CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse the data collected through research conducted with twelve teachers at the three Middle schools in the Temba Township in the North West Province. The purpose of the research was to find out about ways in which educators in these schools plan their Learning Programmes to include Environmental Education themes or topics. It aimed at revealing meaningful results about the process of developing and implementing an Environmental Education programme in these schools, as well as to check if there were any attempts to put Environmental Education into practice. The researcher’s own opinion about how the discourse is conceptualized will also be highlighted in this report.

Twelve semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the individual teachers, three from one school, five from the second and four from the last. Initially, the interviews were supposed to be conducted with one principal and four teachers from each school. It was however not done according to plan because one of the principals refused to be interviewed, saying that his deputy would stand in on his behalf. In another school, the principal was not present as per appointment, because he was busy with his mother’s funeral arrangements. The deputy principal at this same school, who was supposed to be my second candidate, disappeared while I was still busy with the first candidate. The interviews were then conducted with one principal, one deputy principal, heads of departments and post level one teachers. These interviews helped to provide a perspective on how Environmental Education was being taught or implemented by educators at these Middle Schools.
4.2 Results of the interviews with teachers

For the purpose of this research, a total of twelve interviews were conducted, all of which were transcribed into twelve different sources of data to be analysed. Twenty-one open-ended questions were used for the interviews. Open coding was used to break data into seven themes:

- Teachers’ general understanding of the term ‘environment’
- Teachers’ perceptions about the effect of environmental issues within the schools’ environment
- Teachers’ skills, knowledge, attitude and values regarding Environmental Education
- The role of schools in addressing local environmental problems
- The approach to Environmental Education within the schools’ curriculum
- Compliance with environmental learning as a NCS principle and relevant school policies / Approaches to working with the policies.

The themes and the questions were categorized as in a pattern as shown in the following table:

Table 4.1: Main codes of the analysis process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES OF THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</th>
<th>MAIN CODES EMMANATING FROM DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tell me about your understanding of the term environment</td>
<td>1. Teachers’ general understanding of the term “environment”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Could you describe in as much detail as possible, factors affecting the environment?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. In which way do you see these factors affecting the school’s local environment?</td>
<td>2. Teachers’ perceptions about the effect of environmental issues within the schools’ environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. How do these factors affect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>learners’ progress?</td>
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<td>5. Are there any particular incidents currently occurring that you may want to tell me about?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. How do you see yourself as a teacher dealing with or minimizing environmental problems within the school’s local environment?</td>
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<td>7. How would you utilize community knowledge in solving environmental problems within the school’s local environment?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Does the school have a policy to guide you in identifying and addressing environmental problems and also in utilizing community knowledge?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. What is the main objective of that policy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. What guides you in selecting the environmental themes you use to plan your learning programmes/experiences?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>11. Tell me about your experience of implementing these environmental learning experiences in your teaching?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Talk to me about your understanding of the concepts “education in the environment”, ‘education about the environment’ and ‘education for the environment’</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Should you have an opportunity to have your teaching focus on</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The role of schools in addressing local environmental problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The approach to Environmental Education within the schools’ curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers’ skills, knowledge, attitude and values regarding Environmental Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. How would you make that possible in practice?
19. How do you use the out-of-class environment to achieve the teaching-learning objective?
15. What is your understanding of Environmental Education as a ‘process’ and not a ‘product’?

16. What guides you in selecting the methods you use to assess environmental learning of your learners?
17. Could you describe the teaching-learning tools you use to assess your learners?
18. How often do you assess them?
19. How are your school grounds used to achieve the learning objectives?
20. Can you please tell me in general the main focus of the National Curriculum Statement as enshrined in the Outcomes Based Education and Training policy?

21. Is there anything else you would like to say?

6. Compliance with environmental learning as a NCS principle and relevant school policies / Approaches to working with the policies.

7. General information
   (This is where I expect participants to relax and say anything that can have value in the research results/report)
The discussion that follows will focus on the participants’ responses in each code, through the lens that was developed in the literature review (Chapter 2).

