AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CURRICULUM BY FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN BETHAL MPUMALANGA

by

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I dedicate this work in solemn respect to the first most learned member in the family, my late father, Mavela Joseph Mbingo. It is his hard work that has instilled an inspiration and eagerness to learn in me.

DECLARATION

I, STEWART JOB MBINGO, declare that

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is my own work, and all the resources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references in the bibliography, and that the mini-dissertation or research project was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

ABSTRACT

This research was based on the question of how Foundation Phase teachers in the schools received the new curriculum for implementation. Current developments in introducing the new curriculum in South Africa have led to the hope that it would be received eagerly and become well implemented by its utilisers. The common trend of thinking was that if South Africa receives a new system of education, it will obviously be in keeping with changes cherished by its population that voted for such changes. However, these changes in education did not come as expected. In this research paper, the researcher made the case that receiving the new curriculum for implementation by teachers is a risk-taking exercise, especially at the entry level of the school, i.e. the Foundation Phase. He also problematised the notion of receiving a new curriculum by interrogating the ways or methods of implementation, the degree of knowledge and skills of teachers and their concomitant perceptions and attitudes towards the implementation of the new curriculum.

In presenting this argument, the researcher firstly discussed the different perspectives of and the 'rationale' for introducing a new curriculum in the country, which in this case happens to be South Africa. Secondly, he highlighted the role of competent, receptive and enthusiastic Foundation Phase teachers in dealing with the new curriculum. And thirdly, alluded to the challenges facing South African schools in implementing the new curriculum, and made a claim that the present implementation in the country is making a mess out of education.

The aims were to examine the manner in which the new curriculum was presented to teachers at entry level into the school(s), which in this case would be the Outcomes-Based Education curriculum in the Foundation Phase. The problems that were associated with the introduction of the new curriculum were investigated; the level of teachers' participation in the implementation of the new curriculum was looked into; and the findings of the research provided a set of conclusions and recommendations for the Department of Education, Curriculum Specialists and teachers, that will hopefully enlighten them on this burning issue in the Foundation Phase.

For this study a qualitative approach was used, and the methods applied included observation of the targeted population while engaging with its work, which happened to be the implementation of Curriculum 2005/the Revised New Curriculum Statement; and interviews with the Foundation Phase teachers in township settings. The researcher believes that through these interviews the respondents have unveiled many unmentioned and well kept secrets of teachers who are teaching in the Foundation Phase. Teaching is a proud profession, and it is not so easy for experienced teachers to acknowledge that they are struggling with the implementation of the new curriculum in their classrooms. And when the teachers are well qualified to teach on top of their long experience in the Foundation Phase, so much the more the feelings of inferiority and incompetence as far as the new curriculum and OBE and all the new assessment requirements are concerned.

This study also broke the silence of the teachers' frustrations and discomfort surrounding the attendance of in-service training opportunities and workshops. It should encourage the authorities to take heed of these remarks of the teachers, as this can easily and painlessly be rectified to serve the loyal teachers as best and fast as they can.

One of the strongest pleas that were made concerns the upkeep and sustenance of the school's physical facilities and playgrounds. The neatness and even aesthetic countenance of the classrooms have an enormous role to play in the general education of learners, and to this the SGBs and SMTs must seriously and hastily attend. The parents can also play an important role in this regard.

As far as the limitations go, there are a few, namely the contextual factors, financial constraints and time factors. Nevertheless, the findings of this study can for sure be generalised and made applicable to Foundation Phase teachers' problems in other regions, circuits and even provinces, as the results from the teachers came over very strongly, resounding the same difficulties that teachers all over are experiencing.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

At the time of the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in South Africa, the then Minister of Education, Prof SME Bengu, when questioned about the readiness of teachers to receive OBE, said: "…all signs point to a readiness for the new system. Schools are willing and prepared for implementation in 1998" (Department of Education, 1997f: a). Bengu, as a politician, further indicated that "…things are not going to be perfect", and promised that there would be monitoring in order to identify areas in which further training and support need to be provided.

On the other hand, critics questioned the "hurried" implementation of OBE, stating that the policy was not well thought through and will probably fail. The reason for the failure apparently is because it was being implemented in isolation and ignorance of about 80 years of accumulated experience with respect to curriculum change in both first world and developing countries, and in fact undermine the already fragile learning environment in schools and classrooms of South Africa (Jansen, 1997:66).

Another question that is being asked is: "Why the introduction of OBE in South Africa?" The Department of Education (1997g: 9) quoted the Black Education Act (Act No 47 of 1953), in a document titled "Outcomes-Based Education in South Africa", which mentioned that it kept Black education apart and was to "…ensure that blacks would not be over-qualified for positions not at all envisaged for them." Raboroko (1998:1) declares that "…the curriculum of the past dispensation is therefore irrelevant for some learners and is not giving a proper reflection of the perspectives of particular sub-groups."

In presenting the state of education during the apartheid regime, Donaldson et al (1999:330) have quoted the then member of Parliament in the General Assembly in 1954, Mr Le Roux, saying: "We should not give the natives an academic education, as some people are so prone to do. If we do this we shall later be burdened with number of academically trained Non-Europeans and who is going to do the manual labour in the country?"

The above statement was uttered at the time when members of the Parliament were making names for themselves by being racist. Donaldson does not tire to quote Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, Minister of Education in 1954, saying "…when I have control of Native Education, I will reform it so that the natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them."

Current developments in introducing the new curriculum in South Africa have led to the hope that it would be received eagerly and become well implemented by its utilisers. The common trend of thinking was that if South Africa receives a new system of education, it will obviously be in keeping with changes cherished by its population that voted for such changes. However, these changes in education did not come as expected. In this research paper, I will make the case that receiving the new curriculum for implementation by teachers is a risk-taking exercise, especially at the entry level of the school, i.e. the Foundation Phase. I will also problematise the notion of receiving a new curriculum by interrogating the ways or methods of implementation, the degree of knowledge and skills of teachers and their concomitant perceptions and attitudes. In presenting this argument, I will first discuss different perspectives of and the 'rationale' for introducing a new curriculum in the country, which in this case happens to be South Africa. In Chapter 1, I will highlight the role of competent, receptive Foundation Phase teachers in dealing with the new curriculum. In concluding this chapter, I will allude to the challenges facing South African schools in implementing the new curriculum, and make a claim that the present implementation in the country is making a mess out of education.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is based on the question of how Foundation Phase teachers in the schools received the new curriculum for implementation. In order to come to a decision on what theoretical framework my research fits into, I had to check the relevance of my topic with available widely known theories. I have come across the Interpretive Theory of knowledge.

How does this theoretical framework fit the research I am hoping to conduct? The Interpretive Theory of knowledge accommodates that "knowledge is constructed not only by observable phenomena, but also by descriptions of peoples' intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning and self-understanding (Henning, 2002: 56). I find it encouraging in the case of the above theory. The researcher has to look at different places and at different things in order to understand a phenomenon while the activity has become a communal process, informed by participating practitioners and examiners and or endorsed by others. In other words, I will be focusing on Foundation Phase teachers and how they reflect on their work after receiving a new curriculum. In other words, this research focuses on the understanding of individual participants' experience and perceptions of their professional roles as experienced in their day-to-day working environment, from the standpoint of their unique contexts and backgrounds.

In the case of the Interpretive Theory of knowledge, phenomena and events are understood through mental processes of interpretation which are influenced by and interact with social contexts. According to Henning (2002: 61) the type of knowledge frameworks that drive society, also known as its discourses, become key role-players in the interpretive project. I find this theory blending well with the research I am hoping to conduct, as Foundation Phase teachers would be sharing their views, beliefs, success stories and constraints upon receiving the new curriculum. I, as novice interpretive researcher, would be interrogating these knowledge systems by looking into the way these teachers make meaning in their (working) lives.

Appropriate to this framework is the methodology I have chosen to incorporate in this proposal. My research methodology is basic interpretive qualitative research with a tendency towards critical ethnography, which blends favourably with the Interpretive Theory framework. The data will be collected through observation and interviews, which are also appropriate to this framework. How I will be collecting my data is also appropriate to this framework. I will make use of the interviewing technique and unstructured observation.

This inquiry will be undertaken in natural settings in order to collect substantial situational information. It was not a bed of roses to fit my proposal into a suitable

framework. This research is in general exciting and demanding; perhaps with the experience I am gaining I will learn to integrate the framework in an accountable manner, which will probably prove to be a more successful one in the long run.

1.3   RATIONALE

Any curriculum that reaches the schools has its entry at the Foundation Phase level. It should be noted that if such a curriculum is received in any odd way, it would negatively affect all the other grades in the schools and eventually contaminate the whole system of education.

This study wants to establish if thorough dissemination has been engaged into before any implementation of the curriculum were expected to be done by Foundation Phase teachers. The discovery of such facts would obviously help the researcher to come up with relevant recommendations at the end of the day, with respect of what must be done in order to receive a new curriculum competently by the Foundation Phase teachers and how such curriculum should be presented to the entry level.

1.4   PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to the Ministry of Education's revised plan, Outcomes-Based Education was implemented in Grade 1 in 1998, Grades 2 and 7 was phased in during 1999, Grades 3 and 8 in 2000, Grades 4 and 9 in 2001, Grades 5 and 10 in 2002, Grades 6 and 11 in 2003 and Grade 12 in 2004 (Department of Education, 1997f: 12). The time frames set and the concerns raised after the implementation, are the reasons behind the research question, namely: How did the Foundation Phase teachers receive the new curriculum for implementation? Were the Foundation Phase teachers prepared and trained to implement the new curriculum? And if they were trained, how effective was the training?

