating the number of objects from the picture ❖ From the picture identify objects using mathematical language ❖ Draw the objects and count using concrete apparatus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Interact and ask questions ❖ Observation ❖ Self Assessment ❖ Drawings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Picture ❖ Worksheet ❖ Counters ❖ Pencils ❖ Crayons
	<p><i>As: Can perform calculations using, appropriate symbols, to solve problems involving.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Addition and subtraction with whole numbers ❖ Estimation ❖ AS uses the following techniques ❖ Building up and breaking down numbers ❖ Using concrete apparatus 	<p><i>As: Understanding concepts and vocab relating to: number eg One, Two</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Direction: Left and Right ❖ Sequence; first, Second 			