

**CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION IN THE  
HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HSS)  
IN  
THE SENIOR PHASE**

**BY**

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**RESEARCH ESSAY**

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## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie is 'n poging om te bepaal hoe onderwysers hulle kommunikasie kan verbeter in die klaskamers van die leerarea Menslike en Sosiale Wetenskappe, waarin taal gebruik word om doeltreffend te kommunikeer.

Die navorsingprojek fokus op 'n werkswinkelintervensie waartydens die klem geplaas word op kommunikasieprobleme. Dit sluit in die aard van die onderwyser se taalgebruik, sy manier van vraagstelling, terugvoering gee, foute verbetering en die bemiddeling van die leerervaring van die Tweede Taal leerder.

Die hoof veronderstelling van hierdie studie is dat die professionele onderwyser nie moet vergeet dat kommunikasie die essensie van sy onderwysloopbaan is nie. Onderwysers moet derhalwe 'n groot deel van hulle tyd bestee aan die strewende om hulle kommunikatiewe vaardighede en die nodige strategieë te verbeter om gehalte onderwys in hulle leerareas te bevorder.

Daar word gehoop dat die werkswinkelsintervensie onderwysers wat betrokke was, geslyp het in hulle taalvaardigheid. Hulle sal derhalwe 'n groter waardering vir hulle werk openbaar en die ervaring in die klaskamer meer interessant en betekenisvol maak vir almal wat daarby betrokke is.

Hulle het 'n reuse taak om te verrig. Hulle moet 'n kritiese beskouing maak van hoe hulle onderrig en slegs die kommunikasiestrategieë toepas wat geskik is vir hulle en hul leerders. Hulle moet ook bereid wees om nie slegs hulle leerders te ondervra en vakinhoud te dossier nie. Die onderwysers moet ook met die leerders praat, hulle vrae vra en hulle foute verbeter. Hulle moet betyds terugvoering verskaf aan hulle leerlinge en die leerders se leerervaring bemiddel. Kortweg, die onderwyser moet die leerders as hulle vennote in die onderwyssituasie behandel.



This study is dedicated to  
**Mbali Nobuhle** who was so  
lovingly patient while *Mama*  
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**ERMELO**

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# **CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION IN THE HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HSS) IN THE SENIOR PHASE**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

When I visit the Human and Social Sciences (HSS) teachers from time to time as Principal of Amersfoort Combined School (Mpumalanga), I see them walking into the classroom, talking to the learners for thirty minutes and walking out. They repeat this pattern with the next class. It is only natural that I have become concerned about this type of communication that takes place in the HSS classroom where the teacher talks for most of the time and the learners get little opportunity to do so.

Apart from the fact that I am deeply concerned about the learners, my initial responsibility is to help the teachers to interact with the learners in a more suitable way. I ask myself what I can do to help them. I see they need help in the classrooms to communicate interactively and give learners more opportunity to communicate. I see they need to be developed professionally and I suspect many of the teachers in the other learning areas need this type of assistance as well, calling for whole school development.

There is also a great concern in the system that the improvement in teacher practice and in the quality of education, are not seen to be happening at the same pace as political changes in the South African system. From time to time, one reads about good practice in education reported in the media, but it is not acceptable that as South African citizens we should be proud of only a few isolated cases. Improved performance and delivery of quality education should be happening in all schools.



To date, the current education policy documents define explicitly the roles that an effective teacher should play, and the competencies needed to carry out these roles (Harlem, Bertram and Mattson, 1999: 13). These roles are defined in the Norms and Standards document for educators (2000) as follows:

- Learning mediator,
- Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials,
- Leader, administrator and manager,
- Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner,
- Community, citizenship and pastoral role,
- Assessor, and
- Learning area / subject / discipline / phase specialist.

In the same document on the Norms and Standards for Educators, each of the above roles are further broken down into the following three competencies. They are as follows:

- Practical Competence,
- Foundation Competence, and
- Reflexive Competence.



However, in order for teachers to be considered as “effective” teachers, they should be properly developed as professionals and be equipped with the necessary skills and strategies for improving their practice. Calderhead (1992), for example, states categorically that the key to improvement lies largely in professional development of the teaching corps.

It is disappointing to note that the type of in-service training teachers generally receive from the Education Department in Mpumalanga, does not prepare them for the challenges they meet in their classrooms. The demand amongst teachers is now for development workshops in which they can explore classroom

communication and language awareness in all the learning areas in general and in the HSS learning area specifically.

Unless teachers are empowered effectively to have appropriate language skills and strategies for classroom communication, a communication breakdown can be experienced in their classes. This may have detrimental effects on the results and the image of our schools.

### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The study has been influenced by a number of background factors such as

- The continuing concern among teachers for the improvement of classroom communication in the HSS learning area and the concern for the development of language awareness. Teachers in Amersfoort Combined School, for instance, raised concern that they need to be helped in relation to improving communication in their HSS learning area classes.
- The increased concern of the education departments for schools to provide quality education. In July 1999 for instance, the National Ministry for Education formulated a definite policy about the quality of education. The Tirisano education project was initiated as a matter of urgency and had to be realized in practical strategies that became the responsibility of the provinces (Brandt, H; 2001: 79). Since then many departments have been engaged in projects geared towards making quality education the norm for all public schools.
- The expanded role of schools in providing quality education. Many schools are attempting to make changes that allow them to deliver high quality curriculum and instruction. They have also accepted the challenge

to produce quality education as a product through engaging in quality assurance as a process.

- Existing literature points to the importance of communication in the classroom. Apart from the lack of communication skills in the classroom, the literature on classroom communication also points to the importance of this topic. The researcher has also acknowledged the literature documented in the past that is related to classroom communication. Hence, it is hoped that the recommendations made in the last chapter will serve to direct attention on how classroom communication should be improved in the HSS learning area classes.

It is not surprising therefore, that our committed teachers in the school developed a great concern for wanting to meet the desired standards. A collective self – reflective inquiry in the form of a workshop is a suitable way to develop teachers professionally. Teachers will receive an opportunity for developing their language skills and teaching strategies. At the same time, they will gain information as to how language can be employed as a means to improve communication.

Effective communication is the single most important prerequisite to effective learning. It not only helps learners to develop specific concepts about classroom content, but it also shapes their attitudes, beliefs and values about the “real world” and the people in it. In other words, communication and learning do have a causal relationship. Without effective communication, learning cannot take place.

It is important that the student must understand the message put across to him/her explicitly, and in the literature, as well. Sainsbury (1992) stresses that in the matter of language use, application interpretation is the process whereby the

context is rendered meaningful and it determines the possibilities for communication.

Johnson and Morrow (1981) suggest techniques that can be applied to facilitate communication in the classroom. They point out that games and game-like activities have an obvious and important place in a theory of language learning based on the development of "communicative competence".

One of the striking characteristics of communicative competence that may be borrowed from Savignon (1983) is that communicative competence is context specific. Communication takes place in an infinite variety of situations, and success in a particular role depends on one's understanding of the context and on prior experience of a similar kind.

Hansford (1988) takes this notion further by stating that communication is the essence of teaching, and many teachers will, or should, spend a large proportion of their professional careers endeavouring to improve both communicative skills and knowledge of communication processes. It is vital that teachers have an excellent grasp of their learning areas. Unfortunately, a superior knowledge of, for example, physics or industrial arts does not imply the capacity to impart this knowledge to others.

So, one may conclude from this preliminary literature review that good communication between the teacher and the learners is a necessity. The teacher must constantly ask him or herself how far the performance in class is from the objective or goal.

## **1.2 RESEARCH AIM AND RATIONALE**

The aim of this research is to help the Senior Phase HSS learning area teachers improve communication in their classroom where language is used as a medium

of instruction. The aim is not to look at language teaching as such, but to examine how language is used in order to facilitate teaching and learning. The primary focus of this research is thus on the following:

- exploring communication in the HSS learning area and on exploring language awareness,
- making a contribution to teachers' professional development, and ultimately,
- making a contribution towards improving the results of the whole school.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION**

The research question is as follows:

- What happens when teachers are part of an intervention in the form of a workshop in which the focus is on language as a medium of instruction in the HSS learning area in the Senior Phase?

### **1.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

In this report, I argue that participation in the intervention develops different communication skills among teachers, and accordingly they will respond differently to the intervention.

I argue that teachers need radical immersion workshops in which they will work on language skills and strategies for classroom communication and then use language as medium of instruction and learning in specific learning areas.

I also argue that there is a positive relationship between, on one hand, the correct use of language skills and strategies for classroom communication by

teachers and, on the other, their success in improving communication in their classes.

## **1.5 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT**

CHAPTER 1 of this research report has dealt with the introduction to the problem and it has stated the reason the study has been conducted. It has also explained the roles that an effective teacher should have and the competencies needed to carry out those roles. The background to the study explained the internal and external factors that influenced the study. The problem statement has been framed as a research question that has been followed by the research hypothesis. The outline of the research report has also been presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2 deals with the theoretical framework in which the report is located. The major theories, classroom communication, professional development, and whole school development that are related to the research problem have been reviewed. Classroom communication theory has been explicated in depth since it is useful in my study. The reader is acquainted with the literature related to classroom communication in the HSS learning area classroom as it is reviewed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3 outlines the methodology that has been used in this research project. It has provided an overview of research type, context for the study, participants in the study and methods and instruments that were used to collect data. The activities that were performed by the participants during the intervention (workshop) have been outlined. Observations and reflections made by the researcher during and after the workshop are pointed out.

CHAPTER 4 analyses the data that has been collected during the intervention (workshop).

CHAPTER 5 consists of a discussion of the findings of the research inquiry. It also outlines how they fit into the broader theoretical context.

CHAPTER 6 deals with the recommendations I have made relating to improving communication in the HSS classrooms in which language is used as a medium of instruction in the Senior Phase. Moreover, the conclusion.

## **1.6 CONCLUSION**

This study is one in Teacher Education. It seeks to clarify what happens when teachers are part of an intervention in the form of a workshop in which the focus is on language as a medium of instruction in the HSS learning area. The point of departure is not a psychological or philosophical school of thought, but the phenomenon of Teacher Education. I shall argue that this is important, in particular that facet of the phenomenon that deals with classroom communication.

Classroom communication does not depend solely on words exchanged between the teacher and learners but also on communicative skills and strategies which are important in making the process run more smoothly and satisfactorily. Often, communication between the teacher and learners breaks down, not directly because of attitudes, beliefs, commitment, dedication and so on – though these can be significant factors – but because there is differing understanding of words and contexts.

Many reasons can be cited for teaching and learning in the field of Human and Social Sciences, including:

- We need responsible citizens who can contribute towards building a democratic society,

- We need to understand our social, political and physical environments,
- We need the skills and critical awareness to investigate the world around us – to understand its past and present in order to build the future.

The above mentioned reasons for teaching and learning in the field of Human and Social Sciences will never be realized if, in our institutions, teachers lack the kind of teaching strategies and skills more appropriate and suited to accelerating communication in their classrooms.

Classroom communication is a two – way process between teacher and learner. The purpose of communication is to bridge the information gap and to facilitate learning. The HSS learning area teachers are faced with the challenge of acquiring an optimal level of communication strategies and skills for themselves, both individually and collectively as a teaching corps. This is also my challenge as a researcher.





## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

The chapter briefly discusses the major theories related to addressing the problem of non-interactive classroom communication. They include classroom communication, professional development and whole school development theories. The first mentioned theory, classroom communication theory, is explicated in depth since it is central to this research inquiry.

#### **2.1 CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION THEORY**

The major thrust of classroom communication theory lies in its emphasis that a teacher should be competent enough to promote communication in the classroom. Puhl and De Klerk (2001), quoting Brown, put this more succinctly when they state that communication consists of several components, such as:


- Organizational competence, which includes grammatical correctness, and discourse competence, or how ideas are connected by use of language,
- Pragmatic competence, which includes functional competence, such as what is accomplished through language, e.g. request, disagreement and socio-linguistic competence, referring to the appropriateness of what is said or written,
- Strategic competence, which includes “paths” the learner chooses in order to reach his / her goals,
- Psychomotor skills, which include pronunciation, the act of writing or typing, eye movements when reading etc. (Puhl and De Klerk; 2001: 116 – 117).

In short, the major components of classroom communication theory as indicated above are organizational competence, pragmatic competence, strategic competence and psychomotor skills.

The ability to handle these elements in isolation is no indication of the ability to communicate. What is needed is the ability to deal with strings of sentences and ideas in the oral modes (speaking and listening). These strings must be processed in what is called "real" time (Johnson and Morrow; 1981: 61).

Driven as teachers are by the determination to improve communication, they need, therefore, to develop and construct strategies that can facilitate communication in their HSS learning area classrooms in the Senior Phase. Such strategies can be the code-switching, description of concepts and word coinage.

Puhl and De Klerk (2001), also quoting Brown, state that:



Communicative goals are best achieved by giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to heretofore unrehearsed contexts in the real world (2001: 117).

In many studies on classroom communication (Brown; 1994, Canale and Swain; 1980, Puhl and De Klerk; 2001, Savignon; 1997) the emphasis is on language use. This implies that learners must be provided with ample time and opportunity to use the language that is a tool of communication in order to achieve the desired goals. This can best be achieved by immersing them in situations that can compel them to use the language. The more such opportunities are provided, the more they would be fluent in the application of the language.

It is crucial that teachers must understand that learners are not the same. They differ in performance levels, learning rate, learning style and understanding knowledge or ideas put across to them. They have a unique dynamic in their classrooms. Therefore, these and other differences can have important implications for communicative competence in the classroom. Teachers should foster an acceptance of this uniqueness. This does not mean, “because you are different, you can expect different treatment”. But it does imply a willingness to give each student an equal opportunity to participate in classroom communication (Hansford, 1988: 178).

The “big four” language skills referred to in communicative language teaching are – the speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Language is usually used in one skill area at a time. The contexts may determine which skill area should be applied. Sometimes the contexts may call for speaking, sometimes for writing, or sometimes for combinations of “skills” (Johnson and Morrow; 1981: 69).

A teacher who can speak better, listen better, read better or even write better may not necessary make a break-through in class. In a communication process, an essential ingredient is understanding. Learners must understand all those utterances made and / or statements written on the chalkboard and even on the examination question papers. Sainsbury (1992) asserts that communication fails because words seem to mean different things to different people. She further maintains that the theory of meaning must be based upon socially shared understanding. In other words, in any given situation a communication breakdown may be mitigated by a failure to understand the meaning of words exchanged between parties involved in that process. If the understanding of contexts is different, that may have a detrimental effect on the communication process.

The teacher must thus strive for “moving” with learners in the classroom situation. A desire to finish the syllabus by June, for instance, may not bring

about positive gains. The teacher must be willing to spend more time with the learners. The information passed on in the form of subject content must be relevant and meaningful in order to facilitate communication and learning.

It is of crucial importance that teachers must know that learners must be developed to be creative and equal partners in their education. Teachers should ask learners some questions from time to time in order to bring previously acquired knowledge to the surface and to elicit understanding during the lesson. Reed (quoting Brandt; 1997:63) points out that the types of questions that may be used are as follows:

1. Leading questions: used at the beginning of a topic,
2. Comparative questions: where choice or preference is involved,
3. Recall – of – past event questions: seeking respondent's recollection of events,
4. Recall – of – past respondent behaviours: used to develop a picture of respondent's typical behaviour,
5. Feeling questions: used to obtain effective reactions,
6. Cause – effect questions: assessing respondent's reason for events,
7. What – was (is) – there – about –it questions: used to obtain further information about respondent's reactions, or happenings,
8. Would questions: used to assess respondent's beliefs,
9. Should questions: used to assess beliefs about preferred actions,
10. Why questions: widely used for a variety of questions, but especially for probe questions to get more detail.

Although the above questions are good methods in themselves that can be applied in the HSS learning area classrooms, they may not help teachers in the classrooms to communicate interactively and to give learners more opportunity to communicate.

In most cases, teachers are regarded by learners as reliable sources of information. They introduce the lessons and initiate discussions. During the lesson, there is what is called “feed-forward” of information, which is followed by a feedback, by learners. A teacher may also take a role of feeding back information, especially regarding the learners’ performance. Such a relay of information can take different forms. Nevertheless, it is important that any feedback given by a teacher should be phrased properly and be understood clearly by the recipients.

Hansford (1988) asserts that in order to keep the flow of communication moving between teachers and students, it is generally important that immediate feedback be given. He further states that having initiated comments, or responded to teachers, students require feedback that tells them the information is correct or incorrect and whether to continue speaking or to be quiet.

Teachers must thus strive to provide learners with immediate feedback after any exercise or task, since if it is delayed it may not bring about a positive impact on the communication and ultimately, on the learning process. The results obtained will indicate whether the learners understood what was said in class.

More importantly, the correct strategies must be employed for correcting students’ errors. There is no formula to be followed regarding the number of strategies to be used in class. Each situation may determine which strategy to be used. Wildsmith-Cromarty (1997) advises that there are various ways of correcting errors, depending on the purpose behind the correcting, and beliefs held about error correction. She states that if teachers believe that errors are a necessary part of learning, they should either get the learner to correct him or herself, or pass to another learner.

In addition, teachers should understand that learners have their own survival strategies they use for communication in the classroom. A common strategy

used by most of them, is the learn-by-doing strategy. They learn by being practically involved during the communication process. Mistakes may be committed in the process but it is the teacher's responsibility to handle such situations without offending the learner's feelings in class.

I commend the commitment of the Education Department (Mpumalanga) with regard to the perspective held on learner participation in class. One of the principles as charted in the language policy of public schools states: "School language policy shall be designed to facilitate the maximum participation of learners during the learning process" (Provincial Gazette Extraordinary; 1985; 11). In other words, the HSS teachers in the Senior Phase, who are using language as a medium of instruction, should encourage maximum participation of learners to enable them to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge from the learning process. Hence, an action plan should be designed by teachers to give direction on how this objective should be realized.

The principle of the education department that has been mentioned in the previous paragraph is timeless, having no "life-span" attached to it. However, the willingness to publicly affirm one's belief, as shown by the education department, allays some fears teachers might have regarding how the language used as medium of instruction, should be treated. The onus is placed upon a district council to determine the language of instruction for a school, as long as that language of its choice will promote maximum participation of learners in the classroom.

In a learning area such as the HSS, it is not surprising, therefore, if it is expected that teachers should create more channels for learners' inputs. It is therefore probable that the more they participate during the communication process, the more they would acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for being competent in the language used as a medium of instruction. Consequently, learning will take place.

Penner (1984) states that one of the greatest barriers to classroom communication is the lack of interest and attention, contending that without attention there can be no interest; consequently, very little, if any, real learning can take place. Attracting attention and sustaining interest depends upon competence in other areas of the communicative process. He further states that poor delivery constitutes one of the greatest causes of a lack of attention and interest, and it is directly responsible for creating another major breakdown in classroom communication.

It is useful to point out here that, in order for teachers to be successful in bringing acquired knowledge to the surface, they should probe learners through close questioning. This strategy is important in mediating the learning experience of learners. Mediated learning refers to those on-the-spot adjustments that teachers make to the content and complexity of their lessons in order to accommodate individual learning needs (Pettigrew and Akhurst, 1999: 142). This means that teachers give learners an opportunity to construct their own meaning regarding how they perceive the learning content. The teachers guide them towards understanding the learning content through periodic questioning.

So far, in this section, it has been suggested that appropriate language skills are crucial for maximum participation in the communication process for the HSS learning area in particular. Such appropriate language skills must be applied by the teachers in handling the following areas:

- Talking with the learners (telling them what to do, how to do it, when to do it, etc.),
- Asking questions,
- Correcting errors,
- Giving feedback, and
- Mediating experience gained by the L2 learners.

So far, I have argued that there is correlation between the correct use of language skills and strategies for classroom communication by teachers and their success in improving communication in their classes. The strategies are directing, sustaining, extending, cueing and prompting.

Directing strategy involves questions or comments that can help the teacher to direct the pupil's attention towards a particular topic, or idea, by getting him or her to think in a certain way, such as narrating a story or imagining. They include prompting and focusing questions (Wildsmith-Cromarty, 1997:197).

Sustaining strategy can be used by the teacher to encourage the learner to say more during the communication process and to show positive acceptance of his or her ideas. The strategy involves the use of non-verbal gestures, such as the nodding of a head or facial expression, or it can be verbal, such as repetition of the pupil's utterance with a pause, thus allowing the pupil time to think further (Wildsmith-Cromarty, 1997:197).

Extending strategy can be applied by the teacher to help the pupil to develop his or her line of thought and interpretation of ideas. The strategy involves follow-through questions that take the learners' thinking deeper or wider, by asking for elaboration (more detail) or explanations and reasons and which normally start with a 'Why?' or 'How?' question (Wildsmith-Cromarty, 1997: 198).

Prompting strategy is a useful strategy that can be used by the teacher to help the learners to respond to questions correctly during communication in class. It involves providing a cue after an incorrect or incomplete answer or silence (Pettigrew and Akhurst, 1999:47).

Cueing strategy is non-judgemental in nature but gently reminds a learner to respond positively in class. It can be used by a teacher as a useful mechanism for promoting a positive classroom. For example, a child who fails to raise his/her



hand, when answering a question could be given the following cue by the teacher, 'Remember Patience to raise your hand when you wish to answer a question' (Pettigrew and Akhurst, 1999:47).

The final decision about which strategy to use during communication in the HSS learning should rest upon the teacher. However, the teacher must make an informed decision regarding which one works for the class.

Finally, it is necessary to look briefly into the question of the roles of learners in the HSS learning classroom. The researcher naturally understands by way of necessity that this report should attempt to contribute towards Teacher Education. However, one is tempted to investigate what should be the roles of the learners in the HSS learning area classrooms since all the ventures at communication are simple efforts aimed at assisting them in their education. This may provide a topic to further research by other scholars.

I argue that learners must also play a significant role in their education. They should participate freely without any reservations. It is important that they should realize that mistakes are part of the learning process, and making a mistake is not unusual. They should raise their concerns when they do not understand what the teacher is saying in class. It is only through feedback that a teacher may know whether the initiated message or information passed by him/her to learners needs any adjustment or modification.

