

**EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF CURRICULUM CHANGE ON FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN  
SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF SIKHULILE CIRCUIT OF MPUMALANGA**

*by*

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## DECLARATION

**Student No: 07340974**

I, Sizani Nurse Mabuza, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled: "Exploring the effects of curriculum change on foundation phase teachers in South Africa: a case study of Sikhulile Circuit of Mpumalanga" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

  
.....  
S.N. Mabuza

  
.....  
Date:

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to:

- My mother, Betty Mabuza, for her love and prayers.
- My husband and children for their undying love, support and encouragement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

God is great first and foremost. All Glory and Honour belong to God.

I am eternally grateful to the following persons for their tireless contribution towards the success of this study:

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- Sikhulile Circuit, principals and staff of all the schools at which I conducted the study for their participation and valuable contribution.

## ABSTRACT

The study explored the effects of curriculum change on foundation phase teachers of Sikhulile Circuit of Mpumalanga in post-apartheid South Africa. Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced in the post-apartheid South Africa followed by the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), then Foundation for Learning (FLL) and lastly Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). All these curriculum changes had various implications on teaching particularly with reference to foundation phase teachers of South Africa in line with the purposes of this study.

Four research questions guided the study. A qualitative interpretive research design was adopted in order to gain insight into the views of the teachers of Grade 1 to Grade 3 on curriculum changes they faced in their classrooms. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. The views expressed by the study participants were carefully analysed to find common patterns of the challenges faced by the foundation phase teachers in South Africa. Purposive sampling was used to select the schools and study participants. The research findings indicate that many foundation phase teachers found these curriculum changes to be too frequent, confusing and demoralising. This scenario was exacerbated by the fact that teachers were not trained at all or minimally trained for the curriculum changes. Many showed lack of knowledge and skills on the constitution's expectation of education as a lifelong experience. Teachers were teaching in overcrowded classrooms with limited resources thus they did not know what to teach and how to assess.

In light of these extended classroom challenges, it is recommended that the grassroots model or the Social Interaction Model could be used to disseminate innovation from the focal point to the periphery as it allows consultation and communication between stakeholders, curriculum innovators and implementers, to effectively implement new curriculum initiatives. There needs to be extensive and effective piloting of new curriculum innovations before their implementation. Training of teachers on CAPS and other curricula introduced should be on

going. Adequate dialogue between policy makers and teachers at ground level addresses challenges as encountered. Further studies of this nature should be carried out in other circuits, districts and provinces in order to identify common challenges and develop possible solutions to overcome these challenges on a broader national scale.

**Key words:**

Curriculum change, Teaching, Learning, Assessment, Curriculum Assessment Policy, Curriculum Implementation.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ANA	Annual National Assessments
C 2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CASS	Continuous Assessment
COSATU	Confederation of South African Trade Unions
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
FFL	Foundation for Learning
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
I	Interviewee e.g. I1-I5
JPTD	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
LOTL	Language of Teaching and Learning
LTSM	Learner Teacher Support Material
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NPDE	National Professional Diploma in Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies
PLATO	People Lobbying Against The Outcomes
R	Respondents (R1-R10)
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SGB	School Governing Body

SNR TEACHER Senior Teacher

SPTD Senior Primary Teachers Diploma

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## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

On attainment of political independence in 1994, the newly elected democratic South African government had to address the glaring disparities of the education sector which had been primarily designed on racial grounds. This was not going to be easy as the previous education system was racial, segregative and discriminative. Under the apartheid regime, education was classified according to races thus European, Coloured, Indian and Black African. Imminent changes in the education sector had to therefore embrace “common ground” to satisfy the diverse and complex nature of South Africans irrespective of colour, social background, race, gender or creed.

Like any democratic society, the new education curriculum had to derive its impetus from the values in the South African new Constitution 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a). As defended by the then Minister of Education Professor Kader Asmal, “...the values involve a new national and democratic mission to education that rests in first instance on equitable development” (Christie, 2001, p. 269). Carl (2009) insists that the Constitution (108 (29) of 1996) attempts to give all citizens of the country basic education including adult basic education and opportunity for further education.

The new education policy therefore was to be derived from the constitution in the following manner:

Constitution → Values → Curriculum → learning outcomes

After much consultation in and out of the country, the new national curriculum was unveiled as Outcomes Based Education (OBE). The period 1996 to 1997 was the initial stage of putting in place the mechanisms on how the new curriculum would be implemented.

In January 1998, OBE was officially declared the country's national curriculum and implemented in schools. It seems many civic organisations, including the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), welcomed this development and equated it to the progressive American education system. Teacher unions like the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), described it as a vibrant innovation that would positively change the South African educational "landscape" (Christie, 2001).

As early as the year 2000, realities in schools across the country began to emerge that OBE had brought forth challenges which teachers, the custodians of curriculum change, found difficult to grapple with. Some educators, educational theorists and curriculum advisors began to condemn OBE as a failed curriculum that was tested in Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America (Jansen & Christie, 1999). Particular concern arose as to what was to be taught and how to assess the learners' competencies in the diverse and sometimes complex situations in which educators operated (Christie, 2001). The situation was exacerbated by large class sizes in rural areas and a shortage of essential resources in foundation phase classes.

Over the years there have been loud outcries about OBE. These complaints have not only been coming from parents and civil society but from teachers and academics. In 2000, the Department of Education (DoE) released a paper meant to clarify OBE, the paper went on to lament thus: "...observing reports in the media and listening to general conversation, it is apparent that currently there is confusion about three concepts.... The three concepts are Outcomes Based Education, Curriculum 2005 and National Curriculum Statement..." (DoE, 2000a).

Thus, the DoE was also confronted with many questions about the new curriculum. To exacerbate the factors arising against OBE, reading levels in the primary schools dropped drastically, Fleish (2007) observed this and joined the multitude of people who were

condemning OBE. Fleish (2007) wrote a book titled, *“Primary education in crisis, why South African children underachieve in reading and mathematics?”*

There was a lot of confusion in the foundation phase as OBE required teachers to be innovative by selecting what to teach and assess each child according to his/her own pace. Foundation phase teachers, for instance, complain that they face numerous challenges in the interpretation of the new curriculum. To further strain them, before they come to terms with the new initiatives, more and more changes are included (DoE, 2008).

Another key perspective to the new South African school curriculum was the issue of values in education. Powell (1996) defines ‘values’ as desirable qualities of character and these are to be promoted by the schooling system. The new curriculum was deemed to be a well-prepared and revised innovation devoid of any major challenges and constraints. Far from it, as the new curriculum for the General Education and Training (GET), grade 1-9 was consequently developed in great haste and in 1996-1997 it became known as Curriculum 2005 (C2005). This selected year of 2005 was envisaged as the year of its maturity and revision. It seems very little consultation from all key stakeholders was effectively done. Siebörger (2002, p. 23) observed this, hence he remarked “Naïve optimism prevailed, driven by very sincere attempts to sweep out the old and usher in the new curriculum as speedily and completely as possible”.

“This was going to be problematic as provincial departments lacked the human and financial resources to implement such an ambitious curriculum change” (Chisholm, 2004, p. 119). By the end of 1999 it became evident that the new OBE curriculum was hastily implemented without adequately looking into issues of resourcing schools and empowering teachers to implement it fully. The then Minister of Education announced a review of the new curriculum only two years after its inception. The review committee reported back in May 2000 (DoE, 2000a). The report resulted in a complete curriculum revision during 2001-2002 called “Streamlining and strengthening” curriculum 2005 to avoid losing face. The emphasis was now on the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (DoE, 2002a).

The NCS is a curriculum which in essence entails:

- The outcomes of the education system
- What is taught: The underlying values, the selection of context, how content is arranged into learning programmes, learning outcomes, assessment, skills and processes (Chisholm, 2004).

With all these arising factors, was the OBE curriculum going to survive public scrutiny and condemnation? Given the impediments of change in any society, was OBE succeeding or not particularly in the foundation phase where the strength of the system is anchored?

Grade 3, which acts as the exit point into the intermediate phase (grades 4 and 6), was also a cause for concern. In grade 3, learners change their handwriting from the ball and stick (grades R-2) to the nelson or cursive. Sentence construction is emphasised and numerically they tackle complex matters as compared to grades R to 2. A proper foundation should be laid here for the learners to be able to read and write. If educators are unsure of what to teach, how to teach and assess, the essence of learning becomes irrelevant (Spady, 1994).

After the implementation of the NCS, challenges were soon identified. The then Minister of Basic Education appointed a committee of experts in 2009 to investigate the nature of those challenges and amendments were made after extensive review of the NCS. Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) was introduced following the amendments to the NCS. The amendments aimed at addressing four main concerns with regard to the NCS (Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2009). The four concerns were:

1. Complaints about the implementation of the NCS
2. Teachers who were overburdened with administration
3. Different interpretations of the curriculum requirements
4. Underperformance of learners.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The essence of writing a purpose or goal of the research is to explicitly put the research in the picture of what it is the researcher sets out to do (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The purpose of this study is to express the assumption(s) of the qualitative, descriptive case study sets out to explore the changes that have been instituted to the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) system in South Africa. It is prudent to acknowledge that the changes were a response to the outcry by educators countrywide who felt confused by some of these sudden and frequent curriculum changes or refinements (Chisholm, 2004). The changes brought forth seem to have triggered a horde of challenges to teachers who are the key implementers of curriculum in the classrooms. Using the qualitative approach, this study will purposively expose the changes initiated between 1998 to date and the corresponding challenges that teachers in the foundation phase face in their attempt to grapple with the initiatives or curriculum refinements.

The qualitative case study attempts to expose the challenges faced by foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes from three perspectives thus:

- Impact on teaching and learning: Were teachers well prepared for the paradigm shift, from the content-driven colonial “talk and chalk” curriculum to the child-centred achiever facilitated learning? Talk and chalk denotes the notion that the teacher knows it all hence he/she would deliver content to a receptive audience of learners.
- Learner Proficiency: In terms of academic achievements, did the learners enhance their attainment in the classrooms or was there a decline?
- Related challenges triggered by the curriculum changes.

Primarily the main purpose of this study is to explore the effects of curriculum changes faced by foundation phase teachers of Sikhulile Circuit. Armed with empirical data, policy makers are made aware of challenges that arise from repeated curriculum changes and their impact on teaching and learning, thus giving them insight for future curricula implementation.

In this apparent confusion and uncertainty in some education sectors, readers of this qualitative case study may reduce the pitfalls of the OBE system by answering the following questions:

- Was OBE the best education system to be adopted in post-apartheid South Africa?
- Was the modus operandi appropriately given the diversity of our people, quality of teachers, resources available to schools, ethnicity of people and the history of the country?

Thus, the study acts as an open window through which readers (particularly teachers) can deduce where we went wrong as a South African nation and which route could have been followed. The study uses other research approaches to find out how best OBE could be refined to “clear” the confusion and challenges faced by teachers.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Given the above scenario, the study seeks to explore the effects of curriculum change on foundation phase teachers of South Africa with specific reference to Sikhulile Circuit of Mpumalanga.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study seeks to explore the challenges affecting educators in the foundation phase that were caused by curriculum changes in the education sector over the years. The focus is on the foundation phase and specifically targets Sikhulile Circuit. This problem will be resolved by answering the following research question through careful analysis of the sub-questions below:

#### **1.4.1 The main research question is:**

“What are the challenges affecting foundation phase teachers of South Africa due to curriculum changes?”

#### **1.4.2 Sub-questions:**

1. What are the experiences of the foundation phase teachers regarding the repeated curriculum changes after democratic rule?
2. Which curriculum changes mostly affected the foundation phase teachers in their classrooms?
3. How did the major challenges faced by foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes in South Africa after 1994 affect teaching and learning in classrooms?
4. Which strategies should be implemented in order to minimise the challenges faced by South African foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes?

#### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study provides a picture of the major curriculum initiatives implemented over the years after democratic rule. It acts as an “open window” where readers can systematically follow those changes initiated and the challenges that followed as a result of those changes. The significance of this qualitative case study can be summed up thus:

- To help stakeholders rethink and formulate processes and procedures of curriculum change, implementation and evaluation in the South African context.
- It exposes the dangers of hurried curriculum changes by policy makers without the thorough consultation of all key stakeholders. Since teachers are the key classroom implementers of curriculum, they have to play a pivotal role in curriculum change, innovation and evaluation.
- The study also exposes poor behaviour and attitude of teachers towards curriculum changes as a way of defending themselves from a new and seemingly threatening curriculum they are not sure of.

- The study compels policy makers to identify the best model of curriculum. The OBE curriculum change seems to be a top-down (elite - mass) model. Had they used the grassroots or Social Interaction Model which emphasises consultation with all affected stakeholders in innovation implementation, could these challenges been reduced?
- It is also significant to education practitioners as it helps open up the debate on who should choose a curriculum for the nation and how it should be done.

## **1.6 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted in Sikhulile Circuit of Mbombela sub-region of education under Mpumalanga Province. This area is predominantly rural with a few peri-urban schools. Sikhulile Circuit is surrounded by Mgwenya Circuit in the North, Nkululeko in the East, Ntsikazi in the South, Barberton and Nelspruit are in the West.

Sikhulile Circuit is composed of predominantly underprivileged schools which are declared quintile 1 and 2 or no-fee schools.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **1.7.1 Assessment**

According to the Department of Education (2002) assessment is the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about a learner's achievement as measured against nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning.

## **1.7.2 Curriculum**

The term curriculum is often used to refer to the formal academic programme provided by a school as reflected in subjects on the timetable. In this sense it might also be used to refer to a particular course of instruction or a syllabus (Gultig, Hoadley & Jansen, 2002).

## **1.7.3 Curriculum 2005 (C2005)**

Curriculum 2005 is a policy which was adopted in 1998 by South Africa with the aim to transform the curriculum in the country and it was to be fully implemented by the year 2005 (DOE, 2000b). According to the Department of Education (1997a), C2005 is an OBE curriculum derived from nationally agreed on critical cross field outcomes that sketch our vision of a transformed society and the role education has to play in creating it.

## **1.7.4 Curriculum Change**

Curriculum change started in 1994 on the advent of political independence. The National Education and Training Forum began a process of syllabus revision. According to the Department of Education (1997b) the change was necessitated by the need to lay a foundation for a single national syllabus.

## **1.7.5 Foundation for Learning (FFL)**

The foundation for learning campaign was initiated and launched in 2008 in order to improve reading, writing, speaking and arithmetic in both the foundation phase and intermediate phase.