4.2.1 Teachers’ general understanding of the term “Environment” (See Question 1 & 2 in table 4.1)

The purpose of these questions was to determine if the respondents knew that the term ‘environment’ is about the dynamic interrelatedness of the seven dimensions (biophysical, social, political, economic, scientific-technological, personal and contextual aspects) of the environment. Out of the twelve respondents, seven understand the term as merely entailing the biophysical aspect. One respondent had no clue as to its meaning. Only four could talk about some of the other aspects of the environment, mentioning that it was about land, plants, people, water, buildings, etc., However, when asked about their interrelatedness, they could not give a holistic view of this notion in terms of the relationships between these different dimensional aspects.

4.2.2 Teachers’ perceptions about the effect of environmental issues within the school’s environment

The purpose of the questions around this theme (See Question 3, 4 & 5 in table 4.1) was to check if educators were able to notice the occurrence of some of the environmental issues within their school environment. The interviews exposed a high level of participants’ awareness of factors that affect the environment, but when asked about their effects within the school environment, the participants referred to the biophysical aspects only. Most mentioned littering as their major problem, and they were in most instances associating this with other instances of pollution.

One of the teachers noted right away that littering was a problem because learners did not respect the environment, and that it persists because there was no subject on ‘environment’ at school. He also believed that Environmental Education should be taught as a separate subject, not seeing how this problem could be addressed through the curriculum in class:
We need experts who can come and teach Environmental Education or Environmental Studies, that is, if it becomes a subject at schools. (See Appendix 1.5, School 2)

Only one of the twelve respondents indicated that there was a dumping site closer to the school, which he perceived to be a problem and acknowledged that it could have harmful physical effects. He thought that it was only the Department of Education that could take action to make sure it was removed and did not mention that they were using the school’s curriculum to involve learners and the community to solve the problem themselves. When asked if the school had done anything about the dumping site, he referred to another one which had previously been created closer to the school, saying that someone from the community had volunteered to transform it into a rockery with flowers and painted rocks. The place now looked very clean but he complained that no one wanted to do anything with the new site because of lack of manpower and willingness to assist.

Only one teacher created a good impression about his understanding of environmental issues within the school. He was, however, not aware that the problems he was mentioning were indeed environmental in nature. He even went to an extent of mentioning a Durban flood of March 2007, the Mozambique floods that occur almost every year and the instance of 2001, during which a baby was even born in a tree. He raised relevant environmental issues, such as the fact that these were the types of problems which may create displacement of communities, with serious disturbances and effects on societies and their learners’ schooling.

When asked a question about any specific incident of environmental issues currently affecting the local school environment, he responded:

Not that I know of, especially those that are there because of environmental factors. Maybe I can relate about those that are related to the socio-economic factors, ja. (See Appendix 1.5, School 3)
He elaborated further, saying that most of their learners come from the informal settlements where most parents were unemployed, and the fact that there were serious problems caused by unsound living conditions, such as improvised housing structures; pollution from direct use of coal, paraffin and firewood; lack of proper sanitation and potable drinking water supply. He said that these things impacted negatively on the learners because they were always hungry, and, as a result, they struggled to adjust in the classroom in which they were required to be attentive for a relatively long period of the day.

It can be said generally that teachers’ perceptions were that they had little control over how they should address environmental problems.

4.2.3 Teachers’ skills, knowledge, attitude and values regarding Environmental Education

This theme (See Question 6 & 7 in table 4.1) was used to determine whether teachers understood the need to use a curriculum that was not rigid but rather prescriptive to solve environmental problems. It was used to look at the creativity of teachers with regard to the exploration of environmental issues and the consideration thereof when planning their Learning Programmes, as well as how they would involve the local community in dealing with contextualized local problems.

Most of the respondents’ feeling was that the incorporation of environmental themes across the whole curriculum could not be possible as most teachers were not specialists in the field. They felt that the holistic view of the environment could only be possible if Environmental Education or Environmental Studies were to be introduced as a separate subject within the curriculum. They said that, alternatively, specialists needed to be deployed, who could advise and guide teachers on how to go about incorporating Environmental Education into their specific Learning Areas.