It is imperative that learners must understand that there is no learning area that is more important than any other. They are all different components forming a curriculum of a school. Hence, they must be committed to their education and use the language determined as a medium of instruction.

## **2.2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY**

Whilst Classroom Communication theory is important, it is also relevant to my argument that teachers should be developed from time to time. Professional development is a process that should take place in the school on a continuous basis. If the school has as one of its goals, a need to improve communication in the HSS learning area classrooms every year, teachers should be developed from time to time. This may include taking into cognizance communication skills and teaching strategies when developing them, in order to yield the desired results. If the teacher has acquired the appropriate communication skills and strategies for him/ or herself – not only will he or she be successful in solving the problem of non-interactive classroom communication, but can also help his or her colleagues.

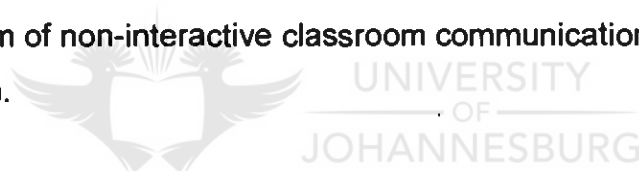
An important part of professional development initiatives is the development of communication skills. Crandall (1993) states that professional development opportunities should primarily enable practitioners to question their own practice, expand their knowledge of and skills in improving that practice, and evaluate the effectiveness of their classrooms. In other words, professional development as a theory suggests that a professionally developed teaching force can spearhead reforms in a school regarding the communication process.

The School Management Team (SMT) should provide support structures and opportunities for its members so that they will enthusiastically contribute towards performing the school's activities and to realizing its goals, such as, communicating with learners effectively.

This research project has another aim, that of contributing towards the development of teachers so that they can become more professional. There are programmes intended for teachers that have been launched and implemented in the education sector with the worthwhile aim of improving the performance of

teachers in the school. Such programmes are, for instance, Whole School Evaluation (WSE), Culture of Learning, Teaching and Services (COLTS) and Developmental Appraisal Systems (DAS). Whilst it may be difficult to make an informed decision as to how to prioritize them in order to meet the desired standards, knowledge of these programmes cannot have a significant impact if teachers in the school are incapable of communicating successfully with their learners in their HSS learning area.

It is also interesting to note that such programmes are aimed at making the education system attractive and the teaching profession effective, challenging and desirable to all stakeholders involved in it. The DAS, for instance, aims at helping educators to know their good points in their teaching, and what they need to improve on (Human Resource Development; 2001: 2). This implies, therefore, that if teachers implement the DAS instrument, they may gain an opportunity to address the problem of non-interactive classroom communication, which is a great threat to them.

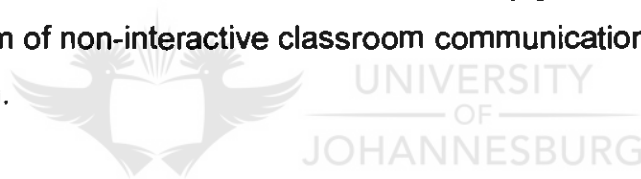


It is important to know what is good or bad about what teachers are doing in the education setting, and to be aware that it cannot serve any purpose if they are still inadequately equipped for their practice. A teacher who has sought help from colleagues on improving classroom communication as a **core** or optional criterion may not get the required assistance in relation to human and material resources. South Africa's public schools are still under – provisioned and lack full-time skilled manpower for ensuring that every project or initiative undertaken receives the necessary attention it deserves.

It is also debatable whether it would be placing unnecessary responsibility on the education department if one were to expect it to provide districts with well-trained officials. Curriculum Implementers, for instance, can act as empowerment cascade drivers in relation to classroom communication for teachers in all the learning areas and the HSS. However, this does not necessarily imply that

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schools should not be innovative and flexible enough to initiate an empowerment project as that undertaken by Amersfoort Combined School on improving classroom communication. Again, if one looks at the DAS approach, it has as one of its important beliefs that people (teachers) are capable of self – reflection, learning and developing (Human Resource Development; 2001: 14). They are promised that they can reflect on their practice, learn from it and be professionally developed in the process. It is expected therefore, that our teachers will gain an opportunity during the intervention (workshop) regarding how communication can best be promoted in their HSS learning area classrooms.

Empowerment projects will be ineffective if teachers in schools do not support them, or they are just not encouraged enough to implement them. Ndhlovu and Mthiyane (2001) advise that targeting teachers for development is therefore a strategic intervention that paves the way for further development. Teachers are powerful levers for bringing about change in the system. It is crucial, therefore, that the School Management Teams should strive to have operative goals as well, which will reflect their true intentions regarding how teachers will be supported and guided in relation to improving communication in their classrooms. This initiative can have a positive impact towards developing teachers professionally.

### **2.3 WHOLE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT THEORY**

Communication in professional development goes hand in hand with whole school development. A developed teaching force makes a significant contribution towards the development of the whole school.

A school is an educative institution consisting of several components directed at achieving the goal of education. The most important components are the learner, the teacher and the learning content. A systematic approach to school

development calls for a continuous interrelationship between these components, but if any are missing we may not have an educative situation and therefore learning cannot take place. Furthermore, if there is continuous good communication between the teachers and the students in their classes, they can obtain good academic grades or marks in their learning areas at the end of the year. Ultimately, this can make a positive contribution towards the development of the whole school.

The teacher must acquire further and new skills, and the expertise for eliminating communication problems during the lesson in the classroom. If the learners have a clear understanding of what is expected from them and have been inspired enough, any task assigned to them can be executed successfully.

The whole school development theory relies on human resource development as a way to foster the knowledge and skills required to overcome problems through systematic learning activities that produce change in the organisation (Makhuvele, 2000: 8). In other words, the whole school development process relies upon the professional development process for its success. If the school has a competent, professionally fulfilled workforce that is able to perform the various activities of the school effectively, such initiatives and work-related tasks can contribute towards the development of the whole school.

I argue that a "developed" school should have the following features:

- ◆ Good channels of communication,
- ◆ The availability of quality resources (curriculum materials, ideas and support structures),
- ◆ Technically advanced (in relation to infrastructure, buildings and equipment),
- ◆ Correct information flow (knowledge and practice),
- ◆ Leadership and management within a school (of sound character and nature),  
and

- ◆ A healthy school culture.

Marczeley (1996) points out that schools improve only when teachers in them improve methods, means and mindsets. It may be contended thus, that if the school is successful in moving its practices forward by developing its staff, this tends to have a positive impact upon how they perceive themselves and their work. They will use the correct skills and strategies in contributing towards the development of the whole school.

This theory is relevant here since one of the aims of this research project, as stated above, is to contribute towards improving the results of the whole school.

## **2.4 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Initial studies on classroom communication (Friedrich, Galvin, Book, C.L.; 1976, Hurt, Scott, McCroskey, J.C.; 1978, Winn-Bell Olsen, J.E.; 1977) focused mainly on areas such as the techniques that should be employed for the classrooms that use language as a medium of instruction. In addition, these studies on classroom communication contain step - by - step instructions which teachers may want to take to their classrooms in order to facilitate communication and suggestions on how to improve interpersonal communication.

For example, Friedrich, Galvin and Book (1976) isolated a set of variables useful for viewing student / teacher relationships as they occur in the classroom.

Rather than prescribing a formula for healthy communication, they identified a set of parameters that can allow teachers to describe what actually happens when a teacher and a student communicate for the purpose of learning.

Furthermore, the studies as mentioned in the preceding paragraph focussed on certain situational applications of interpersonal communication, such as between persons of different races, between associates in a classroom or as members of

a small group. They also dealt with selected important parts of the interpersonal process itself such as learning to trust one another, becoming more open and frank, and utilizing nonverbal communication skills.

Whereas Winn-Bell Olsen (1977) provided exercises that can be applicable in many other contexts to different kinds of learners and to other types of classroom and teaching-learning environments, different sections of this author's study follow somewhat different plans. Some like the rod activities which contain instructions, and which a teacher may want to take into the class and follow directly. Some are more general descriptions and suggestions for a teacher to develop him/herself, such as the tape and vocabulary activities. Others, like the map exercises, are intended for a teacher to duplicate and use in the classroom.

Hurt, Scott and McCroskey (1978) in turn show in their work how the principles of communication could be applied to classroom settings so that student learning might be facilitated and improved. They explain basic communication concepts and integrate those concepts into learning environments. They argue that it is imperative that the process of communication must be understood in order that the practice thereof becomes more rewarding.

In the 1980's the focus of the studies on classroom communication (Hansford,B;1988, Penner,M.S;1984) shifted to integrating the major components of classroom behaviour especially the act of teaching, with a knowledge of human communication. The studies constituted suggestions related to alternatives that can link the communication process and teaching as a profession.

Hansford (1988) raised some issues traditionally associated with the studies of educational psychology and sociology. Reference was made to the use of power by the teachers in classroom settings, individual differences of learners, types of learning outcomes and the importance of motivation and reinforcement in



facilitating communication in the classroom. He maintained that teaching is a communicative act, and the more teachers attempt to gain an appreciation of the communication process, the greater the potential for effective instruction is going to be realized. He stressed the importance of understanding the process of communication itself and argued that with human beings there is always the possibility of a change for the better in any given situation.

Penner (1984) in turn highlighted the importance of avoiding communication breakdown in the classroom. He believed that it is important for teachers to be trained in the communicative arts and techniques by teachers so that the ultimate aims of teaching might be realized. He recommended that teachers should always communicate information to the students correctly, teach them to think independently and critically, and train them to develop intellectually and culturally to their fullest potential. Penner believed that poor personal qualities of teachers and ineffective training in communication techniques might diminish effectiveness in using the language used as a medium of instruction in the classroom.

More recent studies on classroom communication (Berge, Collins, M.P;1995, Neill, S; 1991, Saisbury,M;1992, Wildsmith-Cromarty, R;1997) focus on nonverbal communication skills and computer mediated communication. This means communication and understanding, as well as thinking through language. Neill (1991) argues that the nonverbal signals, for instance, are less easily controlled than words and can offer reliable information to both teachers and learners on each other's true intentions during the communication process. He points out that acquiring nonverbal communication skills by teachers is a necessity. He also states that such signals are more ambiguous than words, and this makes them valuable, especially when teachers or learners wish to send a message and do not want to be challenged.

On the other hand, Sainsbury (1992) stresses the importance of the notions of meaning and understanding of utterances made by both teachers and learners

during the communication process. She argues that communication usually fails if words seem to mean different things to different people, and asserts that the theory of meaning must be based upon socially shared understanding between participants during the communication process.

Berge and Collins (1995) in turn spelled out how communication channels such as the Internet can play a significant role in promoting free access to many and diverse resources including local, national and international libraries and databases. Information is also provided in their study on how teachers can accomplish effective classroom communication as well as personal and scholarly growth from using computers.

Wildsmith-Cromarty (1997) puts more emphasis on the role that language plays in learning from both the learners' and teachers' point of view. Her work also examines what actually happens in language classrooms and how teachers may start thinking about changing their basic approach to teaching through new insights into how learners learn best. More importantly, her work is about ways in which teachers may help learners learn language and learn through language, especially the English language.