Olivier (1997:15) is quoted saying: "The best way to get where you want to be is to first determine what you want to achieve. Once the end goal (product or outcome) has been determined, strategies, techniques and other ways and means will be put into place to achieve the goal."

There is concern about the Ministry of Education's plan to start with the OBE implementation according to this rigid plan. According to Bhika (1997:50) what OBE can achieve in terms of transforming South Africa by shifting the emphasis from rote-learning to an emphasis on understanding, interpreting, evaluating, applying, and thinking, is commendable. On its face, Bhika continues, OBE appears to be so sensible, but the implementation of OBE in the beginning of 1998 with fixed and final dates, was controversial.

Outcomes-Based Education still remains the underlying philosophy of South Africa's education system. What is at issue here are the rigid time-frames and implementation strategies associated with the implementation of Curriculum 2005 – not to mention the technical jargon in which it is couched. The provision of early childhood development, targeting children from birth to nine years old continue to deteriorate. It is still confined to wealthier communities; despite the fact that international research shows it is an essential basis for success in the schooling system.

In primary and secondary schools, teachers are crying out for a national plan for in-service training to tackle past inequalities and to prepare them for the new curriculum. This point was also identified by the curriculum review committee as a major weakness in the implementation of Curriculum 2005. At the level of the classroom there has been little delivery to date. Again, the hype surrounding the release of the committee's report – "Outcomes-Based Education changed" made for good copy, but caused widespread confusion in the minds of the public, in the Department of Education and, most seriously, in the classroom.

It should be remembered that Outcomes-Based Education was introduced because it was believed to be appropriate to the needs of the new South Africa. It promised to meet the skills requirements of the labour market while developing learners' skills, knowledge and values. A crucial objective of the new Curriculum was to prepare an informed and critical citizenry imbued with universal human values.

The evidence presented by the review committee is that Outcomes- Based Education has been a success where proper training and learning materials were provided. The underlying problem in implementing curriculum change has been the lack of resources. This study is therefore undertaken in order to help identifying the problem that lay siege to Outcomes-Based Education and provide possible guidelines towards working solutions for the benefit of every citizen of South Africa.

1.5   AIMS OF THIS RESEARCH

There are a number of factors which contribute towards the poor implementation of the new curriculum. I aim to examine the manner in which the new curriculum was presented to teachers at entry level into the school(s), which in this case would be the Outcomes-Based Education curriculum in the Foundation Phase. The following objectives will be thereafter undertaken:

- The problems that was associated with the introduction of the new curriculum will be investigated;
- the level of teachers' participation in the implementation of the new curriculum will be sought; and
- the findings of my research will provide a set of conclusions and recommendations for the Department of Education, Curriculum Specialists and teachers, that will hopefully enlighten them on this burning issue in the Foundation Phase.

1.6   RESEARCH DESIGN

When deciding which research path would be followed during the course of the study, the following question can be asked: What will the research strategy be? How will the data be collected for the research? For this study a qualitative approach will be used, and the methods to be applied would include observation of the targeted population while engaging with its work, which happens to be the implementation of Curriculum 2005/the Revised New Curriculum Statement. The observation will focus on the progress made in implementing the new curriculum by individual teachers in terms of control of the work and making sense out of it. The data collected will be

analysed with the focus on whether the teachers' interaction with the new curriculum is fashioned with certain assumptions.

The researcher will also conduct interviews with the Foundation Phase teachers in township settings. Through the interviews, the researcher can relate to what others say about themselves and he can form his own generalisations about certain categories of experiences and of human conditions. We validate our own experience by relating it to the experience of the interviewed person. The main aim of the interview data in this case, is to bring our attention to what individuals think, feel and do and what they have to say about it in an interview. Thus, they are giving us their subjective reality in a formatted discussion that is guided and managed by an interviewer and later integrated into a research report (Henning, 2002: 74).

1.7   LITERATURE REVIEW

My research question is best captured in the work of Bruce Fuller (1998: 66-98) that makes the claim that there are conflicting agendas that are pursued by the different people involved in designing the curriculum. In case of my research, Foundation Phase teachers are receiving the new curriculum from the State with the hope that they would interact with it as a working document. Unfortunately for the State and everyone in South Africa, the new curriculum is received with resistance and despair by teachers who are supposed to implement it.

Fuller's research (1991:67) focuses on the State in Malawi and shows how it attempts to use the school system to strengthen its position in society. In this research, likewise to that of Fuller, you will however, also notice that teachers and learners do not simply follow the State's instructions in the form of the planned curriculum. Instead, schools actively re-interpret the curriculum and their roles as teachers, and consequently deliver a very different curriculum to the one planned by the State.

The topic will further be problematised by asking questions such as those of Fuller: Do teachers choose to ignore the instructions of the curriculum planners and interpret it to suit their own needs? To what extent do similar things happen in South African

schools? Fuller's key question is: Do teachers operate as agents transmitting the State's political messages, or are they independent agents transmitting only educational messages? Fuller's answer seems to be yes and no. I think these questions are also relevant in South African context, whereby the Outcomes-Based Education curriculum is continuously struggling to make a meaningful contribution.

The recent second review of the OBE curriculum in South Africa, the Revised New Curriculum Statement, bears testimony to the struggle it faces as being alluded to by the above statement. It is proper to state that if something is not broken, do not fix it. The other way around is the common practice of the OBE curriculum in South Africa.

1.8   CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.8.1   FOUNDATION PHASE – an entry level at formal schooling system. It refers to the learners who are in the first three grades in the beginning stage of schooling, namely Grade 1, 2 and 3 (Department of Education 2002:7).

1.8.2   CURRICULUM - is a broad concept which includes all planned activities that take place in the school and thus also include the subject courses which take place during the normal school day (Carl, 2002: 36). According to Marsh (1997: 4), curriculum is defined as a product, a document which includes details about goals, objectives, context, teaching techniques, evaluation and assessment, and resources. Sometimes these agencies are documents issued by the government or one of its agencies and which prescribe how and what is to be taught. A teacher may not accept all aspects of a written curriculum and/or be unable to implement a curriculum exactly as prescribed due to lack of training and understanding. It is possible, according to Jackson (1992: 32) to note definitional shifts over the decades going from 'fixed courses of study' terminology, to broader terms such as 'learning opportunities' and 'experiences which a learner encounters'. Thus, it might be argued that these shifts in definition over the decade represent 'conceptual progress.'

1.8.3 CURRICULUM DESIGN – is a phase within curriculum development which relates to both the creation of a new curriculum as well as the re-planning of an existing one, after more evaluation has been made (Carl, 2002: 87). According to Print (1993: 2) curriculum design is the process of conceptualising and arranging the elements of curriculum into a coherent pattern.

1.8.4 CURRICULUM DISSEMINATION – comprises of the preparation of curriculum utilisers through the distribution or promulgation of information, thoughts and concepts in order to make them aware of the envisaged curriculum (Carl, 2002: 143). Print (1993: 2) sees curriculum dissemination as the process of ensuring that a curriculum reaches the target population, that is, the deliberate intention to inform clients of an innovation. The process includes such aspects as training those who will present the materials, sensitising those who will monitor it, and other goal-oriented activities to facilitate the adoption of the innovation.

1.8.5 CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION – is traditionally seen as the delivery process, the implementation of the planned activities in a purposeful way (Carl, 2002: 143).

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The first thing to do before conducting my research would be to request my population to be researched or respondents to give an informed consent to participate. I will inform them fully about the research in which the interview is going to be used. I will make them know what is going to happen with their information after recording the data (Appendix A).

I will provide a letter of consent that I have pre-drafted as a researcher and the participants have to give consent to and any other ethics issue that may be relevant. The letter I will give out will be accompanied by a letter in which organisations also consent to the use of their sites and the protection of the institutional name (Appendix

B). I know that I remain accountable (as a researcher) for the ethical quality of the inquiry and I should take great care and when in doubt I will definitely ask for advice.

1.10   CONCLUSION

In Chapter 1 the background to the study was introduced and the problem was stated. The aims with this report and the research design were discussed briefly, and the concept clarification of some words was done. In this chapter, the researcher chose the topic in which he preferred to conduct the investigation, such as how Foundation Phase teachers received the new curriculum (Curriculum 2005 and subsequent updated versions namely the Revised National Curriculum Statement and the National Curriculum Statement) for implementation. The debate on the topic is being provoked by the researcher and new concepts and terminology are being explained.

Chapter 2 deals with the literature review and the necessary information about the topic is given in details. Different authors and writers are quoted expressing their views and opinions on the subject under discussion.

Chapter 3 is spent on how the researcher decided to conduct his research, how he chose the method of research, and detailed information on the gathering of data is provided in this chapter. The researcher is fortunately in the position to collect data by means of interviews and observation.

In Chapter 4 the researcher is analysing and interpreting the collected data. In doing so, the researcher is ensuring that any evidence and facts provided become the solution of the problem at hand. The data and evidence will hopefully provide answers to the research question in order to support the purpose of the research.