## **1.7.6 National Curriculum Statement (NCS)**

A streamlined and strengthened version of the Curriculum 2005 outlines what each learner should achieve in terms of learning outcomes and assessment standards at the end of each grade (DoE, 2003).

### **1.7.7 Outcome Based Education (OBE)**

OBE considered the progress of learning as important as the content. It is the means of achieving learning efficiency to others (Jansen & Christie, 1999). According to the Department of Education, OBE is a flexible, empowerment-oriented approach to learning. It aims at equipping learners with knowledge and competence, and becomes a guide in achieving success needed after a learner leaves school (DoE, 1997a).

### **1.7.8 Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)**

The Revised National Curriculum Statement identifies the goals, expectations and outcomes to be achieved through related learning outcomes and assessment standards. The RNCS consists of eight learning areas which include: Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Technology, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation and Economic Management Sciences (DoE, 2002b).

### **1.7.9 School Management Team**

The School Management Team of a school comprises the school's Principal, Vice principal(s) and Heads of Departments. It is responsible for administering, supervising and managing the school.

### **1.7.10 Teachers (educators)**

These are Department of Education officials who are appointed at each school to impart knowledge, values and skills to learners.

## 1.8 EXPOSITION OF THE STUDY

The study is divided into five chapters:

**Chapter one** provides an introduction and background of the study. The chapter explains the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and delimitations and definitions of terminology.

**Chapter two** provides a review of relevant literature particularly of curriculum changes in post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter also deals with the features of various curricula and the challenges faced by foundation phase teachers due to these curriculum changes.

**Chapter three** deals with research design and methodology. A discussion on the qualitative approach is given and also sampling techniques, data collection and data analysis procedures. The chapter also discusses ethical considerations ensured in this study.

**Chapter four** discusses data presentation, analysis and interpretation. It is from the interpretation that conclusions are drawn.

**Chapter five** presents the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations that will assist in improving the effectiveness of teachers in implementing the national curriculum in the foundation phase.

## 1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter one outlined and discussed the background of the study. The chapter further explained the purpose of the study and presented the research questions that guided the study. The significance of the study, scope and delimitations were also discussed.

The introduction chronologically spelt out that there seem to have been too many changes within a short space of time: Outcomes Based Education (OBE), Curriculum 2005 (C2005), the

National Curriculum Statement (NCS), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the Foundation For Learning (FFL) and now the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). All this seems to have been too much for some educators, hence the confusion and challenges.

The purpose of the study highlighted, which was as to explore the extent of the challenges and to suggest how future refinements to the curriculum could be handled. The main research question revolved around curriculum changes and the challenges it triggered for educators. The study is of significance to educational practitioners, policy makers and researchers as it will help them to visualise curriculum issues under the framework “where we came from, where we are and where we are going”. The investigation is delimited to Sikhulile Circuit, an underprivileged community near Nelspruit, the Provincial Capital of Mpumalanga.

Chapter two provides a literature review relevant to curriculum changes and the challenges related to these changes. The chapter also deals with the features of various curricula and the impact surrounding curriculum changes on foundation phase teachers. Thereafter conclusions are presented.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the researcher embarks on a review of the literature relevant to the challenges faced by foundation phase teachers due to repeated curriculum changes in South Africa. The literature review is aimed at exposing the manner and nature of curriculum changes in post-apartheid South Africa and how these may have (to an extent) impacted negatively on effective teaching and learning in the foundation phase with specific reference to the Sikhulile Circuit of Mpumalanga.

The chapter includes a conceptualisation of the terms ‘foundation phase’ and ‘curriculum change’; strategies and processes of curriculum change; reasons for and implications of curriculum change; the features of curriculum change in South Africa after democratic rule; Outcomes Based Education (OBE); Curriculum 2005; the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS); Foundation for Learning (FFL); Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) and the challenges faced by the South African foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes.

### **2.2 THE ROLE OF THE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHER**

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa 108 of 1996 formed the basis for curriculum transformation and development in South Africa. The manifesto on values, education and democracy (DoE, 2001) identifies the fundamental values of the constitution that underpin the values of education and the kind of teachers envisaged. Some of these values include democracy, social justice and equity, non-racism and non-sexism, human dignity (Ubuntu), an open society, accountability, respect, rule of law and reconciliation (DoE, 1997b Government Gazette 415).

The foundation phase teachers' roles were therefore going to be derived from these values of education. The foundation phase educator is a teacher who is teaching in grades R to 3. The Norms and Standards for Educators 1997 outlines the roles of the foundation phase teacher as "anchored " in qualification, competency, dedication and caring.

These foundation phase teachers are also expected to fulfill seven roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000a). The teachers in this foundation phase are expected to be:

- Mediators of learning
- Interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials
- Leaders, administrators and managers
- Scholars, researchers and life-long learners
- Playing a community, citizenship and pastoral role
- Assessors
- Subject specialists

Thus, in theory the roles of the foundation phase teachers were clearly outlined and expatiated, but how could these teachers be expected to perform these roles effectively when most of them, particularly those in rural schools, were "...inexperienced and unqualified"? (Jansen & Christie, 1999, p. 147) How could these unqualified and inexperienced teachers be expected to be interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials? These are some of the challenges that the foundation phase teachers face in relation to curriculum changes after democratic rule.

## **2.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE TERMS FOUNDATION PHASE AND CURRICULUM CHANGES**

The key concepts in the study are foundation phase and curriculum change. It is therefore prudent to put these two terms in their true perspective in relation to this study, as all discussions and questions to be answered are based on them.

### **2.3.1 FOUNDATION PHASE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION CONTEXT**

The term foundation phase denotes the first three or four years of a child's schooling. This includes grade R to grade 3 (DBE, 2010a). However for the purposes of this study the investigation focuses on grades 1 to 3.

It is in these three primary grades that a child's learning foundation is laid, hence they are referred to as foundation phase. Learners of this phase are taught language, life skills and numeracy (Mathematics). In essence the child's learning foundation is laid here (DoE, Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2004).

### **2.3.2 CURRICULUM CHANGE AS A CONCEPT**

Perhaps before defining the term curriculum change, it is prudent to briefly view the meaning of curriculum. In its broadest perspective, the term curriculum tends to be generic as there is a disturbing lack of consensus on the precise meaning of the term. Because of diverse and sometimes complex opinions on the issue, various definitions have been given by various authorities.

School curriculum is what happens in school situations as a result of planned programmes. It is more than aspirations but the actual achievements (Elliot, 2008). Similarly Gatawa (2008) views curriculum as what happens to learners as a result of what teachers do. Perhaps to add more emphasis on the role of teachers, learners and society, Day (2010) asserts that curriculum is the

totality of the experiences of learners for which schools are responsible, whether these experiences are for individual learners or groups of learners and whether these take place in the classrooms or school grounds or beyond the school borders.

If curriculum means all that learners learn inside the classrooms, outside and in the community, what then is curriculum change which is central to this research study?

“Curriculum change” has been defined as changing the internal organisation of the school and the relationships between schools and government agents which control education (Gatawa, 2008). It means changing concepts of what success and failure mean, hence the concept of examinations (Day, 2010). “Curriculum change” means altering the content, methods, materials and objectives of education to suit individual, societal and national needs of a country (Hoadley & Jansen, 2008).

On attainment of political independence in 1994, the South African nation was restless for change in all spheres of life. The majority of black Africans were clamouring for change. Education had therefore to be changed to suit the socio-economic and political needs of the generality of the society (Hoadley & Jansen, 2008). The racial and segregative three-tier education system of European (whites), Coloureds, Indians and black native education systems had no place in a democratically elected government that endeavoured to portray and nurture an egalitarian society.

### **2.3.3 STRATEGIES AND PROCESSES OF CURRICULUM CHANGE**

Having seen that there was overwhelming need for curriculum change in the new democratic political dispensation in South Africa, educational changes were therefore imminent. Change as a concept entails innovation, development and renewal. In turn, innovation suggests something new, development, improvement of something already existing and renewal, bringing back something that had been stopped (Elliot, 2008).

There are five dimensions to changing a curriculum. Firstly there is the rate of change. This is found on the rapid-slow continuum. Secondly, there is the scale of change which is measured on the continuum great-small. Thirdly there is the degree of change on the continuum fundamental-superficial. Fourthly there is the dimension of continuity on the continuum revolutionary-evolutionary. Finally there is the dimension of direction where change can either be linear (on a straight line) or cyclical, thus, going in the fashion of a spring to higher levels of sophistication (Golby, 2005; Gatawa, 2008; Day, 2010).

No matter how revolutionary the South African education system reforms seem to appear, the changes seem to be evolutionary and cyclical (Hoadley & Jansen, 2008) as shall be seen in section 2.4 (Features of curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa).

An analysis of educational changes in South Africa indicates that two main strategies or models of change were implemented and these were the rational empirical strategies and the normative re-educative strategies.

Rational-empirical strategies are based on the assumption that people are reasonable (rational) and thus respond to rational explanation and demonstration (Golby, 2005). Where rationale for change is given and shown to be in the interest of oneself, it is assumed that the person adopts the change (Day, 2010). This strategy relies on research, development and dissemination popularly known as the RD & D model (Gatawa, 2008). Therefore the strategy relies on researching, training, disseminating and publications.

The adoption of a new curriculum, OBE, in South Africa in 1998 was not haphazardly done. Research was done as to its suitability. There was training of change agents, informing of teachers and curriculum implementers and extensive diffusion and publication on the new curriculum (OBE). The challenges that emerged in the foundation phase were a result of either the development of teachers or the diffusion of the intended outcomes.

In a similar fashion, normative re-educative strategies are based on the assumption that effective change requires change of attitudes (socio-cultural norms), values, acquisition of new

skills, knowledge, information and the development of relationships. The strategies involve consultants or change agents working cooperatively with a client system. The change agent uses behaviour modification strategies to motivate and increase the abilities of the intended clients (Golby, 2005).

The normative re-educative strategies of changing curriculum were used in post-apartheid South Africa but the extent of their success are debatable. Jansen and Christie (1998, p. 7) observes that, "...the pilot project of training foundation phase educators in the provinces has been riddled with challenges. Of the 500 foundation phase educators, HODs and principals invited, about half of the number attended."

"...the training of educators was inadequate ...learning facilitators with foundation phase expertise were few..."

Thus, although the government rationally intended to develop foundation phase teachers before implementing the new curriculum in 1998, there were glaring challenges, thereby rendering the new strategy ineffective as the intended objectives were not effectively achieved (to train foundation phase teachers for the new curriculum).

#### **2.3.4 REASONS FOR AND IMPLICATIONS OF CURRICULUM CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE**

There are several reasons why a country changes its curriculum. These vary from political, social to economic. South African education was revamped after political independence to "level" the socio-economic and political beliefs, values and aspirations of all the people of the country irrespective of their race, colour, gender or creed (Hoadley & Jansen, 2008). "The curriculum had to be changed from the foundation phase (early childhood education grade 1-3) to university level because to be truly independent, a country should shape its educational needs," (Day, 2010, p. 23).

Hoadley and Jansen (2008) sum up some of the reasons why the South African apartheid curriculum had to be changed and rationally replaced by OBE through curriculum 2005 (C2005). An analysis of the reasons focuses on the foundation phase (grade 1 to 3).

- It was content led and content was according to subject disciplines.
- The content for each subject discipline was too abstract and theoretical for learners in the foundation phase.
- Learners in the foundation phase are in the concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1971). They have to learn by doing (Dewey, 1938). Forcing these infant learners to cram, regurgitate facts and recite speeches negates the principles of knowledge acquisition.
- Assessments were based on the foundation phase learners' ability to recall what the teacher taught without necessarily understanding.
- Curricula tended to be developed by experts and imposed on the learners and teachers from above.
- Teaching was teacher-centred with focus on explaining, instructing and questioning learning.
- The education system was fragmented with three different curricula depending on colour and race. Whites were highly privileged in terms of funding and resources.

### **2.3.5 REASON FOR CURRICULUM CHANGE IN OTHER COUNTRIES**

In Zimbabwe the curriculum was changed in 1980 when the country gained its political independence. The then white-led government had enacted a two-tier education system; one for whites and the other for the majority black Africans. The curriculum for whites was comprehensive from the foundation phase to university. White education was heavily funded hence resourced. The white teachers had much higher salaries than their black counterparts. There were fewer learners in the white only classrooms and their content required group work, experiments, demonstrations, research and use of electrical gadgets therefore here education was used a vehicle of social and political segregation (Gatawa, 2008). (Zvobgo, 2003) supports

the sentiments of Gatawa and that education was intended to place Africans in inferior roles in the colonial society and that of rural life.

In Turkey, educational reforms took place in 1986, 2002, 2010, to mention a few. The major changes cited by Helvaci (2006:32) were:

- To redesign or develop learners from the foundation phase to elementary level in order to reach proper living conditions necessitated by contemporary life and increase the quality of education.
- To save students from memorising knowledge and helping them improve their creativity, decision making and problem-solving abilities and inquiry skills.

In Quebec the state government carried out robust curricula changes in their kindergartens in 2005 (Gosselin, 2005, p. 160). The changes included:

- Organising the school subjects from four to three inter-related groups.
- The three subjects were based on four parameters of analysis which included;
  - 1) Role and function
  - 2) Taxonomy structure
  - 3) Object of study and learning
  - 4) Learning processes

Thus the Quebec state department of education redesigned their foundation phase department by ensuring that learners understand reality, structure natural, human and social reality and thus prioritise the development of knowledge.

In China, Sharpe (2012) asserts that over the past thirty years, mainland China had undertaken reforms in its early primary (foundation phase) and elementary schools. This was aimed at

increasing efficiency in the exploratory practices and scientising education. The emphasis was on:

- Focusing on teaching reform
- Foundation laying to all learners before they reach elementary school.
- Curriculum research based on teaching (content - methods - evaluation).

Thus the four countries cited are not an exhaustive list of nations who reformed their curricula. In fact due to the dynamism of society and education, every nation reforms its education system when the need arises. South Africa was therefore not an exception. What then was the nature of the South African educational reforms after democratic rule 1998-2010?

The study now outlines the major curriculum reforms undertaken in the country after democratic rule.