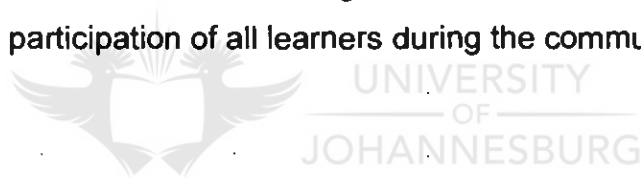
## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the main theories, classroom communication, professional development and whole school development, which form the broader framework of knowledge and which are related to classroom communication, have been explained and discussed in depth.

Previous studies on classroom communication have been reviewed in this chapter. In the 1970's, for instance, it has been stated that emphasis was put more on exercises and principles that could be applied to facilitate and improve communication in the classroom. In the 1980's, it has been mentioned that the

focus was on the use of power by the teachers in classroom settings, individual differences of learners, types of learning outcomes and the importance of motivation and reinforcement in facilitating communication. Furthermore, it has been stated that most recent studies on classroom communication have focused on the use of nonverbal communication skills, the use of communication channels such as the Internet in improving communication. The studies also suggest strategies that can be applied by teachers in order to help learners understand the language that is used as the medium of instruction.

The importance of classroom communication can hardly be over-emphasized. I personally argue that it is only through the application of all communication skills and teaching strategies that one can expect to make progress related to communication in the classroom. Put differently, success achieved after the correct application of those skills and strategies can result in the involvement and, eventually, full participation of all learners during the communication process.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research project has been undertaken within an action research methodological framework. A number of definitions on action research are found in general methodological handbooks, emphasizing how this research project may be started.

#### **3.1 ACTION RESEARCH**

According to Reed (quoting Kemmis and Taggart; 1997:34), action research is a form of collective, self – reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in several situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practice, as well as their understanding of these practices and situations in which they are carried out.

There are five basic steps in the action research process. They involve the following:

- ◆ The teacher identifies a problem,
- ◆ develops a plan of action to improve what is happening or to solve a problem,
- ◆ implements the plan,
- ◆ observes the effects of action taken to address the problem,
- ◆ reflects on these effects, and this forms a basis for further planning and subsequent action through a succession of cycles.

#### **Participants**

In accordance with the purposes of this research inquiry, I developed an intervention (workshop) and conducted it at the Teachers' Centre. My research group were colleagues from my school, eleven in number, with whom I had a

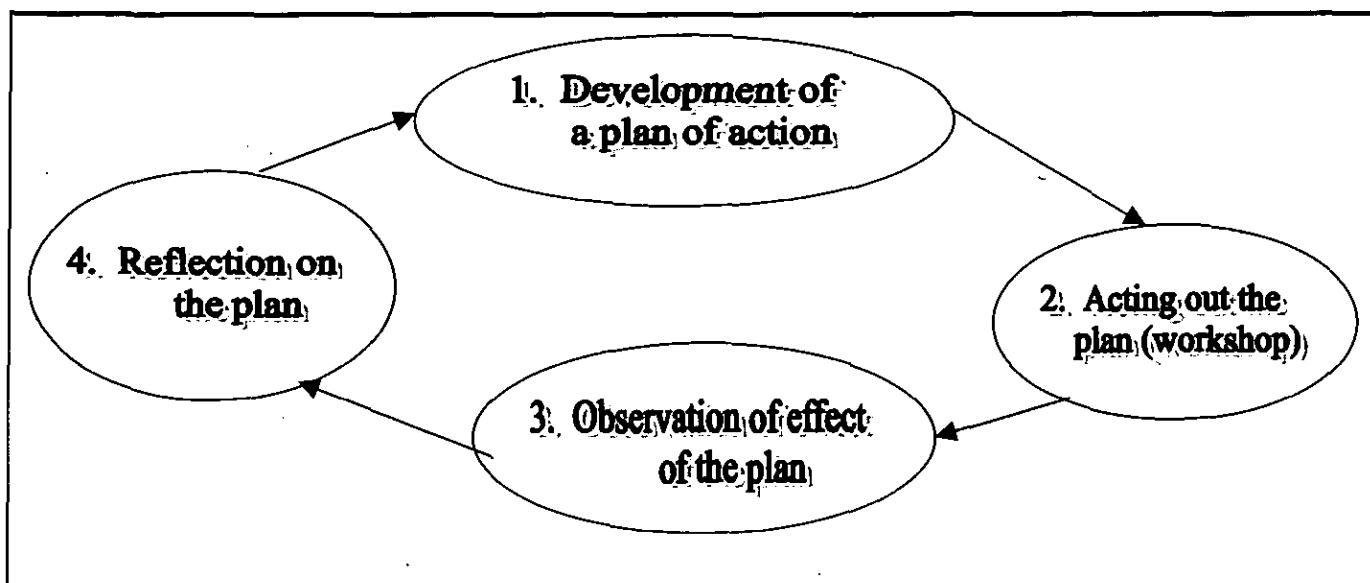
shared concern – that was **improving communication in the HSS learning area in the Senior Phase**. Five female teachers were teaching the HSS learning area in Grades 7 and 8, while six male teachers were teaching the HSS learning area in Grade 9. The home language of all the teachers who participated during the intervention (workshop) was Zulu. They also met the minimum requirements of their posts (REQV 13) at school. The teachers were aware of the purpose of the research and the research instruments that were going to be used.

I had a dual role of being a participant during the intervention (workshop) as well as the researcher. As a participant, I intervened in trying to help teachers to improve communication in their HSS learning area classrooms in the Senior Phase. As a researcher, I tried to locate problems that prevented them from communicating interactively with their learners.

I also worked through a series of linked research cycles or spirals that entailed **planning, acting, observing and reflecting**.

My own action research project, briefly speaking, followed the diagram on the next page. In the next section (3.1), I will elaborate on each of these stages.

**Figure 1. The action research spiral**



The **planning stage** had to do with all those actions taken to bring change in the HSS learning area classes. Such actions entailed situation analysis, identification of the problem, development of the intervention (workshop) and so on.

The **acting stage** involved engaging teachers in a one – day workshop at the Teachers' Centre, which had all the facilities and equipment I needed.

The **observation stage** entailed looking at what was happening during the workshop, such as, the kinds of changes I perceived, the unexpected consequences and behaviour of participants, their reactions towards what was happening during the workshop, and how they interacted with one another, using the language which was the medium of instruction.

The **reflection stage** entailed looking back critically at what happened during the intervention (workshop). I looked at whether the process was positive or negative. I also made a decision related to whether it was necessary to do further investigation into the problem of non-interactive classroom communication.

During the intervention (workshop), teachers were given an opportunity to critically take stock of their teaching practice. They had to commit themselves to making decisions as to which measures can be undertaken to make the teaching and learning situation effective to all stakeholders involved.

The data, relating to what happened as a result of actions taken, was gathered by using the following instruments:

- Interviews,
- Video and tape – recorded lessons,
- Transcripts and classroom photographs,
- Textbook pages from the Senior Phase HSS learning area,
- A questionnaire,
- Field notes written during and after every activity and,
- The remarks of a “critical friend” who monitored and took notes during the workshop.

During the workshop, teachers were engaged in six different activities. These activities included:

- A Questionnaire,
- A SWOT Analysis,
- A Video screening,
- Transcript analysis,
- Classroom arrangement analysis.

- Role-play and De-briefing on the role-play.

The focus of these activities was on the following:

- The nature of teacher talk,
- Asking of questions,
- Giving feedback,
- Correcting errors, and
- Mediating the learning experience for the L2 learners.

Towards the end of the workshop, teachers gave a detailed account of the outcome of all the proceedings. They had to evaluate it in terms of the specific outcomes, quality, climate of the learning environment, as well as the facilitation skills. They were also requested to share some general comments on the evaluation forms, if they had any.

The report indicated that action research for this inquiry took place through linked cycles that entailed planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

In the next section of this chapter I am therefore going to look at the above-mentioned cycles that were followed in an attempt to investigate the intervention.

### **3.1.1 PLANNING**

I embarked on the first cycle of action research by doing a reconnaissance (fact – finding) exercise. I needed to have some sense of the constraints and possibilities of the situation in the classroom. This involved collecting the data by observing a lesson in class, getting informal feedback and analyzing information as provided by teachers. In addition, two lessons were recorded using audiotape and video recorders.



Furthermore, preparations for the workshop were made involving the following activities:

- Booking the venue to be used,
- Collecting workshop materials and equipment,
- Preparing manuals to be used by the participants,
- Setting the date for the workshop,
- Arranging catering,
- Explaining to the Circuit and District Managers about my intended actions, and then requesting permission from them to conduct the workshop on the set date, and also
- Requesting our Circuit Manager to be a critical observer during the workshop.

### **3.1.2 ACTING (OUT THE PLAN IN THE WORKSHOP)**

In the early stage of the workshop, the facilitator (researcher) attempted to create a warm climate and to establish credibility with participants by doing the following:

- Introducing guests,
- Giving participants general ground rules for the workshop, (some ground rules were elicited from the group),
- Participants were requested to introduce themselves,
- They were invited to state on the flipcharts their workshop expectations, and to mention some specific areas of concern in terms of language in their specific learning area, and then,
- The primary objectives of the workshop were outlined.

### **ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKSHOP**

#### **3.1.2.1 QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire which was the first activity for the day was aimed at determining the teachers' understanding of the learning content and to elicit their general knowledge of the subject in question.

Each participant had to respond to Questions 1 – 10 on a separate sheet, by giving a YES / NO / DON'T KNOW answer. The questions of the Questionnaire are as follows:

**Questionnaire**

1. Teacher – learner interaction in a classroom should be formal.  
(Yes / No / Don't know)
2. Learner participation in class should be minimized to promote the flow of a lesson. (Yes / No / Don't know)
3. Talking about experiences and ideas by learners hinders the learning process. (Yes / No / Don't know)
4. Working in-groups on language problems and exercises in the HSS promotes learning. (Yes / No / Don't know)
5. The learning process can be promoted by establishing a position of dominance over the learners. (Yes / No / Don't know)
6. Language – learning activities in HSS promote different classroom climates. (Yes / No / Don't know)
7. Teachers should use a very limited repertoire of correction techniques in classes. (Yes / No / Don't know)
8. Teachers should talk a lot in their classes. (Yes / No / Don't know)
9. Communication with the teacher is often a reward for the student in itself.  
(Yes / No / Don't know)
10. Communication does not bridge the information gap.  
(Yes / No / Don't know)

The answer sheets were collected from all participants after this activity. The participants were divided into three small groups and requested to respond to the same questions again. Their contributions were recorded on the flipcharts.

The findings will be discussed in Chapter 4 (4.1).

### **3.1.2.2 SWOT ANALYSIS**

The main aim of this activity was to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the teachers in order to help them with regard to their needs and problems.

Individually, the teachers were requested to analyze their strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities (SWOT) as HSS learning area (or History and Geography) teachers. Furthermore, participants had to discuss their responses in their respective groups. One member had to represent his / her group during the discussions. I will report the findings in the following Chapter (4.2).

### **3.1.2.3 VIDEO SCREENING**

I then set up a Video Show as our next activity. Participants were expected to analyze the lesson in terms of the following:

- How long did the teacher talk in class?
- What types of questions did the teacher ask?
- What kind of feedback was given to the learner?
- How was the interaction between the teacher and learners?
- Were the learners' existing knowledge and understanding elicited by the teacher?