Most of the teachers confessed that they did not know what to do to address their schools’ environmental problems. They especially felt that they taught subjects that they believed did not create opportunities for an environmental focus. They felt that
it would be an extra job and time-consuming for them to focus on the aspects that were distantly related to the specifics of the subjects they were teaching. They still perceived themselves as not having control over the implementation process of Environmental Education and how it was developed.

This research has indicated that some of the problems at schools were associated with lack of collaboration amongst teachers. Teachers failed to sit and plan together. It was only one or two teachers who were aware of environmental issues within the school and the fact that there were no policies addressing them. They thought there was nothing they could do to address the situation. A teacher responsible for a specific Learning Area did not know what the other teacher was doing in another Learning Area.

One of the principals, who taught Agriculture at high school before he became the principal at Middle school, said that learners’ environmental learning was too much on an abstract, theoretical level and not practical. Therefore learners cannot be expected to know how to care for the environment. Throughout his interview, he was strongly inclined towards Agricultural issues, especially on how to teach learners about gardening.

A social Sciences teacher from one school mentioned that their Learning Area at least has got themes that have an environmental focus. He said that through a theme “sustainability of natural resources” in their Learning Area, they were able to address the socio-economic aspect of the environment by teaching learners about recycling, and encouraging them to also do it with parents at home by taking recycled materials to recycling companies for income.

A Technology teacher from the same school also said that their Learning Area has got a theme or statement in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) addressing the impact of technology on the environment, looking at both the negative and positive impacts. He affirmed that environmental factors should be taken into account when designing and developing technological solutions so that learners can be aware and develop responsibility towards the impacts of technological designs on the environment and people.
4.2.4 The role of schools in addressing environmental problems

This theme (See Question 8 & 9 in table 4.1) was used to check what the whole-school approach to Environmental Education suggests, as well as teachers’ perceptions of the link between a school environmental policy and their implementation of Environmental Education. It aimed at determining whether the schools participating in this study had environmental policies that could be used as the guiding tools in the implementation of Environmental Education, or as a means for identifying priorities for change.

None of the three schools sampled had an Environmental Education policy, and none of the teachers interviewed knew if they were supposed to have a role in addressing their local environmental problems, or how to integrate these local environmental problems in their teaching or planning of Learning Programmes. This perhaps explains why some of the teachers in the Management were so unwilling to be part of the interviews. It might be that they felt guilty for not making sure that policies are implemented in the right way, or at least become supportive of teachers who had a passion for the subject.

Only one teacher mentioned that they only become involved with environmental issues when they have to comply with the government’s national programmes, such as Arbor week, National water week, tree planting day:

We depend on the government programme of environment like Arbor day, National water week, tree planting day etc. This is the only time we involve learners in the planting of trees and also teach them how to safe water. (See Appendix 1.5, school 1)

One teacher, whom I learned was heavily involved in a teacher’s labour union, mentioned that they just improvised and taught pieces of Environmental Education only when they had time. Even if they tried to raise funds, because they had to use the school’s name, most funds went into the school’s coffers and once there it was
difficult to get them back for the purposes intended. When asked if the school had an environmental policy, he responded:

_The school does not have an environmental policy. It is only four teachers who are involved with learners in these projects of raising funds. Even if the management is aware, they can’t assist us. At the beginning of each year, we do Business Plan with management. They are aware of everything that we do. We hold meetings with donors and we sometimes invite the principal to become part of the meeting to arrange issues of funding. There we are together. Problems come after money has been deposited into the school account. You will be told it has paid telephone bills. The office is reluctant to help needy pupils with the money raised specifically for them. (See Appendix 1.5, School 3)_

I learned that this school was a base for supporters of two teachers’ unions. The affiliation of teachers to these unions had got to a stage of dividing teachers at this school. I am not sure if this teacher was just trying to be negative towards management as he was belonging to a rival union with which the principal was affiliated. Perhaps the teacher was trying to address his own personal issues with management. Unfortunately, as I mentioned in this report, I could not manage to get the principal’s side of story as he was not around, and the deputy principal could not stand in for the interview.