#### **2.4 FEATURES OF CURRICULUM CHANGE IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

The attainment of political independence in South Africa meant a change in people's beliefs, values and aspirations. The old system of education served the political ideology of the former apartheid government. It was based on inequality and disrespect for human rights. This apartheid curriculum prepared learners for positions they were expected to occupy in the social, economic and political life under that undemocratic, autocratic, discriminatory and racial regime. Before democratic rule in 1994, preparations were being made for a new curriculum (Cloete & Muller, 1998). Taole (2015) posits that a curriculum reform was important for South Africa in order to adapt to the changing world and to improve quality and equity.

The following curriculum changes relevant to the foundation phase are therefore discussed as they have had an influence and caused challenges for the foundation phase teachers: Outcomes Based Education (OBE), Curriculum 2005 (C2005), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), Foundations for Learning (FFL) and Curriculum Assessment Policy

Statements (CAPS). All these changes took place within 16 years, hence the outcry that “...there are too many unnecessary and confusing curriculum changes” (Hoadley & Jansen, 2008, p. 24).

#### **2.4.1 OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION (OBE)**

In October 1997 OBE was published in the Government Notice No. 1445 as the country’s national curriculum (South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) position paper 2000) but what are the tenets and rationale for OBE? Why was this preferred by policy makers of South Africa?

The SAQA position paper (2000) asserts that OBE was opted for after studying the American, Australian and New Zealand education systems.

Gultig, Hoadley & Jansen’s, (2002) arguments for OBE are:

- It caters for individual difference and emphasises uniqueness among learners.
- Gives room to each teacher to be creative, hence innovative, as it is not prescriptive about what to teach and how to teach it.
- It is child-centred and the teacher acts as a facilitator and catalyst for learning.
- It emphasises individual progression of learners at their own pace.

According to Alderson and Martin (2007), OBE emphasises outcomes, defines long term goals and objectives and holds participants accountable for achieving them.

Jansen and Christie (1998) argue in support of OBE saying that an outcomes approach means identifying what students should achieve and the focus is on ensuring that they do achieve. It means shifting away from an emphasis on what is to be taught, how and when, to an emphasis on what is actually learnt by each student.

Still there are many questions as to why OBE was opted for when it had glaring condemnation in America, New Zealand and Australia. In Australia a pressure group known as People Lobbying Against The Outcomes (PLATO) was formed and it castigated OBE. Prominent newspapers like *“The West Australian”* condemned OBE as *“the failing curriculum”*.

It is not surprising therefore that this new curriculum would trigger challenges to teachers in the foundation phase.

#### **2.4.2 CURRICULUM 2005 (C 2005)**

Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was a form of outcome based education. As a guiding philosophy C2005 was put in place in 1997 as a route out of apartheid education. Its emphasis was on results and success, on outcomes and their possibility of achievement by all at different paces and times rather than on a subject-bound, content-laden curriculum. It constituted the decisive break with all that was limiting and stultifying the content and pedagogy of education (Hoadley & Jansen, 2008).

Thus C2005 provided a broad framework for the development of alternatives to apartheid education. C2005 provided the platform for an open non-prescriptive syllabus and was reliant on teachers creating their own learning programmes and learning support material (DoE, 1997c). The intention was that the new OBE curriculum would be phased in by the year 2005, hence it was called C2005.

Thus C2005 was the broad curriculum and it had to be streamlined over the years to make it relevant to the needs of society. In other words, C2005 was a refinement of OBE. It tried to specify what was to be taught in each phase while OBE is the umbrella curriculum.

## CHALLENGES:

C2005 was generated to focus on teaching and learning but it generated a lot of challenges for the foundation phase teachers. Hendricks, Botha and Adu (2016) argue that Curriculum 2005 required a high level of commitment and competence from teachers in the classrooms which was not forthcoming for many teachers in overcrowded classrooms which are under resourced countrywide.

Chisholm (2003) outlines some of the challenges faced by foundation teachers when implementing C2005.

- There was a skewed curriculum structure and design.
- Lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy was identified.
- There was inadequate orientation training and development of foundation phase teachers.
- Jansen and Christie (1999, p. 241) observed that foundation phase teachers lacked experience and training. It was noted that when the grade 1 pilot was started in districts across the country, new members of staff had been appointed to the teaching and learning. From the 800 members appointed, only 300 had experience and expertise at the foundation phase.
- Learning materials were often unavailable and not sufficiently used in the classroom.
- There was policy overload and limited transfer of learning into classrooms.
- There was shortages of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005.
- Inadequate recognition of curriculum as the core business of education departments was identified.

Thus these challenges faced by foundation phase teachers were compiled nationwide by a ministerial committee established to review the curriculum in 2000.

### **2.4.3 REVISED NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT (RNCS)**

The curriculum review committee of 2000 recommended that the OBE curriculum be streamlined and modified to make it more accessible to teachers. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) of 1997 was modified and rebranded as the “Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)” Grade R-9.

Thus RNCS for Grade R-9 was streamlined to strengthen C2005. The major attributes of the RNCS were:

- Critical and development outcomes
- Learning outcomes
- Assessment standards

With the inadequate and inexperienced foundation phase teachers in most rural foundation phase classrooms, would the teachers grasp and implement the necessary change? This is one other dimension of the study which opens diverse and complex challenges for the foundation phase teachers.

### **2.4.4 FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING (FFL)**

The much publicized OBE, C2005 and their refinements had triggered a lot of challenges to learners and teachers. Academics and civil society began to castigate OBE as the failed curriculum. Reading levels as well as numeracy levels in the primary schools, particularly rural schools, had deteriorated to unprecedented levels (Jansen, 1998). Among the vocal critics were Jansen (1999) who wrote *Why OBE will fail* and Fleisch (2007) who wrote a document on *Primary Education in crisis: Why South African school children underachieve in reading and mathematics?* Indeed a barrage of attacks was laid on OBE and its offshoots like RNCS.

In response, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) initiated another curriculum change aimed at improving reading and numeracy rates in the foundation phase (grade 1-3). The Foundation for Learning (FFL) curriculum was declared a four year campaign (2008-2011) and was aimed to help learners improve their reading and numeracy levels.

The reasons for FFL were outlined by the DBE (2008) thus;

- That the FFL would provide energy, direction and inspiration across all levels of the education system
- That the initiative was a response to national, regional and international studies that had shown that South African children were not able to read, write and count at their expected levels.

It was asserted that the DBE would equip teachers and schools with clear directives to achieve the desired levels of performance. All primary schools were expected to improve learner performance and all learners in grade 3 would write national assessments to gauge the impact of this FFL. Thus, FFL was put up as a stop-gap measure to strengthen the RNCS which had riddled foundation phase teachers with challenges. Although FFL was implemented, its impact was never felt as learners from the foundation phase who are now in grade 6 and tested nationally continue to perform dismally.

Yet another curriculum reform or refinement was introduced with the name of Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) and its nature and rationality are discussed below.

#### **2.4.5 CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENTS (CAPS)**

In July 2009, a report of the task team for the review of the implementation of the OBE's National Curriculum Statements was presented to the then minister of education. In the report the committee had identified common challenges faced by teachers countrywide and recommendations had been provided. Since this study focuses on the foundation grades, the

following challenges were identified: curriculum policy and guideline documents, transition between grades and phases, assessment, learning and teaching support materials as well as teacher support and training for curriculum implementation.

In response to the task team's report on the challenges faced by teachers, the government further introduced another curriculum reform or refinement in the form of the "Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)". The report stated:

....assessment has been a challenge for foundation phase teachers ever since C2005 when unnecessarily complicated approach to assessment was introduced, ...C2005 discouraged use of marks and percentages and introduced a number of complicated assessment requirements, ...the country's repeated poor performance on local and international tests has left parents and other stakeholders skeptical of the curriculum..." (DBE, Report of the task team: for the review of the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement, 2009, pp. 8-9).

But what then is the nature and intent of CAPS? The DBE (2011a) CAPS document argues that CAPS is a single comprehensive curriculum and assessment policy document developed for each subject to replace subject statements, learning programme guidelines and subject assessment guidelines in grades R-12.

An overview of the CAPS documents shows that:

- It was implemented in January 2012.
- It clarifies Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for each approved subject in the foundation phase.
- It replaced the two former national curricula statements namely the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) grade R-9 (Government Gazette No. 23406 of 31 May 2002) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) grades 10-12 (Government Gazette 25545 of 6 October 2003 and No. 27594 of 17 May 2005. DBE, 2011c).

Thus it can be argued that curriculum reforms or refinements in South Africa tend to be instituted in response to outcries made by academics and civil society.

## **2.5 CHALLENGES FACED BY SOUTH AFRICAN FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS DUE TO REPEATED CURRICULUM CHANGES (1998-2012)**

### **2.5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Challenges regarding the nature and rationale of the South African education systems (curricula) have been a focal point in the innumerable debates about the content of the curriculum, quality of teachers and how they are currently trained, supervision, assessment, progression, learning and teaching resources and so forth (Hoadley & Jansen, 2008). The abrupt change in the school curriculum in South Africa has also been attributed to the lack of conviction and focus of policy makers. To exacerbate the situation, the lack of curriculum pacing experienced between Curriculum 2005 (C2005), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) contributed to the apparent confusion regarding curriculum implementation, monitoring, assessment (in classrooms) and evaluation (DBE, 2009).

Abrupt changes in education after democratic rule in South Africa seem to have been triggered by political will at the expense of sound educational needs of the generality of society. It is therefore not surprising that the new curricula changes caused more confusion to the key players (teachers) of the implementation.

It is therefore prudent to discuss the challenges faced by the foundation phase teachers caused by the nature and extent of the curriculum changes after democratic rule. These challenges faced by foundation phase teachers will be discussed under the following headings: communicating the curriculum to the key stakeholders, clarity of policies, role of subject

advisors, teacher work load and administrative burden, assessment and learner teacher support materials.

## **2.5.2 COMMUNICATING THE CURRICULUM TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

Teachers are the custodians of curriculum change and parents are key stakeholders in education (Cloete & Muller, 2007) and post-apartheid South Africa needed a new national curriculum commensurate with the needs, values, beliefs and aspirations of the majority black Africans. But were all role players particularly teachers cognisant of their key roles?

To begin with, there was euphoria about the “sea of changes”, teachers became “facilitators or educators”, pupils and students became “learners”, subjects became “learning areas” and so forth (Jansen, 1998). Teachers and the generality of society talked about OBE, C2005 and NCS without thorough knowledge of the meaning and modus operandi. The confusion continues up to the present day.

The committee for the review of the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement observed that despite questioning by some of the theoretical basis, the quality of the actual design, standards, scope, depth and content was hurriedly done. The new curriculum was never thoroughly researched or properly trialed. There was inadequate preparation and consideration of whether teachers, pupils and the system in general was prepared for such a fundamental change over such a short space of time (DBE, 2009).

Thus, teachers were hastily “given” the new curriculum to teach. There were no specifications of what to teach, how to teach and assess. Lest we forget, the teachers in the foundation phase were trained in the apartheid era where everything they taught was prescribed. How then could they suddenly be able to design their teaching programmes, design materials and facilitate learning in overcrowded classrooms of maybe eighty grade one learners? These teachers were used to the “talk and chalk” method and now they were expected to be

facilitators and designers of learning. This perception that teachers would simply adjust led to challenges such as confusion of what to teach, how to grade the content to be taught, how to cope with the overcrowded classrooms, a skewed curriculum and structure design and so forth (Chisholm, 2003, p. 3). All these factors were exacerbated by the fact that the new OBE curriculum was not adequately communicated to teachers, learners and parents appropriately and timeously.

Ncube and Samuel (2014) argue that teacher efficacy (which is an individual's judgment of his/her capabilities to accomplish certain levels of their performance) is very low among many teachers in our schools. Katz and Stupel (2015) cite Bandura's (1977) four levels of efficacy as follows; firstly, mastery experience (where our teachers experiences should be used to infuse the minimum level of performance in the classrooms. Secondly, vicarious experience, where beliefs emerge as inspiring teachers to identify themselves as successful performers. Thirdly, social persuasion is the encouragement or feedback concerning particular performance which depends on credibility. Lastly, effective state where groups and individuals interpret and react to changes.

In view of this, policy makers may use such a model to assess the teachers' preparedness and competitiveness before any new curriculum change is implemented.

### **2.5.3 CLARITY OF POLICIES**

The confusion in the foundation phase sector was also evidenced by the plethora of policies, guidelines and interpretations of those policies and guidelines, for example, the distinction between OBE, C2005 and RNCS. From the DoE down to provinces, districts and classrooms there was confusion on policy guidelines and policy overlap. The report of the Task Team for the review of the implementation of the National Curriculum Statements observed that the situation was the reality that many teachers as well as some DoE and PDE staff had not made the shift from C2005 to RNCS. Without a distinctive shift, confusion about the status of

curriculum and assessment particularly in the foundation and intermediate phases became the result (DBE, 2009).

Foundation phase teachers were previously used to assessing learners using marks, however C2005 discouraged teachers from using marks but instead to use comments like “achieved”, “meritorious”, “outstanding” and so forth. How would promotion of learners be determined? This problem led to numerous teachers in the foundation phase teaching what they thought was relevant. Assessment became haphazard and across the country there was no uniformity on assessment. The review committee noted this and recommended the development of one curriculum and assessment policy for every learning area (subject) by phase. This was envisaged to provide “...definitive support for the teachers and help address the complexities and confusion created by curriculum and assessment policy vagueness and lack of specification document proliferation and misinterpretation” (Chisholm, 2003, p. 29).

#### **2.5.4 THE ROLE OF SUBJECT ADVISORS**

Subject advisors were supposed to be specialists in their respective areas. Teachers in the foundation phase across the country were completely dependent on subject advisors and district staff to act as intermediaries between curriculum policy and implementation in the classroom (DoE, 2002a).

However, the review committee on implementation of the NCS noted that in every province the foundation phase teachers mentioned that there were several challenges around the role of district subject advisors (DBE, 2009).

Firstly the role of subject advisors differed from subject to subject (Jansen & Christie, 1999). Secondly many foundation phase teachers saw the subject advisors as primarily technicians who were demanding unnecessary administrative tasks and “box ticking” (Chisholm, 2003). Thirdly, there were too few subject advisors countrywide to do justice to thorough and

qualitative in-class support for foundation phase teachers in the classrooms. Most of those so-called subject advisors did not have sufficient knowledge and skills to offer teachers in the foundation phase the necessary support they required to improve learner performance (DoE - RNCS, 2004). Finally, in the absence of role clarification and training for subject advisors, many developed tools to help interpret policies and guidelines thereby contributing to the confusion and proliferation of documents and paperwork (DoE, 2004).