Chapter 5 is the final step wherein the researcher summarises important issues, draws conclusions and provides sound recommendations. It is assumed that this would be a coherent research report as it responds to basic conventions by comprising of a title, introduction, theoretical framework, intentions and literature review, design methods, ethical considerations, conclusion and bibliography. I now

realise that the journey from a concern about an issue in social life, converted to a research topic and the inquired into by means of various methods, is an engaging one in learning by doing, and it is also about not being apprehensive about the new ways of doing (Henning, 2002: 69). Every step of the research journey is a risk, and I trust that this research will point to the direction that was not clearly thought of in the beginning of the new curriculum in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about the journey to the world of literature, where different views are presented by different writers on the implementation of the new curriculum by Foundation Phase teachers. I will collate the views of writers into a common understanding of the implementation of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) through the new curriculum at the entry level of the school. This chapter will also explore in detail the definition, description and common discussions on curriculum implementation. Another aspect of great interest is that of defining, describing and discussing curriculum change. Having paid attention to the curriculum change and implementation, the problems that are being experienced by teachers as described in literature are brought to the light.

2.2 CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Successful implementation of a new curriculum depends on the extent to which all consumers are informed and have been prepared for the envisaged change and whether they are also prepared to associate themselves with it (Carl, 2002: 172). Curriculum implementation is traditionally seen as the delivery process, implementation can be considered as a system of engineering that takes design specifications through various channels to the teacher and classroom (Schubert, 1986: 42).

Jordaan and Mostert (1989:392-400) set out a good description of the various levels of implementation and they refer to it as macro- and micro-implementation. According to them macro-implementation is the application of policy and curriculum initiatives as determined at national level by curriculum authorities.

Jordaan and Mostert (1989:393) define micro-implementation as that process during which local decisions are taken. This leads to application in practice and the eventual institutionalisation. In practice, it means the core syllabi must be implemented at school level by subject teachers. Teacher participation and initiatives

are normally high at this level as, through them, they make their own mark on the development of a syllabus. Micro-implementation may therefore in practice also include the implementation of a subject teacher's subject curriculum.

2.3 CURRICULUM CHANGE

Marris (1999: 85) suggests that the loss one experiences in personal tragedies, such as the death of a loved one is, in many senses, similar to the feelings of loss one experiences during periods of social or organisational change. As a consequence, says Marris, we need to be a great deal more sensitive about how we manage feelings during change processes.

As the author of this chapter, I argue that we cannot simply expect people to accept change immediately, however good the reasons for the change, or the change itself might be. In exactly the same way we have to work through a process of bereavement during times of personal loss; so individuals within organisations undergoing change should be given the time and space to work through the insecurities and loss which they feel during these change processes.

Every South African teacher has in the past few years been exposed to lots of talk and activity about Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). OBE is a broad movement for the change of curricula in schools, colleges, universities, technikons, community organisations and in workplace education. No one in his right mind can change a curriculum just for the sake of change, or just because it is fashionable to do so. There are always strong reasons why a curriculum has to change. Changes are often brought about because someone believes that the present curriculum is antiquated either in part or as a whole. And this someone would then have to give a strong argument why the operating curriculum or part thereof is antiquated. Just as someone would think the operating curriculum is antiquated; another person may beg to differ and give an equally strong argument why the present curriculum is still appropriate. Yet another person may agree that the present curriculum is in fact antiquated, but disagree with what is being suggested as a replacement for that antiquated curriculum Gultig and Butlter(1999: 15).

You may know people who find that they themselves are adopting stances similar to those I have mentioned above when it comes to the change to OBE in South Africa. What is important for teachers is to understand the bases of the arguments for and against specific proposals for curriculum change. It is only if teachers have a good understanding that they can be able to critically evaluate all the different arguments using their own beliefs and experiences.

But what really leads to curriculum change? I can surely rephrase the question to 'Why curriculum change?' If we know the reasons for curriculum change, we are likely to be able to better judge the extent to which the proposed changes actually address the concerns raised in the reasons for change. We can also look at the context in which such change is taking place, and judge for ourselves the extent to which the proposed curriculum changes are likely to succeed.

According to Becher (1978: 109) new ideas, in education as in life, travel hopefully: few of them actually arrive at their intended destinations. I fully agree with the above statement because what the department of education is describing as 'effective implementation of OBE' pays lip-service to the schools for which it is intended.

It is tempting to agree with Becher (1978: 109) saying: …"most of those involved in the business of curriculum change would admit that, while a good deal is now known about how to plan, construct and try out new curriculum schemes, no one has yet come up with a sensible way of weaving such schemes into the daily fabric of classroom life." This is confirmed by the recent review of C2005 and new changes effected to make it more adjustable to classroom life.

Many of those teachers, who first embraced the OBE curriculum as a new, acceptable idea, have 'nightmares' in their sleep with the unfolding of the very curriculum. Hopes were running high that OBE is the vehicle of success, at last, the truth to many if not all – is that everything that is proposed by OBE is uncritically embraced. When this (OBE) curriculum is being implemented, all sorts of hidden snags began to reveal themselves.

Becher (1978: 114) correctly states that "curriculum developers, in their understandable anxiety to present their wares in the best light, tend to over-sell them, to much the same extent as responding teachers tend to over-buy. The resulting inflation of demand and expectancy is of eventual benefit to neither". The rushed 'dissemination' attempts tended to display only the best features of a new programme (OBE) and play down the potential snags, not necessarily in order to deceive, but because it seemed inconvenient and inappropriate to bring them deliberately to view.

The extent of the educational interventions in South Africa has left commentators struggling to find sufficiently dramatic terms of description. Particularly remarked upon were the political means to the educational ends. This is what Brehony (1990: 34) call 'the massive extension of state power over schools.'

In this chapter, I shall also describe the efforts to use legislation and other forms of persuasion to alter the ways in which teachers, especially primary school teachers, approached their work. Despite the enormity of the changes imposed in this period of OBE implementation, there were always signs of contradiction, struggle and contestations among primary school teachers.

What is being obtained in the implementation of South African OBE, is best captured in the words of Ball (1992: 2) saying: "…the credibility of the advice and the arrangements for the curriculum and assessment is undermined by the frequency with which alterations are made, due to the rush with which most of the reforms are being implemented." Moreover, the changes themselves are repeatedly 'altered, amended and reoriented.'

Woods and Wenham (1995: 123) are of an opinion that 'an overloaded curriculum, oversized classes and inadequate resources were not taken seriously as constraints, reinforcing the impression that the individual teacher is the sole agent of bringing about or thwarting children's learning.' This in my opinion complements the assumption that the educational reform in South Africa is causing teachers to lose touch with what they are doing. Teachers are working hard, doing good and feeling bad.

2.3.1 Principles of curriculum change

Oliva (1988: 31-47) sets his principles about change as follows: Change is unavoidable, because life grows and develops through change. Curriculum changes which have taken place earlier may continue together with changes brought about at a later stage. Changes may take place over long period and even overlap newer developments. Curriculum change is the result or consequence of changes which take place in people. Curriculum developers must therefore endeavour to change those people who will eventually influence curriculum change. All persons involved must have the maximum opportunity to have their input in the envisaged changes, because in this way their support during the implementation phase may be obtained.

2.3.2 Reasons for curriculum change

The reasons for curriculum change in South Africa can be deduced from the Revised National Curriculum Statement 9 (Grades R-9) as alluded to by Carl (2002: 79). Stated principles for the new curriculum are:
- o social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity are key values;
- o OBE is the point of departure;
- o a high level of skills and knowledge for all is non-negotiable;
- o clarity and accessibility are to be key aspects in both the design and language;
- o progressive ongoing development and integrated learning are integral principles.

2.3.3 Barriers to change

The following barriers to change are cited by Dalin (1978:29):
- o Value barriers – exist because individuals and groups have different ways of seeing things. This means that two people can look at the same innovation in a completely different light.

- o Power barriers – significant innovations usually involve a redistribution of resources and changes of authority structures in the system. There is often resistance when power changes hands.
- o Practical barriers – one of the biggest problems with change is to bridge the gap between the idea or plan and the implementation of that plan in the school or the classroom.
- o Psychological barriers – experience shows that people find it difficult to change.

We tend to continue doing things that we are familiar with. Familiarity provides security, and it is difficult to enter into the unknown. To be willing to change, we need to see some meaning and advantage for ourselves in the change. A change could be worthwhile, for instance, if it improves our working conditions, if it will lessen our workload, if it reduces conflict, or if it makes our teaching more interesting.

2.4   PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW CURRICULUM

2.4.1   Introduction

The introduction of OBE in schools came at the time when the recipients thereof were not ready to receive it. The excitement about freedom since 1994, to many people in South Africa overshadowed the concomitant implications to overhaul the system of education. Many problems surfaced from the implementation of Outcomes-Based Education. The critical areas that hosted problems were the cascading model, limited not effective time-frame of workshops and lack of resources to schools. In this chapter, I will argue that OBE was rushed to be implemented in South Africa for the sake of making changes, at the expense of quality and efficiency.

2.4.2   Problems experienced by teachers

The implementation of OBE is coupled with problems that are being experienced by teachers. Some of the problems are, according to Madden (1997:53-97), as follows:

- OBE says an educator's success will be measured by learner outcomes; teachers have a problem about this.
- Teachers feel that the new curriculum is a big change, and it might have serious consequences for their careers.
- Teachers find that they do not have enough books for learners to do their own research.
- Some teachers are suggesting that OBE is simply a way of getting rid of teachers.
- Teachers are talking OBE language but implement the old system in their classrooms.
- During a number of workshops, teachers were not really sure about the ideas being conveyed, but were too nervous to ask questions.
- Learners often do not take group-work seriously.
- School periods are simply too short for learner-centred activities.
- Curriculum 2005 promised to increase the workload of teachers, thus resistance was provoked.
- Workshops were rather too skeletal, conducted only for two to three days.
- Teachers complain about the new vocabulary in OBE and it causes them to spend a lot of time acquainting with it.
- Charts to make drawings and diagrams are very expensive.
- Teachers meet weekly to plan and discuss problems and activities of their implementation, but no-one has the skills to plan or assess the work of learners better (Kossor, 1995: 29).