An interview was conducted with a Head of Department at the same school, who said they did have an environmental policy which was still just a document, but as yet to be implemented. It was however not helping in any way because the entire staff did not know about it. This again indicates lack of collaboration amongst the staff members.

When asked why the policy was there but not being implemented, she said they were faced with many challenges, making their situation very difficult. Amongst other problems, she mentioned overcrowding in the classes, lack of resources and lack of support from the government. She reiterated that because of these problems, they could not make an extra effort to do an additional subject on top of
an already excessive workload. Their understanding was that EE should be treated as a stand-alone subject, and not as a cross-curricular process.

One teacher at another school said that even if they did not have an environmental policy, the government had at least provided an exemption policy of which the aim was to address the socio-economic aspect of the environment. He said that they normally requested parents who had been exempted from paying school fees to come to school to assist with the general cleaning of the school, as they were understaffed to deal with both teaching and campus cleaning.

4.2.5 The approach to Environmental Education within the schools’ curriculum

The theme (See Question 10, 11, 12 & 13) was about the way teachers were practically teaching Environmental Education, in particular whether it was done as an interdisciplinary approach across the curriculum, as an independent subject, by interested teachers only or not all together. It aimed at checking if teachers knew that all Learning Programmes should reflect the principles and practices of the environment as reflected in the NCS. This meant that teachers must be able to use their Learning Programmes or Learning Area Statements to highlight the environmental factors, so that learners could develop skills, knowledge, attitudes and values towards the solution of environmental problems.

The observation made here is that Environmental Education was not being addressed through a curriculum with an interdisciplinary approach. The responses given above clearly indicate that it was only done by interested teachers, and only during their spare time. Teachers thought that Environmental Education was only possible in some Learning Areas, such as Technology, Arts and Culture, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. It would only be those teachers whose Learning Area statements were clear with regard to the discourse who would maybe once a week or a month, be able to deal with a theme addressing some of the environmental factors.
None of the respondents mentioned that the NCS was using the Outcomes Based Education approach, which provides room for flexibility within the curriculum to enable them to look at their different contextual situations in order to address these different environmental issues. Teachers thought their Learning Areas would lose focus once they tried to include an environmental flavor:

“I do teach Mathematics but I haven’t used Environmental Education themes in my planning, unless maybe I revisit my policies to check how I am supposed to be using it, however, If the environment can be part of our teaching, I will start teaching learners to start by caring for their home environments first then the school after. (See Appendix 1.5, School 2)

If the environment itself becomes a subject on its own, and experts be brought to assist, then learners can start having the knowledge of the environment. Anyway, I don’t know of any Learning Area here at school dealing with environmental themes.

If I go out of the way to include Environmental Education in my Learning Programme, it will be a waste of time because it is not included in the Learning Area Statements. That is why I said at the beginning that there has to be someone who can teach learners about the environment, and as a subject throughout the year and every year. That is how it should be. Not to include it in our Learning Areas because we won’t give it serious attention as it will be a lot of work. We used to have a subject on environment in the past; I don’t know what happened to have it removed. (See Appendix 1.5, School 1)

It goes without saying that teachers do plan their Learning Programmes independently, hence you will find a situation where one teacher does not know what the other teacher in another Learning Area is doing and which themes are being used for planning. Environmental Education is treated as a thing or product, rather than a process.
4.2.6 Compliance with environmental learning as a NCS principle and relevant school policies / Approaches to working with the policies.

This theme (See Question 16, 17, 19, 19 & 20) was used to check if teachers were complying with the policies prescribed for their practices, with specific reference to the general focus of the National Curriculum Statements and the Assessment Standards thereof. It did not rule out the fact that there might be some hindering factors affecting the expected daily practices of teachers, such as lack of knowledge or understanding.

Before this report can focus on the responses under this theme, it will provide an overview of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R-9, and the inclusion of the environmental discourse within it.