Thus, foundation phase teachers were further confused with new policy documents, how to design their classroom learning programmes, how to assess learning outcomes, and when they needed help no one was nearby to render assistance.

### **2.5.5 TEACHER WORK LOAD AND ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS**

The teacher's role in the classroom, according to the OBE dictates, was to design a learning programme and facilitate learning in a conducive enabling environment (of 30-40 learners). According to the report of the Task Team for the review of the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (2009), teachers across the country complained bitterly about the onerous administration requirements and duplication of work. This was evidenced by too much paperwork at the expense of teaching and learning; for example, the planning requirements of teachers became unnecessarily complicated and appeared to make little contribution to improving teaching or learner attainment. Hoadley and Jansen (2008) note that the administrative burden around assessment and planning appeared to impact negatively on teaching and contact time with learners. Chisholm (2000) notes that teachers are currently painstakingly engaged in three levels of planning construction.

- A learning programme
- A work schedule; and
- A lesson plan

### **2.5.6 ASSESSMENT**

C2005, which is an “off-shoot” of OBE, introduced many new assessment procedures which were new to the foundation phase teachers. At a hearing for the review of Curriculum 2005 (finding the flaws) teachers complained that ever since C2005 was introduced, assessment had been complicated and confusing. In the foundation phase, use of marks and percentages were discouraged. A number of complicated assessment requirements were introduced for the three learning areas of the foundation phase (literacy, numeracy and life skills). Use of descriptive and related jargon was introduced. According to Maphalala (2006), these changes to curriculum and confusion consequently affect learner performances and the standard of education in the country.

### **2.5.7 LEARNER TEACHER SUPPORT MATERIALS (LTSM)**

“The proper and comprehensive use of textbooks was discouraged and undermined by C2005, teachers were encouraged to produce their own materials,” (Chisholm, 2003, p. 19). This contradicts both local and international research which has shown that the textbook is the most effective tool to ensure consistency, coverage, appropriate pacing and better quality instruction in implementing a curriculum.

The Curriculum 2005 review report of June 2000 discovered that many foundation phase teachers complained that developing learning materials was time consuming, difficult and not their responsibility. They argued that this should be “placed in the hands of experts”. Some assertively argued that having to be “curriculum developers” eroded their teaching time. Some provinces like the Eastern Cape and Limpopo complained that they had not received sufficient LTSM (textbooks) over the years while other complaints about LTSM were that in some textbooks the content to be taught was of dubious quality (DoE, 2004).

## **2.6 CHALLENGES FACED BY FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE REVISED NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT (RNCS) AND CURRICULUM 2005 (C2005)**

The rationale of the OBE system was to provide a broad framework of education alternative to the apartheid education system that was reliant on teacher's prescriptive approaches and also reliant on teachers creating their own learning programmes and learning support materials (DoE, 1997b).

A report of the Ministerial Committee established to review the curriculum in 2000 gave a wide range critique to the OBE curriculum and its "conduit" C2005. The following criticisms are summarised from Chrisholm (2003), SAQA position paper (2000) and Jansen and Christie (1998).

These were selected with specific reference to the foundation phase (Grade 1-3);

- The curriculum was skewed in structure and design.
- There was lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy
- There was inadequate training and development of foundation teachers
- Learning support materials were often unavailable and not sufficiently used in the classrooms.
- There was policy overload and limited transfer of learning into classrooms.
- There were numerous shortages of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005.
- Inadequate recognition of curriculum as the core business of education departments.
- Language policy, specified in the RNCS was never communicated and never implemented. The language policy in the South African School's Act 84 of 1996, Chapter 2 Section 6 (RSA, 1996b) states that it is preferable for children to learn in their home language in the foundation phase and that they should get a solid foundation in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), in most cases English, as a subject from

grade 1. However, many schools country wide continue to start teaching English in Grade 3 based on C2005 polices, this leaves children unready for the change to LOLT in Grade 4.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

It should be borne in mind that change in any given society is not easy at any given time. The onerous task of changing the apartheid education system to a more nationalistic OBE system based on the socio-political and economic beliefs of the South African people was therefore not spared challenges. From the constitution (108 of 1996), OBE and C2005 were born to provide the framework for educational impetus from 1998 onwards. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the Foundation for Learning (FFL) and now the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS).

These curriculum changes, or refinements as some theorists might call them, brought forth a lot of challenges to the foundation phase teachers.

Some of the challenges were teacher-related as the majority of foundation phase teachers were semi-skilled and inexperienced so they could not cope with the changes and even up to now with the new CAPS reform some still grapple with the challenges. The supply of LTSM still cause challenges to many foundation phase teachers, in some instances textbooks are delivered late or never delivered, which exacerbates the situation. Overcrowding in classrooms also adds a dimension to challenges faced by foundation phase teachers as it negates individual attention. Policy overlap and assessment procedures in the foundation phase also add their “toll” to the challenges faced by foundation phase teachers due to repeated curriculum changes. The introduction of CAPS in 2010 and now at full throttle in 2014 is yet to be assessed as to whether it does not further add more challenges.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research approach adopted, sampling techniques, data collection, reliability and validity, and data analysis procedures. The chapter also discusses ethical considerations observed in the study. The research was designed to address the following pertinent questions:

1. What are the experiences of the foundation phase teachers regarding the repeated curriculum changes after democratic rule?
2. Which curriculum changes mostly affected the foundation phase teachers in their classrooms?
3. How did the major challenges faced by foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes in South Africa after 1994 affect teaching and learning in classrooms?
4. Which strategies should be implemented in order to minimise the challenges faced by South African foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes?

In order to provide empirical answers to the above questions, this chapter discusses the research design in section 3.2. The choice of the qualitative design and instruments used for data collection will be explained under sections 3.2.1 - 3.2.3. Section 3.3 describes how the pilot study was conducted, while 3.4 gives a brief description of the primary schools in Sikhulile Circuit (the studied area). In section 3.5 the study explains the sample and sampling techniques used. Section 3.6 discusses how the questionnaires and interview schedules were developed and administered to the sample. The validity and reliability of the research method and research instruments is highlighted in 3.7, while 3.8 articulates the procedure for data analysis.

Section 3.9 describes the ethical considerations "employed" in the study and lastly 3.10 concludes the chapter.

## 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.2.1 QUALITATIVE DESIGN

This study adopted the qualitative design as this design had relevance to the researcher's field of study. Below is a summary of the relevance of the qualitative design in tabular form. This will be followed by a discussion of its relevance to the study as informed by the literature review.

**TABLE 3.1 BASIC ATTRIBUTES OF THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

ATTRIBUTES CATEGORIES	WHAT IT DOES
<b>Properties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Captures and discovers meaning of experience.</li> <li>• Has concepts that are presented in the form of themes, generalisations and taxonomies.</li> </ul>
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows creation of measures in an ad hoc manner often specific to the individual setting or researcher.</li> </ul>
<b>Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data are often in the form of words from documents, observation or oral interviews.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Procedure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research procedures are particular and replication is rare.</li> <li>• Analysis proceeds by extracting themes from evidence and organising data to present a coherent consistent picture.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Theory</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory is often casual or non-casual and is often inductive. This means it investigates cause and effect relationships.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Data collection</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data can be collected through interviews, observations, questionnaires, documents etc.</li> <li>• This study adopted some of these data collection methods, namely the interviews and questionnaires.</li> </ul>

**(Neuman, 2006, Creswell, 2008a, and Leedy & Ormrod, 2010)**

Each of the attributes of this qualitative paradigm is discussed below:

The researcher is a foundation phase teacher in the Sikhulile Circuit. She endeavoured therefore to capture and discover the challenges that South African foundation phase teachers face due to repeated curriculum changes after democratic rule.

The qualitative design has concepts that are presented in the form of generalisations and taxonomies (Creswell, 2008a). This is the approach applied by the researcher as she took the views of the ten respondents and five interviewees and placed them into themes.

Qualitative designs allow the collection of data in the form of words through oral interviews, documents, questionnaires and so on (Neuman, 2006). This also prompted the researcher to employ this design as the respondents and interviewees were to express their views in words and these were to be analysed to answer the research questions.

Cohen et al (2006) assert that the qualitative paradigm is a product of the late nineteenth century epistemological debate over the two major paradigms that guide educational enquiry namely the positivist and interpretative. Specifically the limitation of the positivist, scientific (qualitative) method is that it fails to address the problems of understanding motives and bases of people's beliefs, habits, experiences and other socio-psychological preferences. The finality of the debate was that researchers should use these where suitable.

In this study we are exploring teachers' experiences and their views can best be described rather than being quantified hence the qualitative approach becomes more suitable.

### **Case study**

Yin (1984) asserts that a case study is a unique way of observing any natural phenomenon which exists in a set of data. He further states that by unique, it is meant that only a very small geographical area or number of subjects of interest are examined in detail. The study is focusing on a single circuit of education. It is confined to one area as the researcher studies foundation phase teachers in depth over a specific time hence it is a case study.

In this study, the researcher was influenced by the type of data to be collected (views expressed in words) therefore questionnaires with open ended questions and oral interviews were employed as data collection tools. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006), triangulation is the use of multiple sources of data or data collection methods.

## RESEARCH TOOLS

### 3.2.2 QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaire had two sections, A and B (see appendix E). Section A solicited the biographical data of the respondents. This was to bring out an understanding of the respondents' ages, gender, qualifications and years of teaching experience in relation to the research questions.

Section B of the questionnaire had four open-ended questions. These four questions were carefully designed and linked to extract views from the respondents on challenges affecting foundation phase teachers due to curriculum challenges. The first question solicited the teachers' experiences due to curriculum changes, while the second question probed their understanding of OBE, C2005, RNCS, FFL and CAPS (these were explained in chapter two). Question three "digs deeper" by asked them about the real classroom challenges and how these challenges had affect teaching and learning in the classrooms. Lastly, the researcher asked the teachers their views regarding suggestions on future curriculum changes and what should be essentially done to minimise these curriculum changes.

Literature studies of Creswell (2008b), Leedy and Ormrod (2010) guided the researcher in developing the questions used in this study. The questions focused on the following:

1. Curriculum challenges as experienced by the foundation phase teachers.
2. The curriculum changes implemented, their nature and magnitude.
3. How the curriculum changes affected teaching and learning.
4. Strategies needed in the future so as to reduce curriculum changes and their challenges.

In developing the questions, the researcher made sure that the language used was simple (Creswell, 2008b) to suit the everyday English used by the foundation phase teachers in their

classrooms. The questions were framed to address what teachers routinely do at their work place (schools) namely syllabus interpreting, lesson preparation, classroom teaching, assessing learners' work and allocating marks.

The questions were sequenced from general to complex (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2006), for example, question 1 asked for the respondents' classroom experiences regarding the repeated curriculum changes in South Africa after 1994. The last question is rather evaluative as it seeks the respondents own suggestions on how the future curriculum changes should be tackled in the education system with minimum challenges to teachers.

The reason for opting to use questionnaires was that these research instruments gave respondents a chance to answer the questions at their own pace. Questionnaires do not put pressure on respondents (Neuman, 2006) as there is no probing involved. With this study, respondents were able to answer the questionnaires at school or even at their homes and submit them on an agreed date. The respondents had ample time to consult research and discuss before airing their views on their classroom curriculum changes and challenges. Literature study informs that questionnaires with open-ended questions have the benefit of getting honest and detailed answers from respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2006).

### **3.2.3 INTERVIEWS**

Interviews are one of the most important tools of qualitative research. When properly used researchers often get better responses from interviews than any other data gathering (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2006). In almost all descriptive qualitative studies of educational research, interviews and observations are used as the research methods. The researcher believed that the interview technique would give room for an in-depth probing that would provide better knowledge of the foundation phase teachers' ideals and thinking processes.

Each interview lasted for about thirty minutes and each interview was recorded on the researcher's voice recorder with the permission of the interviewee. The purpose of the

interview was mainly to probe the foundation phase teachers to air the challenges they encounter due to repeated curriculum changes in South Africa (see appendix F). The interview method was adopted so as to complement the views gathered through questionnaires from the other sample of ten foundation phase teachers. In this way, issues that might have been left out through questionnaires were addressed. The same questions used in questionnaires were used in the interview. Triangulation was necessary so that views not captured through questionnaires might be captured through oral interviews.

Important measures were taken when designing the questions to be asked to the participants (interviewees). The number of questions was kept minimal (four). This excluded the formalities such as introductions and thanking them after the interview. The questions focused on the foundation phase teachers' routine work at schools, for example, syllabus interpretation, lesson planning, methodology and assessment of learners' work. The interview questions were piloted to ensure that they had the desired qualities of measuring and facilitating one to draw logical conclusions on the issue under study.

The interview schedule was also semi-structured to provide flexibility for the participants to give detailed responses (Neuman, 2006). Creswell (2008b) recounts the central characteristics of face-to-face interviews which were adopted for this study as having a beginning and an end. The same standard questions were asked to all interviewees in the same order. The interviews were conducted with the interviewer and the interviewee only. The interviewer demonstrated a professional tone in all five interviews and obtained detailed answers from the participants, all of which were audio-recorded.

### **3.3 PILOT STUDY**

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) view a pilot study as a smaller version of the purposed study and it is conducted to refine the methodology. A pilot study helps to identify possible problems in the proposed study and allows the researcher to revise the method and research tools before the

actual study is undertaken (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2005). With this in mind it was imperative for this researcher to carry out a pilot study in Sikhulile Circuit with a different set of foundation phase teachers from different schools other than those to be actually sampled for the study. Five foundation phase teachers were used for the pilot study. The aim of the pilot study was to give the researcher an insight into whether the intended questions to be given to the foundation phase teachers would yield the desired data that would be needed to answer the research questions. This was meant to determine whether some of the questions would have to be reconstructed and also to measure the time they would take to answer questions on both the questionnaires and interviews.

The researcher used Saturday sessions which are conducted by Penreach (a non-governmental organisation) to reinforce teachers on classroom discourse. The four questions in the form of an interview were posed to two foundation phase teachers, individually, that were part of the Saturday session. As for the questionnaires, three questionnaires were distributed to three foundation phase teachers and they were required to return the answered questionnaires the following Saturday.

After piloting it came to the researchers' realisation that the initial question three was vague and unnecessary. It read: "Do you understand the following curriculum changes: (i) OBE, (ii) C2005, (iii) RNCS, (iv) FFL and (v) CAPS?" This would be covered by question two and three of the revised questions, so the initial five questions were reduced to four (see appendix E and F). The researcher also realised that the thirty minute slot for the face to face interviews was ideal as two pilot interviews were carried out. The first interview was completed in twenty-three minutes and the second interview took twenty-five minutes. Therefore, the pilot study served in refining the questions and confirming that thirty minutes was adequate to collect the needed data in a single interview.