In their respective groups participants had to record their findings / ideas on the Lesson Observation Form printed on the next page. One member from each group had to do a presentation in a plenary group. The specific aim of this activity was therefore to assess the communication skills and teaching strategies employed by teachers in their HSS learning area classes. What happened during this action will be reported in the next Chapter (4.3).

**LESSON OBSERVATION FORM**

**SUBJECT/ LEARNING AREA**

**TOPIC:**

**SKILL AREA AND COMMENTS**

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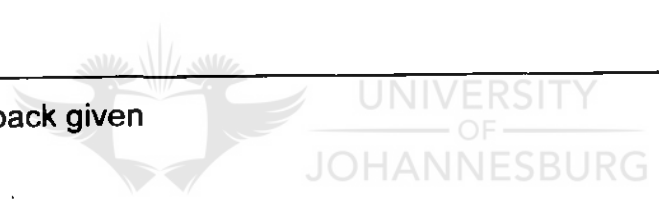
1. The nature of teacher talk

---

2. Type of questions asked

---

3. Kind of feedback given



---

4. Interaction in class

---

5. Learners' existing knowledge and understanding

---

6. Summary comments.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

### **3.1.2.4 TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS**

The aim of this activity was to examine the teaching and the learning processes as well as the communication skills and teaching strategies employed by teachers in the HSS classrooms.

Two transcripts were issued for this activity. These transcripts are printed on the next two pages. The entire group was divided into groups of 5 / 6 people each. The participants were expected to consider the following questions with regard to Transcript A and Transcript B respectively:

1.
  - a) Did the teacher introduce the lesson appropriately?
  - b) Did the teacher succeed in mediating the learning experience for the L2 learners?
  - c) Did the language used facilitate learning? If so, how?
  - d) Did he succeed in eliciting his learners' thinking? Did he understand their idiosyncratic ways of interpreting things, their problems and misconceptions and their strengths?
  
2.
  - a) Cite instances where the teacher has resorted to code switching during his / her lesson. Does it serve any purpose?
  - b) Does the teacher ask meaningful questions that encourage reasoning?
  - c) Comment on the L2 learners' communication skills and second language competence.

What happened during the discussion will be reported in 4.4.

## TRANSCRIPT A

- T : Slaves (izigqila) were brought to S. Africa in the 1670s. They were usually men and came mainly from the East Indies, but also from East and West Africa. Slaves had to work without pay for the person who owned them. They were mainly used for manual labour in the Cape. Many slaves were skilled workers as well. Manual labour means working with your body, doing work like digging, carrying heavy things or washing dishes.
- L 1 : Like painting and building a house, just like my dad. My dad knows how to do such difficult things.
- T. : Class, is painting and building a house also classified under manual labour?
- Ls : (pause)
- T : Is painting the walls or building a beautiful brick house or a building like Shoprite Checkers also known as manual labour? What do you think?
- L 2 : I think you need to go to school to be able to do such things.
- T : Good Peter. People who can do things that need a special knowledge (ulwazi) and skill (ikhono) such as painting and building are called skilled workers. They learn such trades at special schools.

Source: Transcript of a tape – recorded Gr. 9 lesson.

## TRANSCRIPT B

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Teacher: | <p>“Some of the coldest climates on earth occur in the Northern parts of Alaska. In this land, a small but hardy group of native Americans live and prosper in small villages where hunting and fishing is a way of life. This small group of villagers... “</p> <p>You have your hand up Lena?</p>   |
| Lena:    | I don't know what the work, “hardy” means.  |
| Teacher: | What do you think it means Lena? ( <b>asking her to make a prediction</b> )   |
| Lena:    | Well, something that's hard – like may be a stone.  |
| Teacher: | That's a good example of something hard. Let's think of some other words that might mean almost the same as “hard” ( <b>introducing the idea of synonyms</b> ).   |
| Tim:     | Something that is hard is strong.   |
| Teacher: | Mmmm (nods in agreement with Tim).  |
| Shezi:   | It also lasts long.   |
| Ann:     | If you're strong, you can't be hurt.  |
| Teacher: | Okay, let's see if any of your ideas fit in with the sentence, “in this land, a small but hardy group of Native Americans live and prosper in small villages where hunting and fishing is a way of life.” What do you think? Which meaning will go there? ( <b>encouraging the idea of fitting synonyms into text to clarify meaning</b> ). |
| Tim:     | Well, what if we took the word “hardy” out and put in the word “strong”? I think it could mean the same thing.  |
| Teacher: | Thank you Tim. What do the rest of you think?   |
| Raksha:  | It makes sense to me, because when you're strong you can't be hurt – say by the cold up north – and then you live a long  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
|          | time.   |
| Teacher: | You have summarized that well, Raksha. What do you think Shezi? |

Pettigrew and Akhurst, J; 1999: 134

### **3.1.2.5 CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT ANALYSIS**

The next activity was the classroom arrangement analysis. The aim of this activity was to establish the best teaching and learning environments suitable for both HSS teachers and learners.

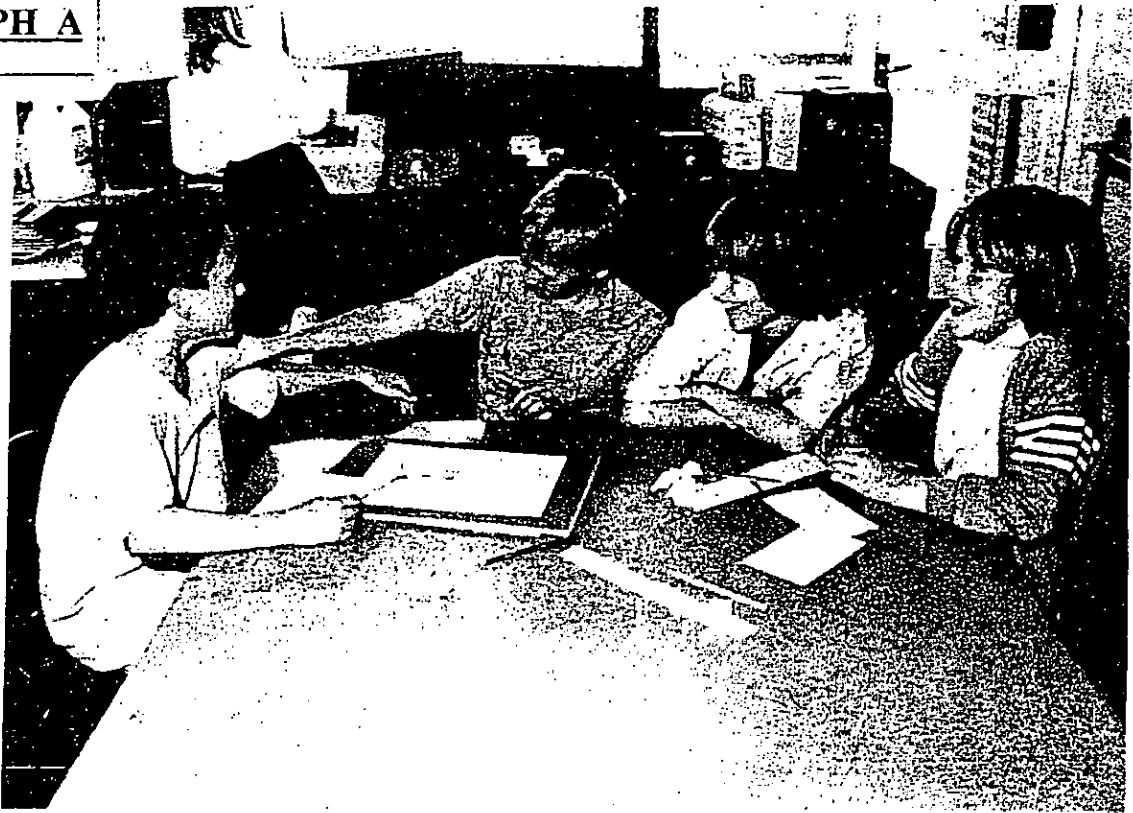
Participants were divided into three groups. They were requested to look at the photographs "A", "B" and "C" inserted on the next pages. Then they were requested to make some comments on the following:

1.
  - (a) Classroom arrangement
  - (b) Learning / teaching aids
  - (c) Teacher – learner participation
  
2. If you were a teacher depicted in the photographs, what changes could you have made in your class?
  
3. Give your photographs suitable titles.

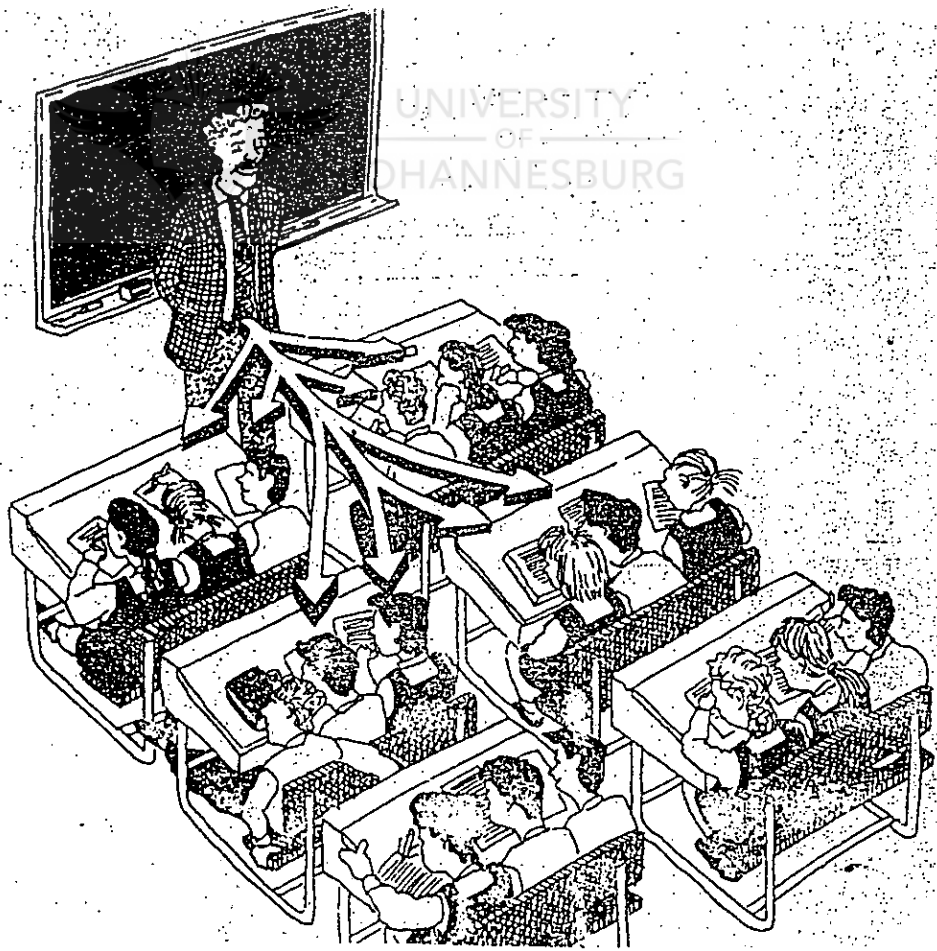
The things they mentioned during the discussion will be reported in 4.5.