The NCS is aligned to the Constitution so that it is able to establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights, DoE, 2002a:9 (in Ramsarup, 2005:50). This Constitutional notion has also been reflected in the vision of the curriculum, which shows a life-long learner with respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen. Thus, the NCS has been developed for use by schools and teachers to play a vital role in creating awareness of the relationship between human rights, a healthy environment, social justice, and inclusivity.

The concerns mentioned above, as addressed in the Constitution, have to be addressed through foci across the curriculum in each Learning Area Statement. They shouldn’t be seen as being limited to a particular Learning Area, but as strands across the entire curriculum. In particular, the NCS attempts to be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality, race, gender, age, disability and such challenges as HIV/AIDS (http://www.mml.co.za: 2007/04/12).

The National Curriculum Statement uses the Outcomes-based education approach which is an achievement oriented, activity-based, learner-centered education process. It is then through this approach that the NCS is able to develop lifelong
learning as a way of life and to enable young people to participate fully at a global level in economic and social life and to achieve their maximum ability, hence there are learning outcomes and assessment standards designed to achieve the critical and development outcomes derived from the country’s Constitution.

The NCS has room for progression and integration, where learners can use their knowledge and skills from one learning area to another to progressively move to other grades. In this way, the whole curriculum has to be linked and related. This encourages a situation where teachers, irrespective of the learning area they teach, should sit and plan together in order to collaboratively use the curriculum to address their common local problems.

Just like in Curriculum 2005, the National Curriculum Statement also uses continuous assessment as the chief method by which assessment takes place. Continuous assessment requires that:

- Learning be assessed regularly and records of learner's progress be updated throughout the year
- Learners become active participants in learning and assessment
- Feedback be to learners by appropriate questioning, oral and written comments that focus on what was intended to be achieved by an assessment activity
- A variety of assessment methods and opportunities be used
- Assessment strategies to cater for a variety of learner needs
- Summative assessment to be planned at the beginning of the year to include a variety of assessment strategies

(\text{http://www.mml.co.za: 2007/04/12}).

Outcomes Based Education and Training used the specific outcomes that learners had to achieve at the end and portray a range of skills, knowledge, values and attitudes. The National Curriculum Statement uses the same approach but this time with the reduced scope. Instead of Specific outcomes, learners are now to be assessed on the learning outcomes. The NCS has streamlined design of features,
simplified the language, aligned curriculum with assessment and has improved
teacher orientation and training, learner support materials and provincial support.

4.2.6.1 The actual situation at the three Middle schools with regard to
compliance with environmental learning as a NCS principle

The situation that was found to be prevailing at schools with regard to the
implementation of policies was surprising. The questions that teachers had to
answer aimed at getting their understanding of the assessment methods and tools
they use to assess their learners. They were also supposed to respond to
questions that aimed at eliciting their knowledge and understanding of the National
Curriculum policy statement, as the policy informing their practices, entails. I had
hoped that their responses would show if they were aware of the underlying
principles of the policy that is the social justice, healthy environment, human rights
and inclusivity, as the principles to give them an opportunity to have the
environmental themes included within their programmes of learning.

No teacher was able to answer the questions on policies in a convincing way. They
knew that the purpose of the National Curriculum Statement was to develop
learners holistically, so that they would able to use the knowledge and skills they
had acquired through this learning to cope with the new technologies, but they
were unable to relate that to their daily practices. Some of them were able to say
they had policy documents but when asked what the policies entailed, they only
justified it by saying the policy (NCS) was still new and after the “two weeks
workshops” they had attended, they were still struggling to understand and to get
used to the type of practice they were expected to portray.