### **3.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOLS**

The investigation was carried out in Sikhulile Circuit of Ehlanzeni District in Mpumalanga. There are fifteen public primary schools in Sikhulile Circuit. Each of these primary schools has a foundation phase department offering grades one to three. Learners in the foundation phase are aged six (grade 1) to nine or ten (Grade 3). The fifteen primary schools are scattered all over the circuit. According to the circuit statistics, Sikhulile Circuit has seventy-three foundation phase teachers in the fifteen primary schools. It is from this population that the sample of fifteen foundation phase teachers was chosen.

All the schools in this area are classified as quintile 1 which means the schools are generally poor and non-fee paying. This implies that the socio-economic standing of the learners is not high. These schools have electricity but do not have computer training facilities or libraries. There is an acute shortage of furniture in most of these schools and learner and teacher support material (LTSM) is always a cause for concern.

### **3.5 SAMPLING**

Purposive or judgmental sampling procedure was used to select fifteen foundation phase teachers from the fifteen primary schools in Sikhulile Circuit; one teacher was selected per school. In purposive sampling, participants are chosen for a particular purpose (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In this case, ten foundation phase teachers were selected to answer questionnaires while five were selected to be interview participants.

**TABLE 3.2: SIKHULILE CIRCUIT ENROLMENT FIGURES FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS (APRIL 2015)**

<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>ENROLMENT FOR GRADE 1-3</b>	<b>NUMBER OF TEACHERS</b>	<b>CLASSIFICATION (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>[15]</b>		<b>[73]</b>	

The researcher classified the 15 primary schools according to their enrolments for grades 1-3 as high, medium and low. One foundation phase teacher from each of the fifteen schools was

then selected to either answer the questionnaire or to be interviewed on an agreed date at their school.

Those who were to answer the questionnaires were taken from schools 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 15 and the respondents from schools 3, 6, 8, 10, 13 were interviewed, as shall be explained in section 3.6 to follow.

Another criterion that informed the researcher to choose the sample of fifteen foundation phase teachers was that the sample constituted 20.5% of the population of 73 teachers sampled. Literature informs that 10% of the population studied is an ideal sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

The researcher also purposively targeted teachers who were teaching in the foundation phase by 1998 when the OBE was introduced through curriculum 2005 (C2005). These fifteen foundation phase teachers were willing to participate fully in the investigation.

### **3.6 INSTRUMENT ADMINISTRATION**

Two research instruments were used for this study, namely questionnaires and oral interviews. The following sections 3.6.1 and 3.6.2 discuss how these were administered to the fifteen respondents.

#### **3.6.1 ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES**

The researcher had sought permission from the Department of Education (DoE) through the Circuit Manager of Skhulile Circuit to conduct the investigation in his area of jurisdiction and permission was granted (see appendix A). Armed with the permission letter, the principals of the schools identified as 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 15 were approached. The principals in all cases consented to the study being undertaken in their schools. In each case the researcher was

referred to the Head of Department (HOD) of the foundation phase where the ideal respondent was identified.

After discussing with the identified respondent who satisfied the sample requirements, they were kindly asked to sign the consent form which spelt out the nature of the study and the ethical considerations entailed (see appendix D). The respondent was given a questionnaire (see appendix E) and an agreed date was set when the researcher would come to collect the completed questionnaires. On the agreed date, the researcher went to collect the questionnaires and courteously thanked the respondents and school authorities.

### **3.6.2 ADMINISTRATION OF THE ORAL INTERVIEWS**

The researcher had approached the Circuit Manager of Sikhulile Circuit requesting permission to interview five foundation phase teachers in five of their primary schools. When the permission was granted, the researcher approached the five respective school principals for their approval as well. This was granted.

The five interviews were to be carried out on five days (one on each day) on Monday to Friday of the same month. Each interview lasted 30 to 40 minutes.

On the day of the interview, the researcher approached the principal's office and was escorted to the HOD for the foundation phase, who later handed her to the awaiting interviewee as prior arrangements had been made before the interview. Five minutes before the commencement of the interview, the interviewee was given the interview questions. The purpose of giving them the interview questions in advance was to enable them to formulate detailed thought-out discussions about the experiences and challenges they face in the classrooms due to the repeated curriculum changes in South Africa.

The four interview questions (see appendix F) were asked in that order to the interviewee. The researcher observed the key principles of interviewing discussed in section 3.2.3, that of being professional, neutral and using simple language.

All five interviewees were asked for permission to allow the researcher to confidentially record their responses with her voice-recorder so that she could replay them, to fill in the gaps in hand written notes. This could also help the researcher to cross-check and correct whenever there were some inconsistencies.

The interviews were conducted at the research sites (five schools) thus the workplace of the respondents.

Finally the interviewees were given assurance that the discussions would be treated confidentially. The researcher thanked the interviewees at the completion of the interview and the school's authorities before leaving.

### **3.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

Reliability and validity were considered in this qualitative case study. Literature study informs that reliability of a measuring tool is the consistency with which a measuring tool measures (Creswell, 2008b). On the other hand validity which is closely aligned to reliability entails the extent to which a measuring device measures what it purports to measure (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In the following sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.2, the study discusses how reliability and validity were infused in this study.

### 3.7.1 RELIABILITY

Among the measures implemented to improve the reliability of the questionnaires and interview schedules were to ensure that the wording of the questions were clear and meant the same thing to all respondents (Bell, 2007). All interviews were recorded using a voice-recorder and with the permission of all the interviewees. These records have been kept securely as a quality assurance measure to be submitted if necessary to verify that they were accurate.

The draft questions of the questionnaire and interview schedule were checked by two academics that had completed their master's degrees. The two academics were given the questions with details of the context in which the questions were framed so as to:

1. Critically review the questionnaire and interview schedule to see whether the questions corresponded to the problems that had been identified and confirmed by literature studies and foundation phase teachers in schools.
2. Ensure that the two instruments, namely questionnaires and oral interviews, would tap the required information.
3. Find and remove unnecessary wording.
4. Find and correct weaknesses on the clarity of questions and ensure that the details of the questions reflected concerns of the foundation phase teachers pertaining to "...their challenges caused by repeated curriculum changes..."

The questions that were asked through questionnaires and oral interviews were therefore scrutinised. Furthermore, these questions were piloted, as discussed in section 3.3. Literature informs that reliability can be measured through tests but in social sciences, researches like this one aim to achieve as high a level of reliability as possible (Thyne, 2004). Thus data collection instruments can only be reliable to a certain extent.

### **3.7.2 VALIDITY**

The questionnaire and oral interview questions were developed from the literature details of challenges bedevilling teachers in South Africa after democratic rule. The questions were discussed informally with foundation phase teachers of Sikhulile Circuit through cluster meetings and colleagues at the work place.

The most important steps in interviewing is transcribing and interpreting the responses. The researcher is familiar with these steps and the processes that are involved in them because she used the same steps in her previous research for the award of the Honours degree in Education.

Furthermore, besides the validation of questions, as explained in 3.7.1, the piloting of the research tools was a measure to ensure validity in the study. The researcher also got expert advice from her supervisor on how to tackle the validity of the study.

### **3.8 PROCEDURE FOR DATA ANALYSIS**

The views expressed by the fifteen foundation phase teachers through answering questions from the questionnaires and recorded views expressed orally during face-to-face interviews were analysed and summarised. The summaries for each question yielded a main theme for that particular question, and categories emerged from those themes, for example, question 1, “What are your experiences with regards to repeated curriculum changes in South Africa after democratic rule?” The theme was, “Experiences regarding curriculum changes in South Africa after 1998.” The categories for question 1 were: (a) The teachers’ understanding of curriculum change. (b) Was there any need for curriculum change after 1988? (c) Educators’ experiences caused by the changes.

At the end of the analysis, the views for each of the four questions became clear.

The researcher then finalised the analysis in four points depicting the four research questions as the research findings.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Human beings are sensitive and protective about their personal views (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006). When used for research purposes, due consideration should be given to their integrity, dignity and safety (Gay & Airasian, 2006). In order to safeguard the safety and integrity of the respondents, the researcher implemented the following ethical considerations for this study.

Permission was sought and granted from the Department of Education (DoE) through their offices at Sikhulile Circuit Office (appendix A). The School Governing Bodies (SGBs) of the fifteen schools used as research sites were approached through their principals and they consented to the research (appendix B). The fifteen respondents used as the research sample were individually approached at their respective schools during working hours.

The researcher explained to each of these respondents the nature of the study and thereafter gave them the consent letter expressing their willingness to participate in the study (see appendices C and D). It was explained that this was an educational enquiry but they had rights as follows (Gay & Airasian, 2006):

- Their participation was voluntary and non-remunerated.
- They should remain anonymous by not writing their names, addresses or cell phone numbers on the questionnaire or divulging to other people that they were participating in the study.
- Their views would be treated with utmost confidentiality. They would also be treated as R1 to R10 for those who answer questionnaires where “R” stands for respondents and for the interviewees it would be I1 to I5 where “I” stands for interviewees.

- Before the research findings were published they would each get a copy to add or subtract (if need be) any views they deemed essential.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter described the research methodology of the investigation that was conducted in fifteen primary schools of Sikhulile Circuit of Ehlanzeni District of Mpumalanga Province. The chapter presented a description of the samples and sampling procedures, instruments and validity and reliability were discussed. The chapter also described the nature of the schools and how the pilot study was conducted. Data collection procedures and data analysis steps were all articulated. The next chapter, chapter four, presents the analysis and interpretation of results.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTEPRATATION

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the research design and methodologies used in this study. This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data obtained from semi-structured questionnaires and face-to-face interviews administered to the research sample which consisted of foundation phase teachers. The aim of the study was to investigate the challenges faced by the foundation phase teachers of South Africa due to curriculum changes. Background information depicting the demographical data of the sample is given in section 4.2, Table 4.1. Section 4.3 gives the analysis process and the identification of themes in Table 4.2. A detailed analysis and interpretation of the findings and responses from the questionnaires and oral interviews is given in section 4.4. Section 4.5 concludes the chapter.

**The four research questions that guided the study are:**

**Research question 1:** What are the experiences of the foundation phase teachers regarding the repeated curriculum changes after democratic rule?

**Research question 2:** Which curriculum changes mostly affected the foundation phase teachers in their classrooms?

**Research question 3:** How did the major challenges faced by foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes in South Africa after 1994 affect teaching and learning in classrooms?

**Research question 4:** Which strategies should be implemented in order to minimise the challenges faced by South African foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes?

## 4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESEARCH SAMPLE

The research sample comprised fifteen (15) foundation phase teachers. The demographical data is tabulated in the table below, thus giving an outline of teaching experience of the participating sample and their current involvement in the foundation phase. The demographic data will be discussed first to qualify the research sample (respondents and interviewees).

**TABLE 4.1: DEMOGRAPHICAL DATA OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE.**

RESPONDENTS	QUALIFICATIONS	GRADE CURRENTLY TAUGHT	POSITION HELD IN THE SCHOOL	YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE
1.	JPTD	1	HOD	17
2.	JPTD	2	TEACHER	15
3.	JPTD	2	SNR TEACHER	16
4.	ACE	3	HOD	15
5.	SPTD	1	HOD	20
6.	JPTD + ACE	3	SNR TEACHER	16
7.	NDPE	1	TEACHER	7
8.	JPTD +ACE	1	SNR TEACHER	16
9.	NDPE	3	TEACHER	6
10.	JPTD + ACE	2	TEACHER	22
11.	ACE	3	HOD	10
12.	JPTD	1	SNR TEACHER	17
13.	JPTD	2	SNR TEACHER	23
14.	B ED (HONS)	2	TEACHER	21

15.	JPTD + ACE	3	HOD	19
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Table 4.1 above shows the qualifications, grades currently taught, position held and number of years of teaching held by the fifteen teachers.

The table shows that ten of the foundation phase teachers possess a Junior Teaching Diploma (JPTD). This was acquired before 1994 during the apartheid era. Such training was accustomed to the “content driven curriculum” of the 1970s and 1980s (Chisholm, 2003). The question may be posed: Could such training have had an adverse impact on the OBE dictates which requires much creativity and innovation on the part of the teacher? The OBE curriculum requires teachers to design content, strategies and assessment. Teachers should be facilitators of learning (DBE, 2009).

Two of the respondents have an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) while two have the current National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE). These qualifications were obtained after 1998 when education in South Africa was structured and realigned to suit the political socio-economic needs of the country.

Only one of the respondents has an Honours degree in Education. This suggests therefore that most of the teachers in Sikhulile Circuit primary school foundation phase were trained before independence and that most of them have not improved their qualifications to be commensurate with the OBE which requires much preparation, facilitation of learning and assessment of learners.

Table 4.1 also shows that the sample of teachers was evenly drawn from grade 1, 2 and 3 which form the foundation phase in primary schools. This is a healthy development as the views expressed will embrace the challenges faced by the teachers targeted for the phase.

A further scrutiny of table 4.1 also reveals that the sample comprises all the categories of teachers in the foundation phase. These are the teachers, senior teachers and Heads of Department (HODs). The structure of this set-up implies that senior teachers have been in the

service for more than fifteen years while HOD's supervise teachers in their departments (DOE, 2004).

On years of teaching experience, the collected data shows that twelve of the teachers have fifteen years and over of teaching experience in the foundation phase. This is important for this study as these particular teachers have been affected by the curriculum changes over the years hence their experiences will be valuable in answering the problem at hand.

The researcher also views the sample as well balanced in terms of experience and professional qualifications to give credible views when answering the research questions on "The challenges faced by foundation phase teachers of South Africa due to repeated curriculum changes."

### **4.3 ANALYSIS PROCESS**

In order to answer the research question, it is imperative to analyse and transform the data presented by the foundation phase teachers into information that will assist in answering that question - the process of constructing meaning out of the data. According to Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh (2006) qualitative data analysis attempts to understand the phenomenon under study, synthesise information, explain relationships and theories about how and why the relationships appear as they do and reconnect the new knowledge with what is already known.