The Sowetan (2004:11) cited the following problems being experienced by teachers:
- The system (OBE) did away with the teaching of vowels or consonants for children and instead kids were to be taught sentences from a word go. "How do you make a child construct a sentence when that child does not even know what 'a, e, i, o, u' is?"
- "We (teachers) were taken on crash courses to learn this system and kids suffered while we were away."
- We started to use that system with no back-up.
- Those 12 hours we spent in a week attending the courses was for the year but there was a follow-up to see if teachers were coping.

- In no time, the "Breakthrough-system" was dumped and was replaced by the "Threshold-system", which was to be used for the first three months of the year for every child.
- Those children who had been to crèches were bored, because it was mostly stuff they had done already.
- There was no alternative to this (boring stuff) that the teacher could provide. All upgrades and changes of OBE came with their own demands and none of them had anything to do with helping the teachers cope. We were just expected to conform and attend the course and get on with it - nobody cared.
- We were being bombarded with different work material from all the publishers you could think of.
- Each Minister of Education came with his own published material and different schools were issued with different books to use.
- There is a lot of glaring confusion with Curriculum 2005; we are being confused with these big words and this system does not work with kids from the township.
- Homework is too demanding. It is difficult to get the kid to bring a magazine from home that has different types of furnisher for example. To ask them (kids) to access internet for homework or an assignment, is an insult. The curriculum has no reading material, our children cannot even read.
- There is no remedial training for teachers. We are not consulted and we are sent consultants who have no idea on how things work in the real world. Our children's parents are not involved in their (kids) education. They still have the old mentality that it is the teacher's job. The children themselves do not have real zeal to do things.
- The socio-economic situation also does not help; the children come to school being hungry.

A report compiled by the National Department of Education called: National Evaluation and Monitoring of the Trial of Curriculum 2005 and OBE in Provincial Pilot Schools in South Africa (1997), summarises the practical problems experienced with the implementation of OBE.

Singh (1999:19) has ordered the Department of Education report of 1997 in the following format:

- o Learning materials were not relevant to learners' own experience.
- o Not all materials were made available in the home language of the learners.
- o Multi-grade and multi-lingual classrooms caused classroom management problems.
- o Group interactions were not effective enough.
- o More time and training is required for assessment and group work.
- o Problems were experienced with the learner support material; teachers were afraid of new methods and therefore needed more training.
- o Teachers needed more training in reporting and recording.
- o Learners' numbers were too large.
- o Disciplinary problems.
- o Shortage of resources.
- o Teachers needed more motivation and support.

2.4.3 Problems experienced by parents about OBE in general

A court judge, Patrick J. Madden wrote: "Abandoning traditional concepts of teaching, we have allowed education theorists who seemingly are more concerned with social engineering than with education, to take over the formation of our children." The problem with the State controlling OBE is that it becomes an engineered result of someone's predetermined agenda. The ability to mandate 'outcomes' is a fearful power of an unrestrained government. Dictating mass opinion through government stated outcomes undermines independent thinking, freedom of speech and privacy of conduct and belief (Kossor, 1995: 19).

OBE is an intrusion into the values of our children. Parents who are trying to rear their children with strong religious values are concerned that willingness to go along with the crowd is taught by OBE as a positive rather than a negative attitude. To "respect decisions taken by a group", is a stated objective in the South African draft document. What if, under the guidance of the teacher or facilitator 'the class decides that homosexual marriage is an acceptable and even desired 'alternative' to heterosexual marriage? Why should Christian children be expected to 'respect' the

group's decision? The irony is that OBE shows very little tolerance when it comes to basic Christian values.

OBE insidiously encourages a rejection of parental values in order to replace them with new state designed values. The new religion which OBE will force upon our children is 'human rights' and a New Age type of spirituality. In fact this is the most disturbing feature of OBE. The South African OBE is full of religious values – not that of parents but of the State. The following are a few of the religious objectives: the holistic unfolding of the learners; the awareness of the need to be spiritually anchored. When a humanistic secular state talks about 'spiritual' be sure that they are not even suggesting Biblically-based spirituality.

OBE is an egalitarian scheme that stifles individual potential for excellence and achievement by holding the entire class to the level of learning attainable by every child. According to a working document of National Qualifications Framework, "in any particular batch of candidates, if no-one is competent, no-one passes. If all are competent, all pass." After all, how do you test whether a candidate can exhibit "non-judgemental thinking?"

2.4.4   Problems experienced by educationalists

The transformational outcomes (which South African education planners have concentrated on) are vaguely worded and show little concern for core academic content. They are largely in the affective domain, describing mental processes such as attitudes, and sentiments – behavioural and social outcomes rather than knowledge, skills and other cognitive outcomes.

OBE stifles independent and critical thought because learners must fulfil the outcomes stipulated by the Education Department. For thousands of years, people have become intelligent by engaging in Dialectics – challenging authority on what is correct and true and arguing thoughtfully about it. Mastery Learning and OBE do not allow for this type of discussion.

2.4.5   Problems experienced by learners

An interview with learners in a Grade 8 class revealed the following problems they encounter:

- o Pile of work is given to learners who have limited time.
- o Resources are not adequately available for the different groups to conduct class research with.
- o Only learners with literate parents receive meaningful support with homework at home.
- o Teachers tend to set outcomes that are not easy to achieve.
- o Teachers are far too strict on rules and do not encourage the learners to think for themselves.

2.4.6   Advantages and disadvantages of OBE

According to Singh (1999:32) in any system of education there are strengths and weaknesses. It is important for all people in education system to build on the strengths and work on the weaknesses. In asking teachers to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the OBE system of education, they would inevitably be looking for solutions for the weak areas.

2.5   SOLUTIONS SUGGESTED IN LITERATURE ABOUT OBE

Teachers need to be empowered in order to cope with the demands of the new curriculum. The kind of development needed is that will nurture the teachers' scope of involvement in developing the curriculum. Teachers need to get an intensive training with respect to curriculum development, strategies to deal with the current stress level at workplace.

Different writers define teacher empowerment in different ways that complement one another. Carl (2002: 4) sees "empowerment" as a process that envisions growth and development and which enables teachers to optimise not only the teaching-learning situation, but also their own potential as educators. Empowerment is therefore seen not as external intervention whereby something is "done to people" but rather as a process in which they are involved that generates growth and enablement.

It is because of this reason that I look at teachers as supposed to be active agents of OBE in South Africa. The attitude of teachers to become receivers only of the new curriculum does not assist in making the country's dream realisable.

According to Lagana (1989: 52) empowerment is the process of providing people with the opportunity and necessary resources to enable them to believe and feel that they understand their world and have the power to change it; for example greater autonomy and independence in decision-making. I find the work of Lagana inspiring and echoing my belief that the Department of Education should provide resources to teachers and learners. Intensive training in OBE should take place for teachers to gain confidence in what they are doing. The new curriculum should be provided as a guide or working document to teachers and autonomy and independence in decision-making should be encouraged. Teachers should be seen doing creative things in the classrooms, encouraging learners to be creative too. When giving teachers autonomy and independence, it is by no means to make them loose focus of the work expected of them. To tap from the vocabulary of Carl (2002: 7) it is perhaps useful to mention here what empowerment is NOT, that is, it is not 'turning people loose and then hoping for the best.' Carl further states that there is still a high premium on output, outcomes and productivity. There is therefore no climate of carelessness and meaningless freedom, but rather of freedom from responsibility because a specific purpose is pursued.

It is also the purpose of this study to indicate that for OBE to find fertile soil for growing in South African schools, the management of the very schools should be encouraging in terms of empowering teachers. Freedom and democracy should be enhanced in the schools for OBE to permeate the right way. Carl (2002: 7) has quoted RM Kanter's writing: "Freedom is not the absence of structure – letting employees go off and do whatever they want – but rather a clear structure which enables people to work within established boundaries in a creative and autonomous way." From the above statement I deduce that teachers should not misuse freedom and independence given to them to tackle OBE curriculum. When a teacher is empowered, it is seen through the way he/she reflects on his/her work.