Only one principal was interviewed on the policies implemented at his school. He
reiterated that the new policies were useless and there was nothing they could say
about their success because they had not yet been tested. According to him, only
Grade 12 results could be used as the measuring tool for the success of the new
policies. This is what two of the teachers had to say:
This is just a new transformation thing which is just two years old and has never been tested in Grade 12. How can we know if it is effective? That’s why I am questioning some of the things which happen. I am not very comfortable with some of the things because our children are not able to read and write. OBE says “just pass/phasa fela/pass all”, so at the end of the day, most kids can’t cope with it. Retraining of teachers is crucial to be honest with you. We can’t do interventions because classes are overcrowded. Where do we get specialists to assist us with the process, or are you one of them who can render help? The whole system needs to be restructured where each school has to have its own specialist to assist with the issues. (See Appendix 1.5, School 1)

Our roll is about one thousand one hundred (1100) with fourteen (14) classrooms. Each class with plus minors sixty (60) pupils. There is no furniture. Learners are always standing. I am trying to tell you that there is no effective teaching taking place here. The guidelines we got from government are just a paper. It cannot be practically implemented under such conditions. Ours is just to improvise, we are trying anyway. It is not like we are doing nothing”. (See Appendix 1.5, School 3)

The first respondent implies that he believed in performance based on examination results as the determining factor for a success or failure. I had observed that there was no consistency with regards to the way they approached their teaching practice, nor the use of assessment tools in that regard. Each teacher preferred to use the method of assessment that they were comfortable with. They could not do interventions with learners who experienced learning difficulties, saying they had to resort to letting learners pass, even if they knew very little.

There are some factors that I believe do contribute towards teachers not doing what is expected of them. Teachers were complaining about lack of training on the policies, lack of government support in terms of provision of resources, as well as unfavorable conditions such as overcrowding in the classrooms, or generally the bad system in the Black schools.
When asked about the guidelines, the second respondent said:

*Isn't it that it will tell you about teacher-pupil ratio, that each learner must have his/her own chair, etc? These are the things they will always tell you must practice but do not happen. If parents do not pay school fees, how can the school have furniture? You hardly get printing paper for tests*.

The schools at which these interviews were conducted are few miles apart from each other. I thought that because teachers are complaining about overcrowding in the classrooms and it was possible that amongst the three of them, one of them may run short of learners, and the solution could be that they share learners amongst themselves. This is what this second respondent said when asked why can't learners be equally shared amongst the three schools:

“If learners can be moved around, most teachers will feel betrayed because they will also have to be moved to other schools where some learners have been taken. You should realize that most schools are fighting for a high learner roll to make sure that teachers remain where they are and it is also not a guarantee that if some learners are removed, some teachers will go while others will remain. The criteria used will also be questioned. Obviously the shortfalls of all these issues will be felt by learners more than teachers. This is the plain truth. There is nothing more than that. At the end, you will find that teachers spend most of the time addressing problems hindering their comfort more than focusing on making sure that there is effective teaching and learning.

The RNCS is a good approach equipping learners with skills but it is not happening. The intention is good but the implementation is a problem. Teachers need to be well trained. The one week's trainings we are getting are not enough. Even if it means closing schools for a year and train teachers, as long as the fruits thereof will benefit the government and society at large. New curriculum under the circumstances I mentioned, won't work
After my interview with this teacher, I perceived that politics within the schools and amongst teachers and the school management could be one of the reasons why teachers did not comply with the policies prescribed for them. If there were conflicts between the school management and the staff, it was possible that some staff members would not do things the right way just to let the management down.

### 4.3 Conclusion

The chapter has attempted to present the content analysis of the interviews conducted with teachers at the three middle schools in the Bojanala East Region of the North West Province. It has traced the practice of teachers with regards to the incorporation of Environmental Education themes within their Learning Programmes planning. It has brought to my attention the individuals’ feelings and thinking about the subject under investigation, which was found to be a subjective reality, with one major aspect identified to be the factor hindering the implementation of Environmental Education themes within the school curriculum.

The fact that the respondents felt that Environmental Education should stand alone as a separate subject not permeating the whole curriculum, while the National Curriculum Statement calls for an interdisciplinary approach within the curriculum, is an indication that teachers lack proper knowledge and understanding of their policies. This can only be corrected through proper teacher training on relevant policies. The next chapter will then elaborate on why this training should be treated as a priority if Environmental Education should not be compromised by schools.