The researcher firstly read the responses obtained from the questionnaires and listened to the recordings made from the interviews; this aided the identification of common patterns and themes in responses and thoughts. Here the researcher does not provide an overview of the data but makes preliminary observations. This is particularly useful with the first few transcripts, where getting a feel for the data is still attempted. A thematic analysis is one that looks across all the data to identify the common issues that recur and identify main themes that summarise all the views that have been collected. This is the most common method for descriptive qualitative projects. Hoberg (1999) supports the above statement that qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising the data into categories and

identifying patterns among the categories. Category construction can thus be guided by the study, the literature, the researcher or the data itself. According to Thomas (2003) development of summary themes from raw data aids in understanding and meaning of complex data.

The data for this study is presented, analysed and interpreted according to the four research questions. Each question produces its own theme that has been identified by the researcher and these are presented with their categories as shown in table 4.2.

**TABLE 4.2: IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES**

THEME	CATEGORIES
1. Experiences regarding curriculum changes in South Africa after 1998 (OBE).	(a) The teachers' understanding of curriculum change. (b) Was there any need for curriculum change after 1998? (c) Educators experiences caused by the changes
2. Curriculum changes in South Africa after democratic rule.	Why were the following curriculum changes introduced?  (a) Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005 (C2005) (b) Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), Foundation for Learning (FFL) and Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)
3. Classroom challenges faced by foundation phase teachers of South Africa due to curriculum changes after 1998.	(a) Language of teaching and learning (LOTL) (b) Class size (overcrowding) (c) Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) (d) Assessment
4. Strategies to minimise future challenges due to curriculum	(a) Views on the new curriculum (CAPS) (b) Suggestions on improving teaching

changes.	and learning in the foundation phase. (c) Minimising future curriculum challenges.
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The themes identified are the focal point of the presentation and discussions of the findings, the subsequent analysis and interpretation. This means that the themes derived from the research questions will be the headings and the categories will be the subheading under which the details and findings will be formulated and interpreted.

The first theme relates to the foundation phase teachers' experiences regarding curriculum changes and understanding of those changes. The second theme explores the teachers' knowledge of the curricula implemented over the years from a South African context. The third theme focuses on the main research question, "The challenges affecting foundation phase teachers of South Africa due to curriculum changes." The last theme explores teachers' views pertaining to strategies to minimise future challenges for teachers due to curriculum changes, inputs on the current curriculum 'CAPS' and general views on improving teaching and learning in foundation phase classrooms.

#### **4.4 DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Each research question below discusses the research findings from the foundation phase teachers' responses from the questionnaires and interviews. These responses are discussed under their respective themes and categories as outlined and illustrated in table 4.2. The ten foundation phase teachers who answered the questionnaires will be referred to as Respondent 1 to 10 (R1-10) respectively and the five teachers who participated in the face-to-face interviews will be referred to as interviewees 1 to 5 (I1-I5).

#### **4.4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE THE EXPERIENCES OF THE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS REGARDING THE REPEATED CURRICULUM CHANGES AFTER DEMOCRATIC RULE?**

##### **Theme 1: Experiences regarding curriculum changes in South Africa after 1998 (OBE).**

###### **4.4.1.1 Teachers' understanding of curriculum change**

This section examines teachers' views on curriculum change and their experiences in South Africa after democratic rule. The responses from the respondents and the interviewees revealed that all the teachers understood that curriculum change entailed the shifting of policies, content, context, methods and assessment. They also acknowledged that curriculum change was necessary to reform education in a country and to address the political, socio-economic needs of people.

All the teachers revealed that there was a need to change from the apartheid "content driven" curriculum to an appealing worthwhile one that addressed the needs, values and beliefs of all South Africans.

When asked how they experienced curriculum change after democratic rule, the teachers expressed various debilitating experiences ranging from confusion to too many changes within a short space of time.

R1 shared her views as follows:

"Curriculum changes means shifting of education policies according to the needs of people and the country. In other words, what kind of learners do we want to produce?"

"The South African curriculum had to be changed because the apartheid one was racial, segregated and discriminatory. It favored white people to be better educated than Africans. My

experiences of the curriculum changes are that there are many changes within a short space of time. This confused many teachers in the foundation phase e.g. OBE, C2005, RNCS and FFL.”

R2, R5 and R7 had similar comments and they explained curriculum change as means of overhauling an education system from people and their duties, policies, context, methods and evaluating whether it is meeting the intended goals.

R9 defined curriculum change as “The shift in curriculum issues pertaining to what is to be taught, how to teach it and measure learners’ achievements which is assessment.”

The interviewees gave similar responses to those of the respondents who gave their responses in written form on the questionnaires, for example, on the understanding of curriculum change they had this to say:

I1, “It is the changing of the country’s curriculum to meet or realise the desired education goals of the country.”

I2 argued that “...curriculum change means overhauling the education system for the betterment of the nation.”

I3: “Curriculum change means replacing an unwanted curriculum with a better one as seen by the government.”

I4 simply said that it meant changing some aspects of the curriculum to meet new demands.

I5 explained that, “Curriculum change means changing the aims, objectives, content, methods and assessment.”

A closer look at the responses of the five interviewees shows that they were able to explain the meaning of curriculum change as a shift of educational policies, change of content and assessment towards the intended national educational goals, aims and objectives. Interviewee I3 was rather vague in her explanation as she thought it was the prerogative of the government to change the curriculum. This would be a top-down model of curriculum development

(Gataua, 2006) which would definitely be met with resistance as there would be lack of consensus on the best curriculum for the country.

#### **4.4.1.2 The need for curricula changes**

There was a need to change the South African curriculum in post-apartheid South Africa. The old South African curriculum of apartheid made African education substandard and irrelevant (Christie, 1991). As a collective, the responses from the participants support the above statement by Christie regarding the need for another curriculum thus being relevant to post-apartheid South Africa.

R3 was very emphatic, she said: “There was need to change the South African curriculum over the years in order to ensure access, equity and redress racial imbalances created previously by former governments which aimed at enhancing white supremacy.”

R4, R8 and R10 had similar views. These views term curriculum change as changing the old curriculum to adopt the new one to address pending problems. On why the old curriculum was always changing they argued that these were ‘refinements’ to make it suitable and easy for teachers in the classrooms.

R6 said, “Curriculum change is the changing of a country’s curriculum because of various reasons. In our case we wanted a uniform national curriculum.” The respondent was not clear on the need to change the curriculum after 1994 as she had only stated, “As a new black government, the ANC government changed the curriculum to benefit the blacks.”

R9 argued that, “There was need to constantly change the curriculum over the years in order to improve on it as there were many challenges faced by the teachers and learners thereby rendering some innovations like RNCS and FFL challenging hence the need for the change.”

There was overwhelming consensus by the five interviewees on why the South African curriculum had to be changed. The five had this to share with the interviewer:

I1 stated; “The old apartheid curriculum had to be changed to suit the new order which emphasised equality and equity in a democratic society.”

I2 argued that, “The new NCS curriculum was necessary to redress the inequalities of the past where black (Bantu) education was inferior to that offered for whites in terms of content and career opportunities.”

I3 said: “There was need to change the curriculum after 1994 in order to address the socio-economic and political needs of the people of South Africa.”

I4 asserted that the prime bone of contention between white and Bantu education systems before 1998 was funding. Whites were funded well while blacks had to struggle to be educated.

I5 was rather emphatic saying, “There was need to transform education in a newly independent African state in order to transform it by giving it purpose, national outlook and align it to careers applicable to South Africa.”

The five interviewees’ assertions are in agreement with why the curriculum had to be changed. Amongst policy makers, academics and civil society curriculum transformation in South Africa was initiated after 1994 to deconstruct the apartheid curriculum which consisted of fundamental pedagogy and Anglo-American traditions (Christie, 1999; Chisholm).

Cross, Mungadi and Rouhani (2002) argue that the apartheid curriculum only gave “blacks” minimum knowledge and skills which would enable them to be gardeners, housemaids and workshop assistants commonly known as spanner boys. The respondents and interviewees echoed similar sentiments on the need for curricular changes and recognised the need for a curriculum that would address the socio-economic and political imbalances of apartheid also making the curriculum meaningful to the needs and values of society. This is why the ANC government had to enforce a new look national curriculum, OBE, which was based on freedom for all, equality and equity.

#### **4.4.1.3 Educator experiences caused by the curriculum changes.**

The foundation phase teachers had diverse experiences that were caused by the changes. These variation in experiences have been subjected to the analysis process and the following is a result of that process. The experiences ranged from many changes in teaching methods to too many learners and lack of support from curriculum advisors. “This has led to poor literacy and numeracy standards in the foundation phase,” argued R9.

On experiences regarding curriculum change after 1998, when OBE was introduced, three respondents argued that the changes were needed but were hastily done making teachers confused as to what to teach and assess.

R3 said, “My experiences on curriculum change in South Africa over the years show that teachers were not well trained for the new curriculum hence they constantly had challenges in the classrooms.”

The experiences of respondents 4, 8 and 10 were briefly summarised thus: There were too hasty changes implemented, each change triggered further problems. This caused a decline in standards, especially reading and numeracy.

The experiences of the interviewees were similar to those of the respondents above. They are presented thus:

I1: “The curriculum changes brought forth more work and confusion in the classroom as to what to teach and assess.”

I2: “It was trial and error as some changes, like RNCS and FFL, brought more work and confusion to the already burdened foundation phase teachers.”

I3: “Changes were too many and we lacked support and training from above.”

I4: “We struggle with work-load, planning and assessment.”

I5: "It brought confusion and unnecessary paperwork. We have seven roles to administer."

The challenges in the foundation phase classrooms have persisted for years as elaborated by various authorities. Teachers fail to integrate teaching, learning and assessment and they feel burdened with a lot of paperwork with all OBE forms, learner profiles and portfolios (Christie, 1999) and institutions need to orientate teachers to OBE/NCS basic principles and concepts (Chisholm, 2004 and DoE, 2010a).

Thus, the teachers' experiences point to a situation where the curriculum was imposed without consultation from top to those lower down for implementation. This means that the decision to change the curricula was taken without the input of teachers and therefore did not enjoy their buy-in. Such model of curriculum transformation has a high probability of failure as it may often be met with lack of commitment to implement which is always fostered by a notion of joint ownership.

In short, the responses captured for question one from both questionnaires and face-to-face interviews show that the teachers in the foundation phase do understand the meaning of curricular change and why there was a need to change the South African curriculum immediately on attainment of political independence. On teachers' experience pertaining to the curriculum change, the teachers feel that the changes were hastily instituted, confusing, triggered more problems for the already burdened teachers and caused the lowering of achievements in learners' marks in the foundation phase over the years.

#### **4.4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHICH CURRICULUM CHANGES MOSTLY AFFECTED THE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?**

##### **Theme 2: Curriculum changes in South Africa after democratic rule**

The section presents and interprets the teachers' views on the changes that affected the curricula since 1994 to date being that of OBE, C2005, RNCS, FFL, and CAPS.

#### 4.4.2.1 OBE and C2005

R1, R3, R7 and R8 had similar views on OBE and C2005. Their collected views were that OBE is the declared national curriculum while the C2005 is an extension of the OBE. C2005 explained what should have been taught by the year 2005.

R2 asserted that, "OBE was the declared curriculum to replace the content driven apartheid one." She argued that C2005 explained the OBE curriculum.

R4 also viewed OBE as, "...the national curriculum" and C2005 as "...the means of implementing this curriculum."

R5 had this to say, "OBE is the country's curriculum to be taught in all schools while the C2005 are strategies to implement this new curriculum."

R6 argued that; "OBE is the new curriculum which had to be implemented through C2005."

R9 had similar views on OBE and C2005, she said, "The government introduced the new OBE curriculum to all schools and since it was broad, C2005 helped to break it down into grades."

R10 said, "To me there is confusion on OBE and C2005. All I know is OBE was a borrowed curriculum from Australia, New Zealand and America where it has failed, C2005 was meant to explain this OBE."

The responses of the interviewees were similar to those above pertaining to why curriculum changes were implemented in South Africa over the years.

I1 said, "To me it was difficult to understand the difference between OBE and C2005. I ended up teaching what I used to teach during apartheid."

I2 commented, "The two, OBE and C2005, were not clear. All I know is OBE is the new curriculum. C2005 was an explanation of the latter."

I3 was rather brief and evasive, she said, “The curriculum was declared OBE and C2005 was a ‘vehicle’ to achieve it.”

I4 asserted that, “OBE as the curriculum had to be achieved through C2005.”

I5 said, “Our curriculum is OBE as it was introduced. It was broad hence C2005 was brought in to explain and break it down according to grades and phases.”

From the above views by the fifteen respondents, it seems that some of the foundation phase teachers were not clearly oriented to the nature and philosophy of the OBE and the reason for introducing C2005 hence they had confusion and difficulty in teaching.

In year 2000 the DoE had to try and explain this confusion thus, “There is confusion about three concepts namely; The National Qualifications Framework (NQF), Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005 (C2005). OBE focused on learning outcomes, C2005 is the curriculum that has been developed within the OBE” (DoE, 2000b). This confusion about the curriculum was noted by many teachers and impacted adversely on teaching and learning. Chisholm (2004) observes that OBE through C2005 and NCS was bound to fail as it was detached from the “grassroots”. This was evidenced by complaints from teachers, parents and the general public that the new curriculum had lowered the quality of education in the country. De Waal (2004) complained about the confusion of the OBE and its impact on teaching and learning as many teachers seemed to be “heading nowhere”.

#### **4.4.2.2 RNCS, FFL and CAPS**

On the other three curriculum changes (the RNCS, FFL and CAPS) this is what the respondents said:

Three respondents, R1, R7 and R9, remarked that RNCS was to perfect the teaching in grades one to nine. The FFL was introduced to improve the teaching of reading and numeracy in

primary schools while CAPS was a response to teachers' 'outcry' that they did not know what to teach and assess each term.

R2 and R10 had similar views that the RNCS emphasised learning outcomes, assessment guidelines and assessment standards. These were so confusing. FFL was trying to correct the decline in reading and numeracy in primary schools and now CAPS specified what to teach and assess each term.

R3, R5 and R8 also had similar remarks about the curriculum changes in South Africa over the years. R8 argued that, "From C2005, the RNCS was so confusing with its assessment guidelines and standards. This caused chaos and a decline in reading and numeracy level. Then to correct this 'mess', FFL was introduced to force intensive reading and mental sums in the foundation phase. Then now we have CAPS which at least tells us what to teach and assess."

R4 was rather brief, saying, "The RNCS was a confusing curriculum change. Teachers were to design their own assessments and it was not easy for many. The FFL was to improve teaching of reading and numeracy. The latest, CAPS, now specifies content and assessment."