2.6 SOLUTIONS OFFERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

According to the Department of Education (1997:18) the following are the proposed solutions:

- o Through in-service training, attitudes of teachers, parents, administrators and professional support staff can be changed;
- o in-service courses and training initiatives need to be aimed at mainstream teachers;
- o training to alter attitudes must be linked and interlinked with other processes and developments which include linking training dealing practically with learners with special needs and achieving success;
- o teachers' attitudes change when they work with such learners and experience success;
- o training if linked to an overall resource/support network which bears upon the whole school, can be an effective method of bringing about change and progress;
- o flexibility needs to operate at all levels in the educational system;
- o flexibility is required in terms of professional roles, curriculum and teaching methods;
- o teachers in schools require flexibility in order to develop confidence in their ability to meet special needs;
- o flexibility is required in order that teachers in existing special schools can experience and develop confidence in working within mainstream;
- o one-year or one-term teacher exchange schemes can do much to facilitate this and provide a valuable training experience;
- o Utilisation of existing resources, training teachers in co-operative learning, multiple intelligences;

2.7 SOME OTHER SOLUTIONS

According to Kossor (1995: 30) since the Department of Education has already decided to go ahead with OBE, concerned educationalists and parents should insist on the following:

- o education and behavioural science experimentation must be separated

- o all psychological testing should be prohibited in the classroom unless there is the express written consent of parents
- o there should be the practice of adopting outcomes that set quantifiable standards in academic skills and subjects whose accomplishment by students can be verified through objective testing
- o there should be a focus on the primary job of schools. Public schools cannot be everything for everyone. Their purpose is to provide students with a common core of fundamental knowledge and skills.
- o there should be increased parental involvement in student performance in schools. Too many parents treat schools as glorified day-care centres and take little interest in their child's progress. The recent South African Schools Act, 1996, makes allowance for parents to get involved in the governing body of their local schools.
- o the trend towards intolerance of independent thought must be reversed.
- o diversity should be embraced. Teachers are not all alike and schools need not be all alike.

2.8 CONCLUSION

It is of essence in ensuring that educationalists understand mastery learning. For progression to work and inclusive OBE system to develop, an important aspect of that development has to be the understanding and implementation of mastery learning. Mastery learning is clearly linked to the premise of OBE that all learners can learn and that OBE is learner-paced and learner-based. OBE is founded on three basic premises; all learners can learn and succeed, success breeds success, and schools control the conditions that determine whether or not students succeed. According to Spady (1994: 26) illiteracy and failure are neither inevitable nor acceptable. Further, Spady argued that average learners and those learners who come from poor socio-economic backgrounds can succeed. A vehicle that could make this success possible in OBE is located in mastery learning.

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The argument around teachers receiving the new curriculum is as old as mankind itself. Since time immemorial the teaching of any school curriculum has been an issue close to teachers' heart. A resounding question has been 'do teachers teach the curriculum in the fashion that it was presented to them?' The answer seems to be 'YES' and 'NO.'

According to Carl (1988: 1-3) South Africa has a number of factors which detrimentally influence effective curriculum development: a new curriculum and the accompanying challenges of implementing it; many teachers are uninformed with regard to curriculum theory and practice; a tendency towards bureaucracy; a shortage in curriculum specialists; a lack of teacher contribution to curriculum development on meso- and macro-curriculum research and experimentation.

3.2 THEORY OF THE METHOD

This research is situated in an interpretive research paradigm with its emphasis on experience and interpretation. Henning (2004

31) rightly states that "interpretive research is fundamentally concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand social members' definitions and understanding of situations. The interpretive paradigm does not concern itself with the search for broadly applicable laws and rules, but rather seeks to produce descriptive analyses that emphasize deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena". This ties in with the focus of the proposed research, as its purpose is gaining a deep level of understanding of individual participants' experience and perceptions about the new curriculum in the Foundation Phase.

According to Garrick (1999: 149) fundamental assumptions of the interpretive paradigm include the following: Firstly, individuals are not considered to be passive vehicles in social, political and historical affairs, but have certain inner capabilities which can allow for individual judgements, perceptions and decision-making autonomy (agency). Secondly, the belief that any event or action is explainable in terms of multiple interacting factors, events and processes –causes and effects are mutually interdependent. Thirdly, an acceptance of the extreme difficulty in attaining complete objectivity, especially in observing human subjects who confuse and make sense of events based on their individual system of meaning. Fourthly, the view that the aim of inquiry is to develop an understanding of individual cases, rather than universal laws or predictive generalisations. This does not mean that the findings cannot be extended logically and used in some way; otherwise the purpose of the research would be questionable. Fifthly, the view that the world is made up of multi-faceted realities that are best studied as a whole, recognising the significance of the context in which experience occurs. Lastly, the recognition that inquiry is always value-laden and that such values inevitably influence the framing, focusing and conducting of research. These assumptions underlie all elements of this research.

3.3   THE INTERVIEW

3.3.1 Introduction

I know that teachers as subjects of inquiry in social sciences can talk and think. For many years, teachers would tell their stories about their profession. I am only interested in my interviewees' difficulties, problems, positive and negative aspects in receiving OBE curriculum. Heron (1981: 26) says " the use of language itself contains within it the paradigm of corporative inquiry: and since language is the primary tool whose use enables human construing and intending to occur, it is difficult to see how there can be any more fundamental mode of inquiry for human beings into the human condition. Vygotsky (1987: 236-237) rightly states "every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness."

Interviewing to me is a basic mode of inquiry. Relating narratives of experiences, experienced by the teachers has always been the human's way of making sense of their experiences. Reason (1981:50) responds aptly to those who ask "Is telling stories a science?' The best stories are those which stir people's minds, hearts, and souls and by doing so give them new insight into themselves, their problems and their human conditions. The challenge is to develop a human science that can more fully serve this aim. The question then, is not 'Is story telling a science?' but 'Can science tell good stories?'

According to McKernan (1996: 128) the interview has the advantage over the questionnaire of allowing the interviewer to probe areas of interest as they arise during the interview. McKernan (1996:130) goes on to say it ought to be stressed that in an interview situation there are no right or wrong answers and that personal information is to be discussed on a voluntary basis. The interview is not the place for a heated debate or discussion to prove one's position.

I know as a novice researcher that interviews are best when brief and to the point of a problem inquiry. It is also according to conventions to have answers tape-recorded or written down for further discussion and a reliable record of the event. In the case of this research, interviews and observations were conducted with 29 teachers at two primary schools in Bethal in Mpumalanga province. An unstructured interview schedule was developed for this purpose and open-ended questions were used to get the opinions of respondents without necessarily channelling them to specific answers.

The provincial department of education was conducting the workshops while this research was on. The researcher had a wide pool of audience for observation. These workshops for Foundation Phase educators conducted by the department of education proceeded in the same manner as those for OBE training in Grade 8. The purpose of these workshops was to train teachers on the Revised National Curriculum Statement. While observing, it struck my attention why these workshops were being criticised by teachers. Facilitators of these workshops hardly understand working with adults (teachers) themselves, as opposed to working with children (learners). The language that is being used does not show negotiations with adults, in stead, it is purely arrogant and enforcing policy matters. A summary of this data is captured in Chapter 4.

I know for a fact that in an unstructured interview, the issues and topics to be discussed are left entirely to the interviewee. It depends on an interviewee to entertain an issue or topic. The interviewer only comes in to ask the interviewee to explain and expand on the issue or topic. According to McKernan (1996:129) during the initial stages of an inquiry an unstructured interview is preferred as it allows respondents to raise issues which may not be tapped by other styles of interviewing.

3.3.2   Purpose of the interview

My purpose for the interview is not to get straight answers to questions, nor to test hypothesis, nor to evaluate, but rather to understand and note the experiences of teachers and the meaning they make of their experiences. It is interesting to me to listen to adults telling their work experiences as teachers. I created a relaxed atmosphere with these adults and it is good for an interviewer not to be the centre of attraction. The trick of relegating myself to the background is paying off, as my 'clients' (interviewees) are suddenly free to respond to questions. I have deliberately structured my interview questions in such a way that the area of concern is evident.

3.4   OBSERVATION

When you are engaged in observation exercise, I have noted that one must try to keep a happy medium between juggling the observation and the participation element, yet this is a problem which each researcher must face and solve. The point to keep in mind when observing in schools and classrooms is that it does not imply that all schools should be orderly and quiet – the purpose in this case of research is to make an empirical and factual rather than a value judgement of the setting.

3.4.1   Advantages of observation

According to McKernan (1996:61) observation has the following advantages as a research technique:
- o *Naturalistic enquiry:* The study takes place in the 'natural' environment of the participants rather than an artificial or contrived laboratory reconstruction.
- o *Time sampling:* Unlike the survey researcher, the observer can take as much time as is required to gain a representative sample of behaviour – ensuring that trends and behaviours are representative. The advantage is that unlikely as well as likely occurrences will probably be sampled.
- o *Non-verbal behaviour:* The observer can make notes on non-verbal behaviour, like facial and body movement and gestures, which are not available to the sample survey.

Furthermore, McKernan (1996:62) indicates that there are however shortcomings with observation too. The following are the disadvantages of observation as a research technique:
- o *Data difficult to quantify:* Unstructured modes of observation rely heavily on description rather than measurement and counting procedures. It is often difficult to impose a coding frame on massive amounts of qualitative data.
- o *Small size of population observed:* The fact that a group or individual is the focus of the observation may permit discussion of results only in relation to the case studied.
- o *Generalisability:* This is related to the above point; since cases studied are small, it is impossible to generalise the results to larger populations.
- o *Reactivity:* With an observer present in situ, a reactive effect may be introduced into the setting which distorts behaviour and produces unnatural

results. That is, with a researcher present, respondents may behave uncharacteristically.

I find the submissions of McKernan realistic and explaining the kind of observation technique I have used.

3.5   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was conducted keeping the essential ethical criteria in mind. According to McKernan (1996:241) any researcher must take note of the following ethical criteria:

- o All those affected by the research study have a right to be informed, consulted and advised about the object of the inquiry.
- o The researcher should not proceed unless permission has been obtained from those concerned.
- o No individual participant will have unilateral rights to veto the content of any research report.
- o All documentary evidence, such as files, correspondence and suchlike, should not be examined without official permission.
- o Copyright law should always be strictly observed.
- o The researcher is responsible for the confidentiality of the data.
- o Researchers are obliged to keep efficient records of the research and make these available to participants and authorities on demand.
- o The researcher will be accountable to the school community who impact on the research.
- o The researcher has a right to report the research fairly.
- o The researcher must make the ethical contractual criteria known to all involved.