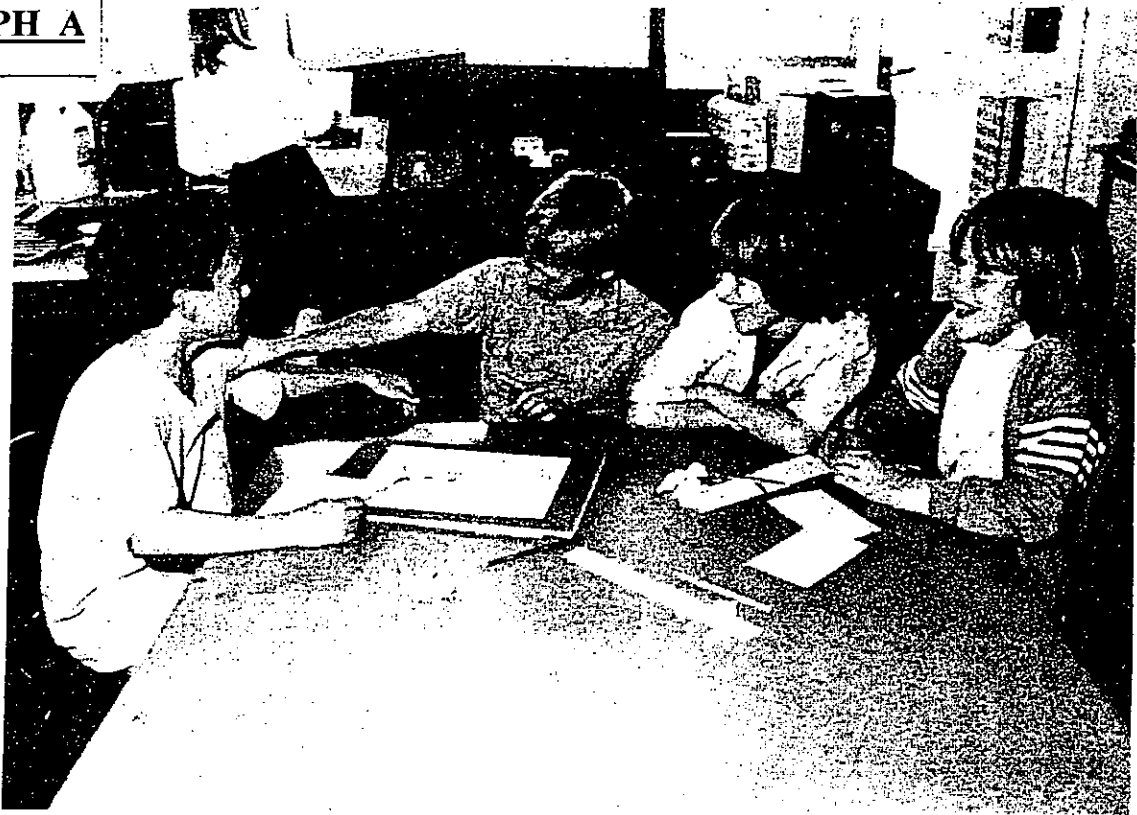
**PHOTOGRAPH A**



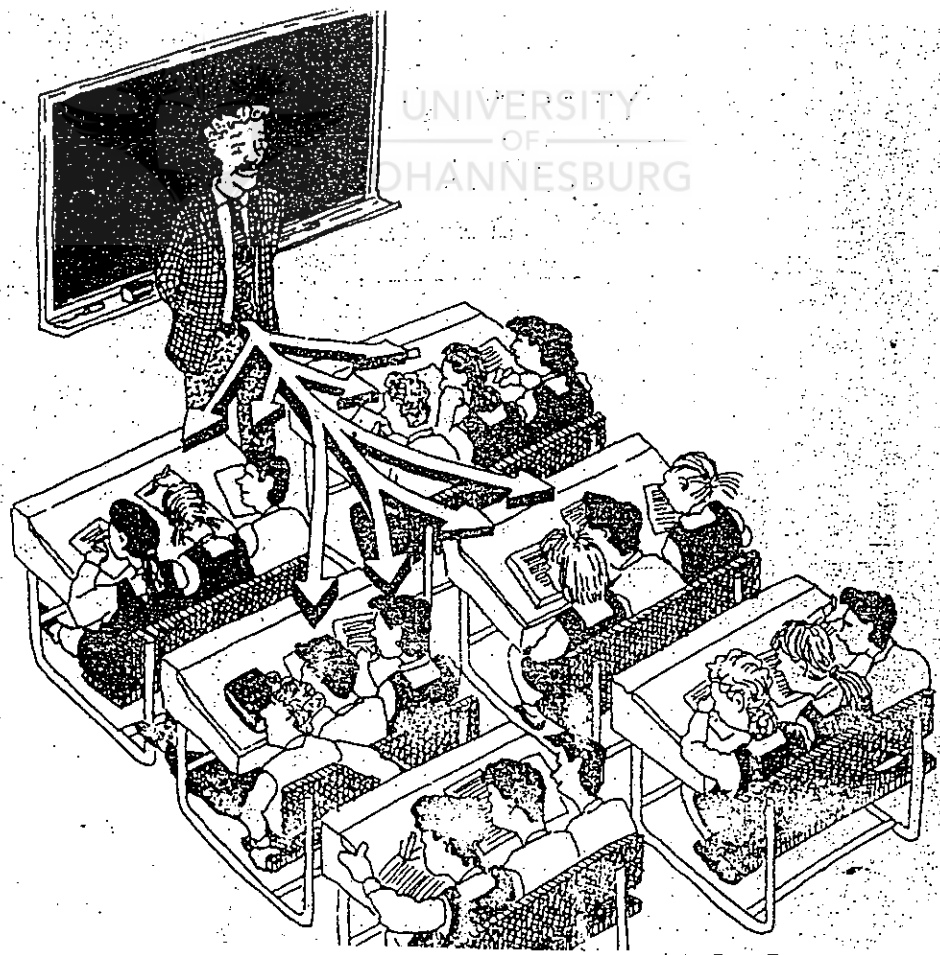
**PHOTOGRAPH B**



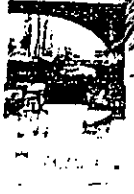
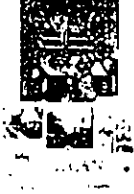
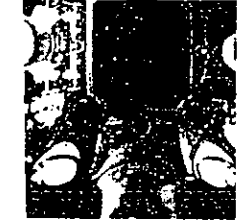
**PHOTOGRAPH A**



**PHOTOGRAPH B**



**PHOTOGRAPH C**



- ❖ Areas of weaknesses were isolated,
- ❖ Language skills to be consolidated and developed were identified,
- ❖ Relevant communication strategies were advanced and some developed during the workshop, and in addition
- ❖ Teachers cleared some misconceptions they held about their HSS learning area students.

In the evaluation forms issued at the end of the workshop, when commenting on the workshop outcomes, participants had the following to say:

They indicated that they benefited by participating during the workshop. They pointed out that they explored communication skills and strategies to be used in the HSS learning area. They further mentioned that they became empowered on how to take control of unexpected situations that may arise from interacting with their learners.

Some participants pointed out that they wished that workshops of that nature could be brought to them on a regular basis. Others stated that they gained important information that the HSS learning area may integrate with other learning areas during a lesson in class, whereas others stated that they gained a lot of information and insight to the problem of non-interactive communication. They further pointed out that this knowledge gained helped them to revisit some of the teaching strategies they used in the past.

When looking back critically at what happened during the intervention (workshop) I felt that the whole process had been successful. I also felt that it was not necessary to do further investigation into the problem of non-interactive communication. The research project also confirmed my hypothesis that participation in the intervention will develop different skills among teachers, and that they will respond differently to the intervention.

### **3.1.4 CONCLUSION**

It can be asserted that an attempt was made in this chapter to mention, describe and explain the type of inquiry and the stages which were undertaken to investigate the problem of non - interactive classroom communication.

During the acting (workshop) stage, participants were engaged in six different and simple activities. The focus of the activities was more on the nature of teacher talk, the asking of questions, giving feedback, correcting errors and mediating the learning experience for the learners.

The acting stage seemed to be a success. Data of a high quality was gathered by using instruments such as the questionnaire, transcripts, photographs of classrooms, and so on. Participants learnt a lot and felt that they had acquired new ideas on communication skills and strategies that could be used in their HSS learning area classrooms in the Senior Phase.

Whether the new knowledge gained will have any effect on the long term, is still to be seen. However, efforts will be made to continue developing teachers, and a follow up of classroom communication in the Senior Phase will be made in the near future.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

This chapter focuses on data analyzed by the researcher to determine whether there are any patterns developed during the workshop related to classroom communication.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that different techniques were used to gather data during the workshop. The techniques that were used are, for instance, the questionnaire, which was issued to all participants (teachers) during the workshop, transcripts, photographs of classrooms, the video-recorded lesson. What follows in this chapter are the data and the analysis thereof that was gathered during each activity.

#### **4.1 QUESTIONNAIRE**



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An overwhelming majority 98% showed an understanding of the subject content and a sound general knowledge when responding to the questionnaire activity (3.1.2.1). The results were as follows:

**RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS IN QUESTIONNAIRE (3.1.2.1)**

| NO. OF PARTICIPANTS |     |    |            |
|---------------------|-----|----|------------|
| QUESTIONS           | YES | NO | DON'T KNOW |
| 1                   | 6   | 4  | 1          |
| 2                   | 1   | 10 | -          |
| 3                   | 1   | 10 | -          |
| 4                   | 1   | 10 | -          |
| 5                   | 1   | 8  | 2          |
| 6                   | 9   | 2  | -          |
| 7                   | 4   | 7  | -          |
| 8                   | -   | 11 | -          |
| 9                   | 11  | -  | -          |
| 10                  | 4   | 7  | -          |

Three major themes could be identified in what participants said in a plenary group when responding to the questionnaire. They are communication, the learning process and teacher talk.

With regard to the first theme, **communication** between the teacher and learner, the majority of participants felt that it is imperative that it should always be formal. They supported the statement that communication is often a reward in itself for the student. Many participants also felt that communication bridges the information gap.

With regard to the **learning process** theme, many participants mentioned that for effective learning to take place, teachers should encourage maximum participation of learners in the class. During discussions it was raised that a

“successful” teacher in the school is the one who is versatile, free and approachable by the learners. He / she encourages learners to come forward with their personal experiences, ideas and opinions related to the learning content.

Furthermore, participants felt that teachers should vary the learning activities to make their lessons interesting. It was pointed out that activities that encouraged learners to work in small groups or pairs could facilitate learning. They supported the statement that learning activities can create different classroom climates during the learning process.

With regard to the **teacher talk** theme, many participants said it should be a process involving the use of unlimited correction techniques by a teacher. They also mentioned that the teacher should not dominate a discussion in class.

Summarily, the three major themes that could be identified in what participants said during this activity are communication, the learning process and teacher talk.

#### **4.2 SWOT ANALYSIS**

In response to the SWOT analysis (3.1.2.2) the following aspects were identified:

**STRENGTHS:** for Group “B” stated that they have a firm grasp of the target language and can impart knowledge with great success, whereas participants from Group “A” and “C” stated that they are good listeners and they like working with children.