R6 gave similar comments that, "The RNCS gave assessment guidelines to teachers. FFL was to help improve literacy and numeracy while recent CAPS states what is to be taught and assessed."

Interviewees had this to say about the RNCS, FFL and CAPS:

I1 said, "The confusion began with the C2005 and continued with the RNCS. This one talked about assessments which were so confusing, FFL tried to clear the confusion by giving us strategies of improving literacy and numeracy and now CAPS specifies the content to be taught and assessed."

I2 expressed the following sentiments, "The RNCS was introduced to help teachers with assessment because C2005 did not specify about what to teach and assess. FFL was a response

to poor reading and numeracy levels in schools. CAPS is now clearer with what to teach and assess each term.”

I3 lamented that the curriculum changes were hasty and teachers were not consulted hence their failure. “RNCS was introduced to help teachers with assessment, FFL to help improve numeracy and literacy then CAPS for teachers to know what to teach and assess.”

I4 expressed the same sentiments thus, “The RNCS aimed at helping with assessment which was problematic. The FFL aimed at improving reading and mathematics while CAPS outlines what to teach and assess learners.”

I5 said, “The RNCS was aimed at assisting teachers with assessments, FFL was an attempt to spruce up the decline in reading and numeracy while CAPS clearly specifies content to be taught and tests given.”

The teachers seem clear on why the three curriculum changes were introduced. Most of them agreed that the RNCS was to help teachers with assessment in classrooms, FFL was to help improve numeracy and literacy while CAPS specified what to teach and test each term.

From their responses, it seemed that the foundation phase teachers had very little understanding of the distinction between OBE and C2005. They also feel that the RNCS and FFL were ‘abortive measures’ aimed at correcting an unsuitable curriculum that does not address the socio-economic and educational needs of the nation. On CAPS the majority of these foundation phase teachers felt that it attempted to solve the teachers’ concerns on “what to teach and assess each term”.

CAPS as the latest curriculum attempts to address the learning and teaching needs of the teachers. However, this curriculum initiative is not ‘divorced’ from the parent OBE and its subsidiary NCS but a refinement which specifically informs teachers on the topics – content to teach each term and assessment tasks to be done for each grade (DBE, 2012). However, there are still challenges on the new CAPS curriculum particularly the time frame to carry out the

numerous tasks suggested and the rigid timetables which do not give time for examinations (DBE, 2011d).

#### **4.4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: HOW DID THE MAJOR CHALLENGES FACED BY FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS DUE TO CURRICULUM CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICA AFTER 1994 AFFECT TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CLASSROOMS?**

**Theme 3: Classroom challenges faced by foundation phase teachers of South Africa due to curriculum changes after 1998.**

In this section, the researcher explores the foundation phase teachers' views pertaining to four aspects identified during the study. These are: (1) Language of teaching and learning (LOTL), (2) Class size (Overcrowding), (3) Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) and (4) Assessment.

##### **4.4.3.1 Language of teaching and learning (LOTL)**

The language to use when teaching in the foundation phase is an issue for many teachers. Although the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b) clearly states that, "The governing body of a public school may determine the language policy of the school subject to the Act..." (SASA 84 of 1996 section 6, subsection 2), most of the foundation phase teachers tend to use both vernacular and English as the LOTL. They expressed their sentiments that they mix Siswati and English to make it easy for their learners to understand.

R1 argued that, "We used to teach in Siswati then introduce English in Grade 3. Now we introduce both English and Siswati in grade 1."

R2, "We are confused by the RNCS (2004) policy which encouraged the local language to be used in Grade 1 and 2."

R3 and R4 said that there is mother tongue interference in the foundation phase.

R5 and R6 supported R1 by saying, “The issue of introducing English in Grade 1 is good as it gives learners a firm background in all subjects.”

R7, “Learners are confused when we use both Siswati and English in Grade 1 and 2.”

R8 and R10 had similar sentiments that both languages should be introduced in Grade 1 to avoid further confusion in later grades.

R9, “English should be the only language to be emphasized and Siswati should be introduced later in Grade 2 and Grade 3.”

Interviewees had similar remarks on LOTL as a challenge in the foundation phase. They said:

I1: “I have been teaching in the foundation phase for 23 years. If you introduce English and Siswati together, most learners will be confused. A good teacher should start with the local language then English later.”

I2: “Much depends on the teacher. I have always successfully introduced both languages in Grade 1.”

I3: “In all our schools the language of teaching is English and this goes up to Grade 12. All other subjects are tested in English except the mother tongue. So teachers should always teach all other subjects in English.”

I4: “The DOE has been short changing us by saying introduce English in Grade 2 (2002 – 2004) and later use the language learners understand.”

I5: “The issue of LOTL needs serious consideration, the teacher is the one who should know the capabilities and background of all her learners, but English should be used throughout and the vernacular sparingly particularly during that period of home language (Siswati).”

Out of the ten respondents and five interviewees, six teachers definitely feel that English should take centre stage in Grade 1 while one teacher believes that Siswati should dominate. Five teachers suggested that the teacher should decide on what is best for their learners while three

teachers strongly suggested that both languages, English and Siswati, should be introduced in Grade 1 and allow the learners to carry the languages through in further grades. From the above views on LOTL as a challenge, it seems in some classes the home language interferes with the introduction of English in the foundation phase. Some respondents have pointed out much dependence on the teacher as she understands her learners' background well. Cross et al (2002) also observed this challenge as they argued that the language to use in grade one should best be decided by the teachers as they understand the learners and learning environment. This is critical as the teachers should "tailor" their teaching in a multi-cultural classroom.

#### **4.4.3.2 Class size (Overcrowding)**

According to the DBE (2013), the learner-educator ratio (LER) in ordinary schools in the country should be 29.2:1 but this is not the case with the enrolments in Sikhulile Circuit where some teachers have 87 learners in their classrooms.

The respondents had this to say on overcrowding as a challenge;

R1: "This is a serious challenge. Unfortunately all officials say there is nothing they can do, in an overcrowded classroom, group work is compromised and performance is poor."

R2: "Overcrowding makes the teacher overwork, too much work and discipline is poor."

R3: "Overcrowding in classrooms stresses the teacher and usually yields poor performance as individual attention is not possible."

R4: "Overcrowding is a serious problem which stresses the teacher, makes group work impossible and causes the teacher to use the lecture method, this is against the OBE philosophy which emphasizes 'child-centered' learning."

R5: "When one teaches in an overcrowded classroom, the only possible method is lecturing."

R6: "Overcrowding negates learning by doing or discovery learning as teachers tend to 'talk and chalk'. This destroys individual help which is very important in the foundation phase."

R7: "Overcrowding is a very serious challenge in our schools. It hinders use of child-centered methods and the use of individualized learning cannot be done correctly."

R8: "It is not easy to attend each individual's needs as expected, it puts pressure and stress on the teachers."

R9: "Overcrowding causes poor performance because the teacher cannot clearly identify learners' problems in order to assist them."

R10: "All other schools that have the correct teacher-learner ratio, academically perform better because the teacher can manage the learning process as demanded by the curricular needs of constant assessment."

Interviewees had this to say:

I1: "Overcrowding means more work for the teacher. This causes stress. The teacher cannot effectively plan and assist each individual learner in a class of over 55, poor performances therefore is the result."

I2: "In an overcrowded classroom the teacher is limited to lecturing, group work and individual reading becomes strenuous and stressful."

I3: "I have been facing this challenge for the past five years. It's difficult to teach reading on individual basis and it is really stressful."

I4: "Overcrowding causes poor performance as the teacher will concentrate on those that are able since there will be no time for individual attention."

I5: "Teaching in an overcrowded classroom is strenuous, stressful and unenviable. Take for instance an individual reading to the teacher, other learners are fighting or going out. It is not

easy and not in line with the OBE philosophy where a teacher is supposed to be a facilitator of learning.”

Out of the respondents who responded on overcrowding as a challenge in the foundation phase, the study has revealed that the teachers assert that when there are too many learners in a classroom, discipline is compromised. They also argued that it is difficult to give individual attention hence the teacher tends to lecture (talk and chalk). This leads the teacher to concentrate on those who are able. Overcrowding also stresses the teacher with the work-load because it is strenuous. Some of these respondents also argued that the OBE philosophy is that the teacher is a facilitator of learning meaning that the learners should explore and discover while the teacher guides the learning process. Makgatho and Mji (2009) attribute poor classroom performance to overcrowding as the teachers would struggle to give individual attention.

#### **4.4.3.3 Lack of Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM)**

All fifteen foundation phase teachers felt that the DoE should do more in availing essential teaching materials to the foundation phase teachers. Of the ten respondents who answered the questionnaires, four were of the opinion that the DOE should provide basic word cards, number lines and pictures to aid literacy and numeracy teaching and learning.

Two others felt that when the DoE provides these basic LTSM with adequate textbooks, teachers should be innovative by improvising. One of these two argued that each learning environment is unique and different so each teacher should make and use LTSM that are appropriate for her learners at that time.

Four of the respondents suggested that since schools get grants, they should buy these essential LTSM just like they buy photocopy machines and paper.

Respondent 10 said, “The DOE and school management will always say there is no money. So the onus is on the teacher to improvise by making charts and work cards.”

On this issue the interviewees had similar views:

I1: "Ooh this is a critical issue which needs serious attention. To me I feel the DoE should provide basic essential charts. Given our overcrowding challenge, we cannot be expected to plan, mark, teach individual reading and make our own LTSM."

Interviewee 1 disagrees with respondent 10's view on teachers providing their own LTSM. She emphatically expresses teachers' work load and its limitations when having to furthermore provide their own LTSM.

I2 and I4 agreed with the latter that the DOE should at least provide some LTSM in the form of charts and word cards to reduce the work-load.

I3 and I5 suggested that there should be a 'pool' of LTSM at the school to be used by all the teachers over the years. Such materials should be departmentally based and could include those provided by the DoE and those made by teachers.

The findings from this study on the LTSM tend to suggest that teachers agree that besides the textbooks supplied to all schools by the DoE, the foundation phase teachers really need extra LTSM such as charts, pictures, word cards and so forth to supplement teaching. Smit (2001) notes that presently there are many resource constraints in the system characterised by lack of books, charts and other learning materials and worsens the possibility of sound implementation of educational practices.

The well renowned French psychologist Piaget (1971) asserts that children's cognitive development can be placed in four categories: 0-2 years (sensory-motor stage), 2-7 years (preoperational stage), 7-11 years (concrete operational stage), 12 years and higher (formal operational stage). Learners in grade 1 to 3 belong primarily to the concrete stage. According to Piaget (1971) a child in the concrete operational stage needs objects (LTSM) such as games, puzzles and shapes in order to understand numbers, mass, volume, length etc. Thus, the issue of using tangible, concrete objects in the foundation phase should not be taken lightly.

#### 4.4.3.4 Assessment

Outcomes Based Education (OBE) encourages child-centred learning and the teacher acts as a facilitator of learning (DoE, 2004). Assessment of learners is both formative (continuous) and summative. How then has curriculum change in South Africa posed a challenge for teachers when it comes to assessment?

R1 and R9 argued that the assessment work for learners' activities is too much work, "We have to assess learners using tasks and tests. In the olden days we only used summative tests quarterly and annually and now it's an everyday thing."

R2 lamented continuous assessment as taking more time for the teacher at the expense of actual teaching.

R3, R4 and R7 had similar views and said that tasks have many activities. Each subject has many assessment tasks which become stressful to the teachers.

R5 had this to say, "Educators need to analyze each and every script of a learner for numerous tasks. This should be done question by question and in an overcrowded classroom, this is stressful."

R6 and R8 asserted that, "There are too many tasks to be assessed within an allocated time and this leads teachers to cheat by 'cooking' marks for learners."

R10 realises that there is little time to do all prescribed assessments in the foundation phase, she cited English, where shared reading is supposed to be 15 minutes and writing 15 minutes within the same period.

The interviewees also shared their views on assessment in the foundation phase and constraints over the years. According to the RNCS assessment guidelines, home languages for instance, the following should be covered and assessed weekly.

1. Speaking and listening

2. Phoning
3. Reading
  - 3.1 shared reading
  - 3.2 independent and paired reading
  - 3.3 group reading
4. Handwriting
5. Writing - Grammar and Creative

In numeracy, a grade 3 class is supposed to cover the following for Task 1 (2012)

1. Numbers
2. Space and shapes
3. Patterns
4. Measurement
5. Data

I1 lamented thus, "Foundation phase teachers do not rest and they keep on assessing. The workload is too much."

I2 had this to say, "This OBE curriculum makes teachers do a lot of paper work at the expense of the actual teaching and close monitoring."

I3: "The old curriculum was better when it comes to assessment because assessment was done at the end of the learning programme, this continuous assessment has reduced us to clerks and data collectors."

I4 said, "Assessment is becoming more and more complicated. Besides the continuous assessment we are burdened with, the DoE has introduced workbooks. This is extra work to us as each learner writes in the stipulated exercise book for set tasks. The teacher checks each sentence and the workbooks have tasks that have to be done. The workbooks have alien and abstract work. We are overburdened."

I5 was quite emphatic on assessment, “Educators are teaching overcrowded classes, and work to be assessed is too much, it should be done frequently. Now workbooks are adding more burdens and time allocation to do all of this is too little.”

From the above views by the five interviewees, the study reveals that the old assessment procedures before OBE was introduced were primarily summative. OBE assessment is formative hence continuous. Continuous assessment in overcrowded and under resourced classrooms of Sikhulile Circuit have become a burden to teachers as they feel overburdened and stressed. This challenge has also been exacerbated by the recently introduced workbook which has tasks to be done by each learner besides the usual daily exercises. The foundation phase teachers therefore view this as a serious challenge to their authority. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007) asserts that the studies they carried out in KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga on reading show that many foundation phase teachers lag behind in reading and assessing reading.

#### **4.4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: WHICH STRATEGIES SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN ORDER TO MINIMISE THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SOUTH AFRICAN FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS DUE TO CURRICULUM CHANGES?**

##### **Theme 4: Strategies to minimise future challenges due to curriculum changes.**

This section presents teachers’ responses on teaching and learning with particular reference to; views on the current curriculum in use (CAPS), suggestions on how best foundation phase teachers can improve teaching and learning in their classrooms and, lastly, strategies to minimise challenges due to curriculum changes.