3.6   CONCLUSION

In this chapter the theoretical framework for the research was put forward, discussing the methodology of the interview and observation as the main tools for the gathering of data. Some ethical considerations were also pointed out as all researchers need

to keep in mind that the respondents they are dealing with, need to feel safe and protected whilst partaking in research activities all the time.

In the next chapter the findings of the research will be described and discussed. In the analysis of the findings the researcher will also strive to interpret the responses of the participants in order to throw light on the problem as set out in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 4 - DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the research data is analysed and interpreted in order to make the findings of the research project clear. The teachers' understanding and implementation of OBE and their Foundation Phase training are explored and analysed in detail in this chapter. The researcher will outline the findings of the research from the interviews and focus group discussion.

4.2 BACKGROUND TO DATA COLLECTION

The interviews were conducted with 19 Foundation Phase teachers in two primary schools in Bethal. The interviews in one primary school took place earlier than the set date, because the teachers of the Foundation Phase in this school were experiencing difficulties with their OBE classes. This research was believed to have the panacea to their problems. This happened despite the clear explanation of the researcher that this is a research project for study purposes – not an extension of a Department of Education workshop and assistance with the implementation of OBE.

4.2.1 Biography of Foundation Phase teachers in the sample

The rationale for providing the biography of teachers in this study is to reveal their background in relation to the context of their work situation. The researcher at the same time has undertaken to guarantee these teachers with anonymity in the research.

In Table A (below) information on teachers is presented as from the sample in terms of gender, teaching experience and formal qualifications.

TABLE A – GENDER, EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS

Teacher	Male\ Female	Number of years of teaching	Formal qualification
1	Female	11	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
2	Female	16	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
3	Female	14	Higher Diploma in Junior Primary
4	Female	19	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
5	Female	29	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
6	Female	17	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma + FDE
7	Female	17	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma + HED
8	Female	9	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
9	Female	12	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma + FDE + B Ed
10	Female	12	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
11	Female	14	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma + HED
12	Female	14	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
13	Female	16	B Prim degree
14	Female	16	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
15	Female	19	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
16	Female	31	Primary Teachers Certificate + BA
17	Female	7	BA Ed in Junior Primary
18	Female	9	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
19	Female	17	Primary Teachers Diploma

Table A reveals the following common trends amongst Foundation Phase teachers: they are predominantly female; all these teachers are amply qualified to teach in a primary school; and they have an average of 15.75 years of experience. These teachers are therefore experienced and competent to act as participants in this research for they know what they are doing and they are doing it for quite some time now.

4.3 INTERPRETATION OF DATA

In order to gather data on the research problem, the following interview questions were included in the interview guide:

- How did you feel when the new curriculum were announced and you received the documents on OBE?
- What was the nature and amount of the training on this new approach that you have received?
- What do you think are the chances of OBE to succeed in South Africa?
- Are you implementing OBE as a whole or only part thereof in your class?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of OBE you noticed?

The responses on Question 1 reflected that 90% of Foundation Phase teachers in the sample do not appreciate to change over to OBE. 86% of the teachers disagree that OBE is being implemented with little problems, as according to the former Minister of Education, Professor S.M.E Bengu, said that it did. This academic Minister is quoted saying "…all signs point to a readiness for the new system …" (Department of Education, 1997f:a).The teachers begged to disagree. 76% indicated that they feel very frustrated by the implementation of OBE. These results mean that the respondent Foundation Phase teachers were not ready for the implementation of OBE.

In Question 2, 97% of the respondents indicated that the training received was very flashy and took a short time. One of the respondents was quite vocal about this saying: *"You cannot be taken on a crash course for one and half days and be expected to implement the new curriculum soundly."* This complements the critique of Professor Jonathan Jansen (1997:66) saying that "…the hurried implementation of OBE against the backlog that already existed; the fact that the policy was not well thought of, and will probably fail because it is implemented in isolation and ignorance of about 80 years of accumulated experience with respect to curriculum change in both first world and developing countries; and in fact, undermine the already fragile learning environment in schools and classrooms of South Africa."

One teacher responded in the following manner: "*Few teachers are taken to the workshops and they are expected to come back and pass on the information to those (teachers) who could not be invited for a workshop (the so called cascade-model). This in my opinion would really play down the actual impact of OBE as a new system.*"

Another teacher expressed her disappointment about the future of the new system of education. She talks of "*…having begun with phase organisers and 66 specific outcomes and later the very system gets overhauled by the review committee*".

Yet another teacher has expressed bitter feelings with respect to the change from the old system to the new. She says: *"How can you teach a learner at Foundation Phase a language lesson when you are not expected to teach him/her the vowels 'a, e, i, o, and u? At the same time you are expected, as a teacher, to write down everything you plan to teach your learners and at the end you are to record everything learnt by the child?"*

One of the teachers sounded positive though, and said*: 'If we can give OBE a chance to exist, that is, complying with what it needs from us - no matter difficult things may be - its success is certain".* It is interesting to note that one respondent thinks that OBE can succeed if we give it a chance. Such positive responses were few and far between, although it sounds good and hopeful.

Most respondents complained about the short crash courses that were conducted, instead of proper workshops. Respondents are also not in favour of the idea of training that takes place after a hard day's work, when teachers are tired and ineffective. Respondents do not seem to be happy that training needed by all teachers seem to have been reserved for the chosen few. Most respondents are not happy with the mostly theoretical training offered during training. Respondents also express great concern over the high teacher-pupil ratio in predominantly black schools. The Grade 1 teachers are wondering as to how they are expected to cope with two different grades in the same classroom in parallel teaching.

It is important to note that as a follow-up to the question *"Are you implementing OBE as a whole or as part thereof in your classroom?"*, respondents were asked if they were pursuing further studies. What was surprising from the data is that of those teachers that were pursuing further studies, 22% were pursuing teacher education and related studies and the rest were pursuing other studies outside the scope of teacher education. This complements the issue raised by Taylor (2003:4) about qualified teachers who are not qualified to teach the subject they are teaching at schools. It raises serious issues as to whether these teachers are pursuing those studies in order to enhance their pedagogical competencies, or whether they are studying for the fun of it or do they have intentions to venture into new jobs?

Responding to the question that asks, *"What are the strengths and weaknesses of OBE that you have noticed?"*, one respondent answered, "*if things do not go according to the government plan, such as schools functioning without resources, it would be difficult for OBE to be implemented'; this, in other words, is a weakness.* Adler (2002:16) conclude that the teachers' difficulties to embrace, exercise and implement learner-centred approaches come as a result of their historical educational background. This should be construed in the context that most of the teachers attending the in-service training courses, come from the Bantu Education background which was characterised by inequalities and inadequacy.

Another question asked was, *"What do you know about OBE?"* The respondents were almost all in agreement to say that *"OBE is an approach that is learner-centred and symbolises a shift from rote learning to a creative and dynamic type of teaching and learning that includes continuous assessment of learners' activities with the teacher playing the role of a facilitator".* However, there is no doubt that not all teachers had the same understanding of OBE. They understood it differently and gave different responses to mean the same thing, implying that their level of understanding differed too.

4.4 SUGGESTIONS ON A WAY FORWARD

Judging from the responses, the teachers seemed ready to get busy with OBE activities at school. In fact, the training that should be given to teachers should be

both intensive and meaningful. It is out of good spirit showed by teachers to agree to take up the challenge of engaging their learners in critical thinking, reasoning and reflection as opposed to rote learning. Teachers should be encouraged to adhere to their conclusions that it is possible to make their lessons learner-centred, where the teacher acts as a facilitator and use group work.

I found it pleasing and encouraging hearing teachers disagree that learners are just empty vessels. This indicates a great paradigm shift from the old belief that learners are empty or clean slates who come to class being blank. Much as I acknowledged that the majority of teachers indicated that it was highly recommendable and that they were justly knowledgeable of assessment practices, I noticed their complaints about the amount of administrative work that comes with this new system of assessment.

In the vocabulary of Department of Education (1997b:1) continuous assessment is defined as an ongoing systematic way of all the overall gains that the learner has made in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills after a given set of learning experiences. Le Grange et al (1998:37) go on to say *"Continuous assessment involves keeping record of the learners' progress as observed and using the information to guide the teacher on how they learnt and how the next lesson could be improved upon."*

It is also noted, without surprise, that a large number of teachers do not know what the Revised National Curriculum Statement is. I listened to them saying: *"…It is a new curriculum, substituting OBE."* Those who indicated that they know what RNCS is, also emphasised that it was not formally introduced to them but they know it out of their personal efforts and interest in the ever-changing system of education.

Flowing from this analysis come the belief that it is important to allow teachers to reflect and do self-introspection about their competence in OBE. The responses given by teachers suggest that they understand their new role in OBE; and that they believe that with good training they can be in the position to assess learners and help them to improve. Teachers also agree that it is part of their duty in OBE to nurture

and support learners, facilitate that they work in a team and making sure that they guide learning rather than transmit knowledge.