**WEAKNESSES:** participants from Group “A” indicated that they lack the appropriate skills for asking questions in class. They also stated that they are inclined to dominate discussions most of the time in the classroom. Group “B”



and “C” pointed out that they were not sure of whether they were using the correct communication strategies in their classrooms or not.

**OPPORTUNITIES:** Participants from Group “A” and “B” highlighted that they received positive support from both learners and parents in the school. Group “C” could not respond to this part of the analysis.

**THREATS:** The three groups all indicated that they lacked teaching and learning materials, which is a serious threat to them. Group “B” further pointed out that they have no Curriculum Implementers for the HSS learning area.

In summary, participants spoke during this activity about these three major themes. They are fluency in the target language, communication strategies, and support materials.

With regard to the first theme, **target language**, participants mentioned that they were in good command of the English language. They stated that they could express themselves appropriately.

With regard to the **communication strategies**, the second theme participants acknowledged that they lacked the appropriate communication strategies that can promote the communication process *per se*.

With regard to the theme, **support materials**, participants stated that they lacked resources such as the prescribed textbooks and teaching aids (flipcharts, models, pictures, diagrams etc). It was stated that they have three Curriculum Implementers in the district but there is no one specifically responsible for handling the HSS learning area.

### 4.3 VIDEO SCREENING

From the Lesson observed from the video (3.1.2.3), I identified three themes. They are the teacher talk, interaction between the teacher and the learner, and the acknowledgment of learners' existing knowledge and understanding.

On the subject of the nature of **teacher talk**, participants indicated that the teacher who presented the lesson “talked to much”. In a similar vein, they approved of his voice being loud and clear.

With regard to the **interaction between the teacher and the learner** theme, some groups correctly pointed out that the instructions that were given by the teacher were clear and easy to follow. They said that the teacher encouraged learners to do their utmost best. The participants also mentioned that the language used as a medium to communication was on par with the level of the Gr. 8 learners.



They indicated that the teacher did not embarrass or humiliate learners for giving incorrect answers. They stated that the teacher used correct skills for correcting learners' errors. They also suggested that the teacher should make use of appropriate teaching strategies for promoting maximum participation of learners in the classroom.

Lastly, the participants felt that the teacher should accommodate the diverse existing knowledge of learners, and make sense out of it before embarking on new knowledge.

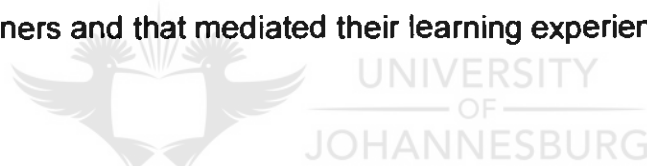
In summary, the three themes discussed in this section are the teacher talk, interaction between the teacher and the learners, and acknowledging learners' existing knowledge and understanding.

#### **4.4 TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS**

I identified three major themes in what participants said when responding to the transcript analysis (3.1.2.4). Such themes are the introduction of the lesson, the learning experience for the L2 learners and the introduction of the lesson.

With regard to the **introduction of the lesson** theme, participants stated that the introduction of the lesson was satisfactory, some said it was just good.

With regard to the **learning experience for the L2 learners** theme, participants for Group "B" pointed out that the teacher succeeded in mediating the learning experience for the L2 learners. They mentioned that he succeeded in doing so by driving learners to give synonyms of difficult words e.g. "hardy" (Transcript B). Another group indicated that there was a continuous interaction between the teacher and L2 learners and that mediated their learning experience (Transcript A).



With regard to the **teaching process** theme, participants highlighted that the integration of learning areas takes place during the teaching process. They stated that in Transcript B lesson for instance, the teacher requested learners to give the meaning of the word "hardy". They said this resulted to the integration of learning areas, that is, Language, Literacy and Communication 2(LLC2) and HSS.

Furthermore, participants stated that the language used by both teachers (Transcript A and B), facilitated learning because there was no communication breakdown and that it was up to the level for the Gr. 8 learners. They further asserted that learners responded to questions asked and instructions given appropriately.

Participants from Group “B” indicated that the teacher gave learners an opportunity to respond to different questions asked. They mentioned that the teacher in Transcript B encouraged his / her learners to correct themselves when incorrect answers were provided.

Participants cited instances where the teacher resorted to code switching:

E.g. Slaves > *izigqila* (Transcript A)  
Skill > *ikhono* (Transcript A)  
Knowledge > *ulwazi* (Transcript A)

They realized that the code-switching strategy was not applied in Transcript B. Speaking on behalf of Group “A”, one participant indicated that this strategy helped the teacher to express the meaning of the above-mentioned words.

Participants were able to single out the types of questions that were asked by the teacher to encourage learners’ reasoning skills e.g.

What do you think Lena? (Transcript B)

What do the rest of you think? (Transcript B)

Class, is painting and building a house classified under manual labour?  
(Transcript A)

In addition, the three groups pointed out during the Transcript activity that learners could express themselves well in the language used as the medium of communication.

To sum up, three themes could be picked out of what participants said during this activity. They are the introduction of the lesson, the learning experience for the L2 learners and the teaching process.

#### **4.5 CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT ANALYSIS**

The two major themes identified in this activity are directly related to the titles, the groups and ultimately to the photographs provided for this activity. The themes are the classroom arrangements and the titles of the classroom photographs.

With regard to the **classroom arrangement** theme, participants had the following to say when responding to question 2 (a):

Group "A" indicated that learners in Photograph "A" were arranged haphazardly. There were four in number around a big table, and their teacher was standing behind them.

Group "B" indicated that in Photograph "B" there was a traditional arrangement of the classroom. They stated that learners were seated in rows, three learners behind each table, and their teacher was standing in front.

Group "C" stated that Photograph "C" was an example of a traditional arrangement of the classroom. They pointed out that learners were seated side by side, two behind each table and the teacher was standing in front of them.


The response from Group "B" for question 1(b) was that the classroom had no visible teaching or learning aids, except the chalkboard. Group "A", pointed out that only two learners facing each other seemed to be having learning aids (e.g. scissors, textbook / manual, etc.). The learners seated at their sides had nothing in front of them. Group "C" pointed out that the classroom had pictures on the walls but no teaching aids were in sight. The class seemed to be overcrowded.

With regard to question 1(c), Group "B" felt that the classroom atmosphere seemed to be tense and threatening. They mentioned that it looked as if learners were just reading from their textbooks or just studying during the lesson.

Group "A" believed that learners in Photograph "A" were just interacting with each other. They further stated that the teacher seemed to have just neglected her class. Participants also mentioned that the learners were playing behind the teacher who seemed not disturbed by their behaviour. Group "C" indicated that the teacher was interacting with only one section of his class, while learners on his right hand side were completely neglected.

Group "C" further stated that the learners who had the teacher's full attention were all smiles, and had his full attention. They said that learners who were on his left side were just neglected, although they had their hands up.

When responding to question 2, participants from Group "A", "B" and "C" stated that if they were the teachers depicted in the Photographs "A", "B" and "C", they would have done the following to change the situation:

- 
- Separated the playful boys, unlike what was happening in (Photograph "C"),
  - Provided more learning materials for the classrooms, as shown in (Photograph "A", "B", "C"),
  - Increased space between the desks in the classrooms appearing in (Photograph "A", "B", "C"),
  - Ensured that all learners participate during the lesson, unlike the scenario as depicted in (Photograph "A", "B", "C"),
  - Given all learners undivided attention as opposed to what was happening in the classrooms appearing in (Photograph "A", "C"), and to
  - Created a lively, warm and active atmosphere, as opposed to a tense classroom atmosphere as shown in (Photograph "B").

Participants from all groups also stressed the importance of the interaction between the teacher and the learner in facilitating communication, and ultimately learning in the classroom.

Concerning the **titles of the classroom photographs** theme, Group "A", "B" and "C" had this to say:

- Group "A" gave its photograph the title "CHAOS IN CLASSROOM".
- Group "B" gave its photograph the title " A TEACHER – CENTRED LESSON".
- Group "C" came up with the title "UNSUPERVISED CLASS" for its photograph.

In summary, two major themes could be identified from what the participants indicated during this activity. They are the classroom arrangements and titles of the photographs.

#### **4.6 ROLE-PLAY AND DE-BRIEFING ON THE ROLE-PLAY**

During the role-play, two major themes could be identified. They are the interaction between the teacher and the learner and the teaching and/or learning strategies.

With regard to the **interaction between the teacher and the learner** theme, participants stated the following when responding to questions asked:

##### **Comments from Group A: (situation: 4)**

The Group "A" observers indicated that the teacher aimed to seek help from the learner who had been successful in her studies. However, they noted that the teacher seemed to be intimidated by the knowledge the learner imparted during their discussion.

They also pointed out that it appeared as if a senior member had given the teacher a mandate to seek help from the successful learner. The observers from

Group "A" also stated that at some stages during the conversation between the teacher and the learner, the teacher talked over the learner's comments as if he wanted to assert his authority.

It was also mentioned that the teacher never at any stage gave an impression that he genuinely needed the assistance of his learner to make a breakthrough. They asserted further that even the questions asked by him were not carefully planned and phrased. They said he talked as if he was reciting a story he read from a certain textbook.

In addition, the observers for this group highlighted the fact that no errors were ever corrected by the teacher during that role-play, as the learner seemed to be the only trusted and knowledgeable candidate. They felt that the teacher was just at the receiving end, with a situation in his hands that was out of control.

With regard to mediating the learning experience gained by learners, the observers from Group "A" pointed out that it became an impossible task to do as the roles had been reversed. It was only the learner who held the reigns.

#### **Comments from Group B: (Situation: 5)**

The observers from Group "B" indicated that the teacher who role-played this situation felt threatened by her learner. She was supposed to advise the learner not to learn by rote learning. However, she could not bring herself to do this task properly.

They said the teacher was shy, uneasy and stammered during the conversation. They mentioned that the learner stood his ground and told the teacher that rote learning was a learning strategy that had worked wonders for him over the years.



The observers also pointed out that the teacher tried to correct the above-mentioned perspective but with no success, as she appeared to lack the appropriate approach for advising the learner against rote learning.

### **Comments from Group C: (Situation 6)**

The observers from Group "C" pointed out that the interaction between the teacher and the learner was very interesting. They mentioned that the learner was adamant that it was his right to associate information gained from other learning areas with what he was learning from the HSS learning area in class. Observers from Group "C" also mentioned that the learner supported his argument by saying that he learnt best in class whenever he has made that association.

Furthermore, observers from Group "C" mentioned, that the teacher made a tremendous effort of telling the learner that his behaviour had a detrimental effect on the learning / teaching process as a whole.

With regard to the **teaching and/or learning strategies** theme, observers from Group "C" mentioned that the teacher used the appropriate communication strategies and handled the whole situation with great care and concern. Moreover, the participants from Group "C" stated that the teacher never hurt the feelings of the learner. Even the questions that were asked were well phrased and enabled the teacher in this situation to get the desired results.

Observers from Groups "A", "B" and "C" pointed out that in certain role-plays (situation 4 and 5) the teachers were intimidated by the knowledge gained by their learners. They were not able to correct any errors since they lacked the necessary communication strategies. Even the questions asked by the teachers were not phrased properly.