Teachers are also aware of the new way of looking at what OBE wants learning to achieve in terms of developing people and responsibility. The challenge is to develop people who can communicate, solve problems, act confidently, can work with others, have life skills and can take responsibility for their own learning.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the data gathered by the interviews were written up, described and interpreted. It seems that the majority of the teachers are hesitant and/or unwilling to accept the new curriculum as such, and that they complain that they are not amply trained to implement the OBE approach successfully. Concern is also expressed by the teachers over the high teacher/learner ratio, the lack of knowledge and skills on the new assessment strategies, the stacks of administrative and preparation work involved and lastly, uncertainty about the exact meaning of the new approach per se.

In Chapter 5 the findings will be categorised, conclusions will be made and some useful recommendations will be offered in order to assist the relevant stakeholders in accepting, understanding and implementing the new curriculum with enthusiasm.

CHAPTER 5 - FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the interpretation and conclusions on the data analysis of Chapter 4 will be provided. The interpretation will flow according to discussions on research question. Finally, conclusions and recommendations will be made.

5.2 FINDINGS

5.2.1 Personal information

The notable findings that emerged from the biographical data gathered from the teachers, revealed that the Foundation Phase teaching at the schools where I have conducted my research is predominantly and exclusively a female domain. The majority of teachers have more than ten years teaching experience. The qualifications of these teachers are mainly consisting of the Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD). There are few exceptions, as one teacher has a bachelor of education honours degree, and another one has a Bachelor of Arts degree added to their qualifications.

These teachers are mainly falling in the age category between 30 and 50. All of them have no intention to leave the education sector for the rest of their lives. No-one among them favours the Outcomes-Based Education approach in teaching. They are working very hard and are absolutely dedicated to their calling of teaching learners. The discussions that we had during the interviews revealed that they do not have enough OBE training. These teachers concerted that they will go on implementing the old curriculum and present their final work as an OBE product.

The workshops that they attended were not completely helpful as the trainers themselves were wanting as far as it comes to the OBE approach itself. These teachers, in my opinion, can, with proper training, translate into a meaningful, resilient investment (my emphasis).

5.2.2 Physical facilities

As far as the physical facilities are concerned, the schools that the researcher visited were well-built but not well-looked after facilities. The one school had an unpainted, rather worn out roof, with graffiti on the walls. Broken window panes, squirting water in the toilets and broken water gutters on the roof, were characteristics of these two schools.

The other school was built in a modern style, but the surroundings that were within view as one approaches the school, tell of poor management. It becomes clear that if and when the School Governing Body is brought into existence, it is there for other things than school governance and maintenance. What looked like having been gardens before, were then for sure water-worn ravines and suitable areas to take Geography students for erosion and exfoliation lessons. The other parts of the school grounds and empty soil, which were fortunate to remain, are struggling with heaps of papers and debris on it. Hygiene in this school is not heard of and even conveniently forgotten by everybody. Classrooms and bathrooms were not clean and neat, and no effort seemed to be taken in order to do anything about that.

5.2.3 Teachers are facing problems with OBE implementation

5.2.3.1 Workshops for teachers

Workshops attended by the researcher revealed that teachers are struggling with the implementation of Outcomes-Based Education curriculum in the classrooms. Very few teachers, if any, benefited and found these workshops helpful. The duration of these workshops was two days at most to equip teachers with all necessary skills to implement the new curriculum successfully. The trainers in these workshops were themselves not well prepared in advance in order to be of assistance to the teachers that they were training. When one teacher asked questions, she was coldly referred to the policy document with no definite page number or heading in the said document. Attendants (teachers) were quiet throughout the workshop and these teachers were very keen and active when it came to collecting the handouts without questioning the content.

The workshops were mainly the theoretical training of teachers with no direct link to what happens in the classrooms. The trainers could not advise teachers on how to deal with overcrowded classrooms when teaching learners. The other problem was that these workshops were conducted after school hours when teachers were tired. The teachers complained of a huge amount of extra administration work that comes with OBE. On the one hand the teachers understand OBE differently and what they do in their classrooms on the other hand, is totally different too.

5.2.3.2   Teachers' perceptions of OBE implementation

Teachers complained about oversized classes and inadequate resources to implement OBE meaningfully. The frequently asked question was, "Why the change to OBE?" It is a fact that nobody was happy about the limited and definitely not effective time-frame of workshops. They complained of these workshops as being skeletal. Teachers had a problem about OBE saying that an educator's success would be measured by the learner outcomes. Some teachers were suggesting that OBE is simply a way of getting rid of teachers. These teachers are talking OBE but they are still implementing the old curriculum in the classroom.

During a number of workshops, teachers were not really sure about the ideas being conveyed, but were too nervous to ask questions. Another aspect of teachers' complaints was about the new vocabulary in OBE which caused them to spend a lot of time getting acquainted with it. Another area of concern was that they were being bombarded with different work material from all the publishers you could think of. They further said that they were being sent to ignorant consultants (trainers) who themselves had no idea on how things work in the real world.

5.2.4   Teaching and learning

5.2.4.1   Lesson activities

The lesson activities that were chiefly in progress were Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills in the Foundation Phase. Learners were building castles with plastic bricks, colouring in drawing books, sorting out items according to the object's family. In Life Skills learners were learning to tie shoelaces; in groups learning how to stop littering in the school premises; whilst others were learning how to dress properly. In literacy learners were pasting letters to form words that were frequently used as well as new words. Another exercise the learners were engaged in, was pasting name cards to the chalkboard using adhesive strips. There was also a great deal of learning proper spelling and corrections in grammar.

Teachers indicated that it was pleasing to engage these learners in different activities. According to the teachers, learners were performing activities that were familiar to them and which they even practised at home. The argument went on to say if resources were sufficiently provided by the Department of Education, the work would be much easier.

5.2.4.2   Lesson preparation

Individual teachers presented different lessons for similar grades. For instance, in one of the researched schools there were three Grade 1 classes, three Grade 2 classes and two Grade 3 classes with different lesson preparations. When asked why the implemented different planning, the teachers said they adapted their lessons to the needs of their classes. Following a common lesson preparation would present problems. There is no definite management intervention in terms of giving direction to these teachers. The Foundation Phase Head of the Department (HoD) (now commonly called an Education Specialist), was quick to say no one knows exactly what OBE expects of teachers to do. The HoD concluded the discussions by mentioning that in all the workshops she had attended emphasis was on suiting one's lesson to the learners' needs. This was a problem in any language if the quotation was understood in the way the HoD does.

5.2.4.3   Teaching methods

The teaching methods used in the researched schools revealed that any method that was put in use successfully was seen as a good method to these teachers. In one class the teacher was using a narrative approach, telling learners how to keep the school clean. In another class close to the administration office, the teacher had provided learners with an activity to sort things out according to order. Learners were also expected to identify pictures of a clean and a dirty environment. The teacher, who was using the narrative approach, explained that it was good to tell learners what was expected of them in order to practise good hygiene.

Learners in other classes were sitting in a circle which, according to my view, was too big to manage and control. The teacher was in a circle without any meaningful interaction with the learners surrounding her. In another instance a teacher was standing in front of the class teaching numbers to the learners. These learners were passively sitting in rows and the arrangement reminded the researcher of school days in Bantu Education. It struck the researcher's mind that the paradigm shift would take time to find room in teachers. The question and answer method was chiefly used in the researched schools at the level of Foundation Phase. Participation of learners where the question and answer method was used, was limited and compromised (my opinion.)

5.2.4.4   Use of medium of instruction

At the level of Foundation Phase, the medium of instruction was the mother tongue (primary language) of learners. The problem was that not all learners speak the common language in one class. The teacher might not be able to speak all the languages of learners in class or even if the teacher could, time was not on her side. The researcher noted with concern that not all learners in the researched schools speak Zulu.

The worst finding the researcher made, was to meet learners whose primary language is Zulu, but who were being taught only in English. One teacher explained this whilst looking around uncomfortably trying to make sure that no one at the school heard her speaking. The school belonged to the English speaking learners in the beginning. It was later transferred to the Nguni's. What captured the researcher's

attention was the explanation that not only the school was transferred to the Nguni's – the (Black) community - but the culture and language were transferred too. The implication was that if you agree to use the building, you were actually agreeing to use the language you find in that building too. One teacher, when asked why English as medium of instruction to Foundation Phase learners were used, she retorted saying that until the management realised that this school was now in hands of the Nguni's, the language of its founders will enjoy preference.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

5.3.1 Conclusions on the personal information of teachers

- The common qualification for Foundation Phase teachers in Bethal Circuit are Grade 12 and the Junior Primary Teachers Diploma. These certificates are the highest academic and professional qualifications amongst the teachers. There are only a few exceptions.

- Only a few teachers are improving their qualifications but the majority does not see any good in further study. In the old education system an educator would be rewarded for any relevant qualification newly achieved and the salary and other benefits would be increased. In this new dispensation, only a one-off amount would be paid out to the teacher for any extra qualification.

- If all teachers were expected to attend the OBE workshops that are being presented, their grasp of this new approach would increase, and their competence in implementing the new curriculum would improve. The training at the schools, which is conducted by ordinary teachers who have attended the workshops to their fellow colleagues, is undermined by a lack of respect and general acceptance of the other teachers.

5.3.2 Conclusions on the physical facilities

The poor management of school buildings affect teaching and learning negatively.

The broken window panes cause learners to inhale dust during windy days at school and they become soaked in the event of an inclement weather. Squirting water all over in the toilets and unhygienic conditions prevailing are a sure invitation to diseases. The unpainted worn out roof and broken water gutters on the roof are a disaster to any learning environment.