In addition, they said some teachers could not mediate the learning experience for the L2 learner. They even indicated that one learner discussed in detail the Jig - Saw strategy that enables her to be the best in class (situation 4), while another student was adamant that rote learning is the strategy that helps him to master his studies and to be successful in any learning area (situation 5). The observers mentioned that the teachers could not advise the learners as to which strategy to use.

To recap, the participants spoke about two major themes during the role-play activity. These themes are the interaction between the teacher and the learner, and the teaching and/or learning strategies.

### **DE-BRIEFING ON THE ROLE-PLAY**

When de-briefing on the role-play, participants spoke about two major themes, which are the communication strategies of the teachers and teachers' expectations.

Concerning the **communication strategies of the teachers** theme, it was interesting to hear from the group that they believed that teachers should always back up their views with well-reasoned arguments when holding discussions with learners. They also proposed that each given statement should be substantiated with specific evidence and examples if the teacher wants to get the desired results.

Some participants pointed out that the teacher should always sustain the pressure exerted by the learner, should such a situation arise, whereas others stated that teachers should not be intimidated by learners during discussions.

Participants who played the roles of learners (Group "A", "B") stated that they found it extremely difficult to be in those roles. They said they were disoriented,

uneasy and uncertain of how to behave or of what to say since they knew intuitively that the teachers they were dealing with were not actually learners – but professionals like themselves. They said that knowledge had a detrimental effect on the task – oriented aspects of their roles.

Participants for all groups reached an agreement that the teacher must know the subject matter and use correct communication skills and teaching strategies in order to facilitate communication in class.

With regard to the **teachers' expectations** theme, participants who played the roles of learners (Group "A", "B") said they enjoyed role-playing their roles. They mentioned that they were fully prepared for their roles, and the response they received from their teachers was contrary to what they had expected. They said they had expected to be engaged in lengthy and challenging arguments with their teachers.

The teacher and the learner from Group "C" indicated that they enjoyed their role-play. They indicated that they had a problem to resolve, and that it was done in a suitable way.

The participants also highlighted that it is imperative that teachers must not be easily intimidated by the knowledge that learners had gained. In addition, they pointed out that teachers should know that intelligent learners might pose a challenge during communication in their classrooms.

To summarize, only two themes could be identified from what participants indicated during this activity. Such themes are the communication strategies of the teachers and the teachers' expectations.

## **4.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have analyzed the data gathered during the workshop. Furthermore, an attempt was made to identify the major themes related to what participants said during each activity.

At this stage of the project, I noticed positive changes in the responses that participants were making that were related to classroom communication. I also evaluated their responses critically. I realized that communication skills and teaching strategies should be developed on a continuous basis in order to develop teachers professionally. In the next chapter, I am going to make a discussion of the findings.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

This section seeks to outline the factors that contributed to the problem of non-interactive communication in the HSS learning area classrooms in our school.

The findings that have been made are clustered into the following two categories:

- Findings that are confirmed by the theories (Classroom Communication Theory, Professional Development Theory and Whole School Development Theory), as mentioned in Chapter 2,
- Findings that differ from the same theories as mentioned in Chapter 2.

The following have been cited as some of the important factors that restricted communication in the HSS learning area classrooms:

- ◆ Weakness of dominating discussions,
- ◆ Rigid and unapproachable teachers,
- ◆ Boring lessons and no learning activities for making lessons interesting,
- ◆ Limited correction techniques used by teachers,
- ◆ Inappropriate skills for asking questions in class,
- ◆ Incorrect communication strategies,
- ◆ Lack of teaching and learning materials, e.g. flipcharts, models, pictures, and diagrams,
- ◆ Lack of support structures e.g. Curriculum Implementers,
- ◆ Inability to use existing knowledge of learners, and the
- ◆ Lack of self-confidence on the part of teachers who are easily intimidated by more skilled and experienced learners.

Each of the problems in this section is described, and recommendations follow in the following chapter.

### **5.1 FINDINGS CONFIRMED BY THEORIES**

I experienced varying restricting factors during the process of gathering information related to the problem being investigated. I observed that teachers demonstrated a willingness to resolve the problem of non-active communication in their HSS learning area classrooms, but that a number of restricting factors impacted their efforts.

During discussions with teachers after certain activities of the intervention (workshop), it was discovered that some of them applied incorrect communication strategies in their classrooms. They indicated that they had a weakness of dominating discussions, and could not notice that they denied learners an opportunity of expressing their ideas and opinions in language during the communication process. This weakness on their part had a resultant negative impact on effective communication. This finding is also confirmed by the pioneers of Classroom Communication Theory (Hurt, Scott and McCroskey 1978) when they state that, it is imperative that the communication process must be understood in order that the practice thereof becomes more rewarding.

I experienced that some teachers had limited techniques for correcting learners' perspectives and errors when role-playing certain situations during the intervention (workshop). This resulted in boring, tense and threatening situations. This finding is in line with what Puhl and De Klerk state concerning the Classroom Communication Theory when quoting Brown. They state that communicative goals can best be achieved by giving due attention to language use, fluency, authentic language and contexts, and students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to heretofore unrehearsed contexts in the real world.

The research indicated that teachers lacked support structures such as Curriculum Implementers (CIs) for the HSS learning area. The structure in 2000 did not provide for Senior Phase Curriculum Implementers. This shortage of Curriculum Implementers was confirmed by the Circuit Manager: Volksrust Circuit. There were only three CIs for the Ermelo District who had been absorbed from closed Colleges of Education. Teachers also cited that they lacked learning area-specific workshops and uncertainty existed around the type of skills to be applied for improving communication in their HSS learning area classrooms. This finding is confirmed by one of the proponents of the Professional Development Theory (Crandall 1993). He states that professional development opportunities should be provided to enable practitioners to question their own practice, expand their knowledge of and skills in improving that practice, and evaluate the effectiveness of their classrooms.

Furthermore, the research indicated that some teachers had weak control over their learners. When role-playing certain situations during the intervention (workshop), it was discovered that the lack of self-confidence on their part had a resultant negative influence on the effectiveness of communication. Even teachers who played the roles of learners noticed that weakness, and capitalized on it during the discussions. If learners have little confidence in the teachers' ability to communicate effectively, it may have a detrimental effect even on the results of the whole school. This finding is in line with what Marceley (1996) says about the Whole-School Development Theory, when he states that schools can only improve when teachers in them improve methods, means and mindsets.

## **5.2 FINDINGS THAT ARE DIFFERENT FROM THEORIES**

The research identified the following factors that contributed to non-interactive classroom communication, which are different from the theories mentioned in Chapter 2:

- Commitment , and the
- Changing environment.

It was discovered during the intervention (workshop), that some teachers were not committed enough to their work. Still teachers did not do their best. They were not prepared enough for their classes. To protect themselves from challenges in the classrooms, they chose to be rigid and unapproachable. Such teachers cannot identify problems experienced by their learners that are related to classroom communication.

It was also discovered that rapid changes in the Education Department regarding Outcome-Based Education demotivated teachers because they failed to cope. There was also uncertainty that existed around the implementation of the new curriculum. Some teachers held the view that the new curriculum would be phased out and had made little effort to promote communication in their learning area. They were intimidated by the new concepts found in the new curriculum, as well as the methods or approaches that should be applied when communicating with the learners in their HSS learning area classrooms.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

This research report has outlined the findings that are confirmed by the Classroom Communication Theory, Professional Development Theory and the Whole School Development Theory, as mentioned in Chapter 2. In addition, findings that differ from these theories have been outlined and discussed. Furthermore, many restricting factors either intrinsic or extrinsic, which contributed towards non-active classroom communication, have been cited.

It is hoped that the recommendations made in the next chapter will shed light on how classroom communication should be improved in the HSS learning area classrooms in which language is used as a medium of instruction.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Many studies on classroom communication have provided different ideas and opinions regarding how communication should be facilitated and improved by teachers. However, I personally believe that it is imperative that teachers should use appropriate language skills and strategies to improve communication in their HSS learning area classrooms that use language as a medium of instruction. The major language skills that should be taken into account are the speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. In other words, the teacher must be competent in all these language skills and use the language determined as a medium of instruction to facilitate communication and ultimately, learning, which is the educational goal.

I recommend the following strategies that can be applied by the teacher in the HSS learning area classes. They are directing, sustaining, extending, cueing and prompting. The teacher may decide which strategy to apply during a particular context in order to address the problem of non-interactive classroom communication. When deciding which strategy to use the teacher should ask him/ herself the following questions: Which strategy is most appropriate to the content and objectives of the lesson in my learning area? Which strategy is most likely to facilitate and improve communication in my classroom? The final decision about which strategy to use, should be made after the teacher feels that these two questions have been answered satisfactory. The teacher may decide to use one or a combination of these strategies during a particular situation in the classroom.

I also recommend that the School Management Team (SMT) must also play a major role of engaging teachers in workshops that will sharpen their language

skills and communication strategies on a continuous basis. The type of in-service training teachers receive has some flaws – it does not address the challenges teachers may be faced with in a particular setting. Teachers must thus be provided with opportunities that will enable them to make communication with their learners interesting and effective.

It is acknowledged by the researcher that heads of institutions (Principals) are overburdened by important but mundane administrative workloads. There are also new programmes and policies in place that should be implemented to ensure that educators provide “quality (good) education for all”, according to the constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

However, if we want what is best for the learners, teachers should not be left on their own to either “sink or swim”. They should be provided with the necessary support and “tools” to be used in their learning areas, the HSS in particular.

The School Management Team must design comprehensive, clear Year Programmes, which should accommodate professional development dates for teachers. Such Year Programmes should be followed precisely. In addition, the year programmes should highlight succinctly the following:

- For which learning area should teachers be developed?
- What resources will be needed?
- When?
- Who will be responsible for the development programmes?
- What are the objectives of the school?

The SMT members working collaboratively with the School Governing Body members, should always budget funds for the successful development of their teachers. Although it is common knowledge that all stakeholders (parents, circuit managers, district officials etc,) should be responsible for the development of

schools, the onus rests upon schools to move towards the desired goals. Senior officials can provide schools with the human and material resources, but implementing the initiative such as that undertaken by Amersfoort Combined School, should be the responsibility of the school itself.

Engaging teachers in a workshop of this nature (as explained previously) can also make them reflect on their activities in a healthy, stress-free, persistent and personally significant manner.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education must as a matter of urgency, employ sufficient CIs to ensure that teachers receive the necessary support and guidance related to the HSS learning area. The CIs must also be trained to specialize in ways in which they can help teachers to improve communication and develop language competence in the HSS learning area classrooms, as they use language as a medium of instruction.

The recommendations, however good, will not improve classroom communication in the HSS learning area classrooms, unless they are vigorously implemented. To this end a concerted and sustainable effort must be made by all teachers who are using language as a medium of instruction to implement the recommendations in order to achieve the desired results. Where outside intervention is required, the school must contact the relevant service providers and outline the service required.

The importance of conducting this study has shown first of all what happens when you conduct a workshop intervention to improve classroom communication. Secondly, we learnt a lot about the structure of classroom communication. Lastly, this study can improve our own classroom communication.

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