The water worn ravines and persisting soil erosion and concomitant exfoliation are all announcing the extent of damage to occur in the future by natural phenomena.

Heap of papers and debris close to the classrooms mean that learners and teachers inhale all forms of lung diseases. Sick learners and teachers will find it difficult to create an environment conducive for teaching and learning

The broken water pipes are infusing poverty in the school in the sense that high water consumption means more money to be paid to municipality for services rendered.

5.3.3   Conclusions on teaching and learning

Lesson preparations leave much to be desired and were done rather haphazardly with no co-ordination at all. There is no evidence that the lesson activities embarked upon were outcomes-based as policy requires. The learners are engaging themselves in less co-ordinated activities.

What is a positive thing is that all teachers are preparing their lessons, although the ready prepared lessons are defying the policy guidelines. These teachers are applying teaching methods that are not appropriate to OBE. For instance, the question and answer method is not suitable for a teacher to use when learners are discussing in groups. On other hand the narrative method suppresses the curiosity and analytical judgement of learners. Arranging learners into too big groups in a circle, also defeats the purpose of grouping them.

The medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase of most schools in the Bethal Circuit is Zulu, with the exception of a few. The teachers in the researched schools were struggling to express themselves in English.

5.3.4 Conclusions on in-service training

5.3.4.1 Workshops for teachers

The views of the teachers about the shortcomings of the workshops that they attended were very clear. In the answers the respondents indicated that the training received was very flashy and took a short time; they felt that you cannot be taken on a crash course for one and half days and be expected to implement the new curriculum soundly. They also reported that only a few teachers are taken to the workshops and they are expected to come back and pass on the information to those who (teachers) could not be invited for a workshop. They were also not in favour of the idea of training that takes place after a hard day's work, when they are tired and ineffective.

It is the researcher's conclusion that the majority of the respondents were not happy with the mostly theoretical content offered during training.

5.3.4.2 Conclusions on the role of the School Management Team

This structure at the school level is supposed to have know-how when it comes to any curriculum being implemented, but the conclusion that the researcher arrives at is that the opposite is true. Teachers are not getting any help from the SMT because it too does not have a grip on OBE. The HoD explained that they gave the teachers first preference to attend the workshops hoping to have the SMT attending later. The training expected by the SMT could not be conducted by the Department of Education. The SMT is said to be helpful when it comes to distributing learning books and enforcing discipline. The feeling is that the School Management Team should be adequately trained. Parents in the capacity of School Governing Body are expected to support the SMT and teachers by providing enough money for training needs of the schools.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The following recommendations and guidelines are based on the findings and the conclusions of the study as conducted by the researcher:

5.4.1   Recommendations on personal information of teachers

It is of the utmost importance that teachers are well trained, well ahead of the time of implementation on the new curriculum through proper dissemination and implementation skills. This must be done during the initial pre-service training of teachers, and then be followed up with sustained in-service training on a regular basis as the curriculum develops further. With good OBE training teachers can be in the position to assess learners properly and help them to improve. The Department of Education must provide the skilful training of teachers on OBE, and the parents must also be encouraged to get involved. The training should be geared towards preparing teachers for the new curriculum. In-service training must be focused on producing practical activities done by teachers. The Department of Education should award further education certificates after training to those competent teachers who have succeeded in attending the whole course and exceeded in their performance. Certificates should also be awarded to teachers who have participated meaningfully during the training.

The trainers of the teachers need to be trained thoroughly before training takes place. The Department of Education must ensure that only specialist trainers are conducting the workshops on teacher training – teachers are professionals in their own right, and do not need to sit and listen to laymen and women who actually waste their time. Trainers need to be relevant to what is happening in the classrooms when training teachers. Parts of the training should be conducted in the real situation in the presence of learners.

5.4.2   Recommendations on the physical facilities

The Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Health, should make it compulsory for schools to keep the classrooms and surrounding school grounds clean and hygienic at all times. This can be done by issuing out the policy to schools and monitor its implementation regularly.

The School Governing Body must come up with means to curb vandalism and petty-thievery of school property and facilities. The SGBs are encouraged to install security measures and employ night-watch and security personnel. The proper management of school buildings and classroom facilities by the SMT and SGB should be encouraged. This can be done by involving the school in competitions on clean classrooms, school building and school projects. An annual budget geared towards maintenance and minor renovations of school buildings should be set aside. The SGBs must be motivated to allocate funds after assessment for maintenance and minor renovation.

Running water, safe for drinking and washing, should be a high priority of the SGB and the SMT. It is recommended that schools are only to operate when clean water is available for learners and teachers. Otherwise, the school must be closed until the water situation is rectified.

The marketing of the school to the parental community and to the business sector must be engaged into by the SGB. Open days for parents can be arranged and the business community can be invited to host their billboards in the school surroundings. The school must become the centre of pride and progress in the community and everybody must feel obliged to uphold the school and its surroundings as the epitome of the community's achievements.

5.4.3 Recommendations on teaching and learning

School Management Teams must be intensively trained as their duty among others is chiefly to manage the curriculum. The Department of Education should empower SMTs with curriculum management skills through effective training.

Teachers should receive fast assistance at school in case of any curriculum problem. They are not supposed to wait for another workshop before the problem can get resolved. Once the SMTs get the specialised training in all learning areas in order to tackle the problems head on, the schools can start functioning effectively.

The Department of Education should become serious about monitoring and doing follow-up visits at schools over OBE. Curriculum implementers should visit every school at least once a week for monitoring and support.

All teachers of a particular grade must undergo training and get first hand information on OBE. It is suggested that all teachers per grade are allowed to attend the training in that grade at the same time. Teachers should be trained in the early hours of the day when they are still fresh and able to grasp a lot. It is recommended that workshops on teacher training be conducted during school holidays and then to start early in the morning.

Creating people-centred schools should be the primary goal of the SMTs of every school. The SGBs and SMTs should give reasonable access to the school community to use the school facilities for meaningful activities other than learning.

All the curriculum needs of the school should be upheld by the SGB, SMT and Department of Education. Each stakeholder is supposed to back-up the curriculum initiatives of the other meaningfully. The medium of instruction should be well determined by the parents of learners attending that school through the governing body. Parent consultative meetings on the medium of instruction should held in every school.

5.5 STRENGTHS AND POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This study has its strengths and possible limitations as has any study of this kind. As far as the strengths are concerned the researcher believes that he has unveiled many unmentioned and well kept secrets of teachers who are teaching in the Foundation Phase. Teaching is a proud profession, and it is not so easy for an experienced teacher to acknowledge that they are struggling with the implementation

of the new curriculum in their classrooms. And when the teachers are well qualified to teach on top of their long experience in the Foundation Phase, so much the more the feelings of inferiority and incompetence as far as the new curriculum and OBE and all the new assessment requirements are concerned.

This study also broke the silence of the teachers' frustrations and discomfort surrounding the attendance of in-service training opportunities and workshops. This is the main strength of the findings, as this is where the most complaints come from. It should encourage the authorities to take heed of these remarks of the teachers, as this can easily and painlessly be rectified to serve the loyal teachers as best and fast as they can.

The slogan "Cleanliness is godliness" can also be made applicable in this study, as one of the strongest pleas that can be made concerns the upkeep and sustenance of the school's physical facilities and playgrounds. The neatness and even aesthetic countenance of the classrooms have an enormous role to play in the general education of learners, and to this the SGBs and SMTs must seriously and hastily attend. The parents can also play an important role in this regard.

As far as the limitations go, there are a few, namely the ambient conditions (contextual factors), financial constraints and time factors. The contextual and financial limitations can be summarised in the geographical context as this study was confined to the Mpumalanga Province, in the Gert Sibande Region, at the Bethal Circuit. Including other provinces, regions and circuits was not possible. The distances to these other places were too vast and costly to reach out to. Nevertheless, the findings of this study can for sure be generalised and made applicable to Foundation Phase teachers' problems in other regions, circuits and even provinces, as the results from the teachers came over very strongly, resounding the same difficulties that teachers all over are experiencing.

Time limitations made it impossible to include more than just the Foundation Phase in this study. The implementation of Outcomes-Based Education is explored in detail at the level of Foundation Phase only, and for obvious reasons it could not be extended to the Intermediate and Senior Phase levels because the time to complete

it is definite and not negotiable. The scope of the mini-dissertation also did not allow too much time to spend on a study that would last for too long a time.

5.6   FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

An interesting study that can be undertaken in a follow up of this research might be to explore how the Foundation Phase teachers are coping now that the new curriculum has been implemented and functioning for some time in the schools. Focus on specific issues such as the following may bring to light interesting facts on the empowerment of the teachers and the development of the new curriculum in the practical everyday life in the classrooms:

- Teachers' feelings of competence and empowerment now that they are working with the curriculum for some time;
- The efficiency of in-service training sessions and workshops in empowering the teachers for the implementation of the new curriculum;
- The impact of dilapidated school buildings and physical facilities on the teaching and learning in schools;
- The role of the School Management Team to create people-centred schools as beacons of light in our communities.

And so one can go on and on coming up with more research possibilities as the scope in the field of education is virtually limitless. The researcher in the final instance, trusts that this humble contribution may prove to be helpful in adding to the body of knowledge in the field of education, and specifically, the curriculum, and that teachers in the Foundation Phase can be assisted in their daunting task of laying the foundation of the education of every learner that embarks on the long road of education.

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