##### **4.4.4.1 Views on the new curriculum (CAPS)**

On the newly introduced CAPS curriculum the respondents had this to say:

R1, R3, R7 and R9 pointed out that it is a welcomed curriculum but needs refinement on assessment. There are too much unnecessary assessment tasks for foundation phase teachers.

R2 and R8 elaborated that CAPS is clear on what to teach and assess weekly, quarterly and annually. The two however argue that the DoE introduced Annual National Assessments (ANA) and workbooks which are not part of learners' assessment marks. They feel these are just an extra load for teachers.

R4 and R6 view CAPS as an answer to the foundation phase teachers' 'cry' of "What exactly should we teach and when?"

R5 elaborated that the CAPS initiative is trying to 'refine' the NCS which was riddled with uncertainty and disgruntlement among teachers. "At least CAPS tells you what to teach and assess."

R10 argued that there are now too many tasks to be done within a short space of time. "The emphasis in the foundation phase should be on literacy and numeracy and not these other unnecessary tasks like workbooks and ANA."

Interviewees also had this to say on CAPS:

I1: "CAPS is clearer than the RNCS and FFL. However, it has been overshadowed by other unnecessary interventions like workbooks and ANA. Remember we are introduced to two languages, numeracy and life skills to learners for the first time."

I2 commented, "Teachers should view CAPS as an example of what is to be taught and covered. The actual question should be created by the classroom teacher who understands the level and environment of the learners."

I3 commented, "At least with CAPS I know what is to be assessed and I know what to do every day."

I4 said, "CAPS should be refined further especially on reading because we lack reading materials in our overcrowded classrooms."

I5 commented that at least the DoE had listened to complaints raised on RNCS and FFL. “However assessments should be reduced per quarter to give more time to teachers to concentrate on the actual teaching and assisting learners individually.”

The above views reveal that the recently introduced curriculum (CAPS) is welcomed by many foundation phase teachers as it is clearer on what to teach and assess. The teachers however feel that they are short changed because there are too many unnecessary tasks and assessments. They cited workbooks as an “extra burden” and ANA as unnecessary as they do not contribute towards the learners’ final progression marks. In 2015, the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) was in disagreement with the DBE and the ANA were not carried out.

#### **4.4.4.2 Suggestions on improving teaching and learning in the foundation phase**

When asked about how the foundation phase teachers can best improve teaching and learning in their classrooms, the respondents had this to say:

Six of the ten respondents strongly felt that foundation phase teachers should love their job, prepare their lessons thoroughly by planning in time and making LTSM available.

Four respondents were of the opinion that teachers should select the relevant content to teach, use plenty of learning material such word cards, charts, counters and so forth and try to help all learners to be able to read English.

Of the five interviewees, two were of the opinion that teachers needed to adequately prepare their lessons and assessments, they should work in teams to assist all learners in literacy and numeracy.

Three of the interviewees suggested factors to consider in order to be effective in the classroom. These include thorough preparation, use of a variety of LTSM, teamwork, passion for

the job and learners, as well as sound collaboration with parents who undoubtedly assist with reading and numeracy at home.

In general, when considering views concerning improvement on reading and learning in classrooms, this study revealed therefore that effective foundation phase teachers should have a passion for the job and learners, adequately prepare for all lessons and provide a lot of LTSM. The study also showed that teachers should use teamwork to improve teaching and to 'rope in' parents and guardians who are key stakeholders in education and who are essential in assisting with homework.

#### **4.4.4.3 Minimise future curriculum challenges**

Ten of the respondents argued that curriculum change should involve thorough consultation at grass-roots level. This includes parents and teachers.

R1, R9 and R10 suggested that effective training programmes need to be in place where after consultation with foundation phase teachers on proposed curriculum programmes, educators can receive comprehensive training as to be able to achieve National Department of Education expectations and objectives of any new curriculum.

R2, R5 and R6 shared the same view and said that the challenges they faced and continue to face due to curriculum changes are a result of lack of consultation and wrong models used for curriculum changes. R2 asserted, "South Africa should have adopted an African oriented curriculum which is suitable for developing under resourced countries. Instead of copying the American, Australian and New Zealand curricula (where OBE failed) we should have copied from other African countries with better education systems like Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ghana and so forth."

R3 commented, "Consultation should also be done with 'captains of industry', meaning the teachers, because we prepare learners for careers."

R4, R7 and R8 were of the view that OBE as a curriculum is not bad but the implementation is haphazard. They cited lack of training of teachers for the new curriculum, lack of resources and no proper monitoring in schools. They felt that a robust overhaul of the education system is needed in terms of:

1. Teachers' training to meet educational and national needs.
2. Reducing overcrowding.
3. Resourcing schools.
4. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning.
5. Reviewing assessment procedures in all grades (1-3).

The respondents collectively argued that with reduction in class sizes, all other teaching practices are aided. For instance, effective monitoring of teaching and learning giving ample time to focus on struggling individuals, assessment of learners becomes thorough with decreased work-load. These voiced sentiments on reduction of class sizes highlight the lack of availability of support material catering for large class sizes. The issue of class sizes and LTSM is a "teething" problem which should be addressed (De Waal, 2004).

The respondents maintained the view that challenges of future curriculum changes could be minimised through thorough consultation with teachers who are affected by curriculum change. They continued to say that all curriculum changes need to be clearly communicated to all stakeholders involved, not only teachers but also parents or guardians. Optimal preparation needs to be in place by the effective and efficient training of teachers aiding the institution of curricula.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented the data collected from fifteen foundation phase teachers through questionnaires (ten) and face-to-face interviews (five). These data collection techniques aimed at exploring the effects of curriculum change on foundation phase teachers in South Africa. The

exploration of respondents' views was informed by the techniques elaborated in chapter three of this study.

The research findings indicate that the foundation phase teachers of Sikhulile Circuit experienced numerous challenges caused by the repeated curriculum changes in South Africa over the years. Some of these challenges are training on new curriculum, confusion about new curriculum initiatives (refinements) such as NCS, C2005, RNCS and FFL. The study also reveals that although the current curriculum change CAPS is welcomed, it is still riddled with challenges for teachers, particularly with regard to assessment.

The data collected, presented, analysed and interpreted in this chapter informs the next chapter (chapter five) which focuses on research summary, conclusions and recommendations as well as some limitations to the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, a summary of the findings of the study that aimed at exploring the effects of curriculum change on foundation phase teachers in South Africa is given. The summary is given in section 5.2 followed by the implications and recommendations in section 5.3. The limitation of the study is discussed in section 5.4 followed by concluding remarks in section 5.5. The responses through questionnaires and the interviews conducted were useful in providing data used in the description of the challenges faced by the foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes in South Africa after democratic rule. With the insight and description of challenges faced by the teachers, the researcher was able to make recommendations that have the potential to enhance the processes of introducing curricula and reduce the challenges faced during their implementation.

### **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The summary of findings will be discussed according to each of the research questions.

#### **5.2.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE THE EXPERIENCES OF THE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS REGARDING THE REPEATED CURRICULUM CHANGES AFTER DEMOCRATIC RULE?**

The results show that the majority of the foundation phase teachers understand the concept of curriculum change. They also think that it is the government's prerogative to dictate a curriculum for people. Most of the foundation phase teachers asserted that there was a need to change the apartheid curriculum because it was racial and segregative, marginalising the

Africans as it was designed to make them subservient to whites. This, they believe, has made them secondary to their counterparts in well established schools.

The study also shows that the foundation phase teachers have diverse experiences on curriculum changes in South Africa. Most teachers felt that there were too many changes which had been hastily introduced without training teachers in the new curriculum. This they argued, caused much confusion which resulted in problems in the classrooms on what to teach and how to assess.

### **5.2.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHICH CURRICULUM CHANGES MOSTLY AFFECTED THE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?**

The study reveals that there was confusion among teachers on what OBE and curriculum 2005 (C2005) was all about. Some viewed the two as different curriculum initiatives while others saw them as one thing. This confusion was not only in the classrooms but became a public condemnation as lamented by the DoE (2000a). Nonetheless, the Department of education explained OBE as the national curriculum while C2005 was the initial ‘vehicle’ of transmitting it (DoE, 2000a).

On the RNCS, the majority of the teachers viewed it as a “correction” of the C2005 and its assessment guidelines which were to help teachers. A few highlighted the fact that the RNCS was a total failure as it never helped teachers on what to teach and assess.

The study further reveals that between 2008 and 2011 an attempt was made to rectify teachers’ concerns on numeracy and literacy through the foundation phase for learning. This study also reveals that teachers in the foundation phase viewed this as extra work which compelled them to force learners to cram mental sums and spelling. The majority of the foundation phase teachers view this as an abortive attempt to correct the “ills” of OBE.

The study also reveals that the current curriculum change, CAPS, has some positive aspects such as what to teach and test each term. However, CAPS still falls short on learner individual differences. At least CAPS has given direction to foundation phase teachers, though in some instances the content to be taught has to be specified and the time to carry out assessments is still problematic for many.

### **5.2.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: HOW DID THE MAJOR CHALLENGES FACED BY FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS DUE TO CURRICULUM CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICA AFTER 1994 AFFECT TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CLASSROOMS?**

The study reveals that four sub-themes emerged from this question as shown by the categorised aspects below. These are the four major challenges that were identified and discussed by the foundation phase teachers:

- Language of teaching and learning (LOTL)
- Overcrowding in classrooms
- Learner teacher support material (LTSM)
- Assessment

#### **5.2.3.1 Language of Teaching and Learning (LOTL)**

Of the fifteen foundation phase teachers that took part in this investigation, the study reveals that six teachers strongly believe that English should be used as a medium of instruction for the subject English, numeracy and life skills while the vernacular (home language) should be confined to the home language period which in this case is siSwati.

One teacher argued that the home language (siSwati) should be the main means of teaching and learning as learners are familiar with it. English should be gradually introduced.

Five teachers argued that the classroom teacher is the one who should determine whether she should use the mother language or English as she would be familiar with the learners.

Three teachers are of the idea that both the home language and English as the first additional language could be used as the Language of Teaching and Learning (LOTL).

A further scrutiny of the views as revealed by the study shows that policy-wise the schools and/or the foundation phase teachers are missing the point. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (as amended) Section 6, sub-section 2 is clear on this issue thus, "...the governing body (SGB) of a public school may determine the language policy of the school subject to the Act..." This suggests that schools may not have communicated this to their teachers or they deliberately let teachers apply whatever is applicable in their own classrooms.

#### **5.2.3.2 Overcrowding**

The study reveals that the foundation phase teachers of Sikhulile Circuit lament that although the learner-educator ratio (LER) for Mpumalanga is 35:1 they are teaching over 55 learners in their classrooms. This has a negative effect on discipline and giving individual help to these "infants" who rely solely on their teacher for reading and writing.

#### **5.2.3.3 Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM)**

The study reveals that four teachers are of the opinion that the DBE should supply basic LTSM to rural schools like theirs. Such material may include basic word cards, number lines and pictures. They think that this may aid the effectiveness of teaching in the foundation phase.

Two teachers believe that when the DBE has supplied the above LTSM, the individual teachers should be innovative by making more LTSM.

Four other respondents argued that since their schools get grants to spend on teaching and learning through the norms and standards, each school should buy the LTSM for its learners.

Six teachers agreed that although the DBE may provide or the school may buy the LTSM, these should be cared for and teachers should continually add to the existing material by making more LTSM. This sounds rational as such items should be regarded as essential school property that should be cared for by all stakeholders.

#### **5.2.3.4 Assessment**

This study reveals that the foundation phase teachers still have a gap in understanding how to design formal assessment tasks according to the national assessment guidelines. According to curriculum implementation requirements, classwork and homework activities should inform all the subjects components (outcomes) taught (DBE, 2010a). Section 4.4.3.4 (Assessment) of this study shows that teachers lament that they are overwhelmed with too much work. This reveals their lack of knowledge on assessment as they are supposed to select their activities in line with expected outcomes on a continuous basis, thus continuous assessment (CASS).

The findings support those of Fleisch (2008) that teachers in disadvantaged rural primary schools tend to have lower expectations of their learners and seem not to know what they are supposed to assess.

#### **5.2.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: WHICH STRATEGIES SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN ORDER TO MINIMISE THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SOUTH AFRICAN FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS DUE TO CURRICULUM CHANGES?**

The study reveals three pertinent aspects on strategies to minimise curriculum challenges in classrooms. These are on:

1. Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)

2. Improving teaching and learning in the foundation phase.
3. How to reduce challenges on any curriculum change.

#### **5.2.4.1 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)**

The findings of the study show that most teachers welcome CAPS as a new refinement to teaching and learning. The teachers most welcome its clarity on what is to be taught and assessed.

However, the study also shows that some foundation phase teachers still lag behind in “grading” the content to be taught and continuous assessment practices as spelt out in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) grade R-12 the provision of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and National Protocol for Assessment (DBE, 2010a).

#### **5.2.4.2 Improving teaching and learning**

Evidence gleaned from this study reveals that the foundation phase teachers of Sikhulile Circuit are strongly convinced that teaching and learning in the classrooms can significantly improve if:

- The foundation phase teachers have a passion for their job and the learners they teach.
- They adequately prepare for their lessons before they go to class.
- They use a lot of LTSM in their lessons. A critical finding from Peat’s (2009) study indicates that the majority of teachers in rural areas of South Africa could not modernise teaching and learning in classrooms as they were still relying on text-books and the “so-called teachers guide” as their main resource.

#### **5.2.4.3 How to minimise challenges of curriculum change.**

The findings of this study reveal that the foundation phase teachers feel that the classrooms could be managed effectively and efficiently in the wake of any curriculum change if the following could be addressed:

Teacher's training should meet educational and national needs. In other words education should be aligned to the expected national values and outcomes.

Overcrowding should be reduced to promote effective, efficient teaching and learning.

The DBE should increase their impetus in resourcing schools.

Effective monitoring of teaching and learning is a prerequisite to attainment of the envisaged goals.

Assessment in all grades should be reviewed from time to time so as to ascertain its effectiveness, hence attainment of desired goals.

### **5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

The findings of this study show that not all the foundation phase teachers of South Africa have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of curriculum change, implementation and evaluation. Therefore the following are recommended to help these teachers to improve their effectiveness in implementing the national curriculum in the foundation phase.

#### **5.3.1 General experiences of foundation phase teachers on curriculum changes**

The study shows that there were too many curriculum changes within a short space of time. Some of the changes were hastily implemented from top-down without teachers having mastered the dictates of the other change. Such uncoordinated, hasty and untested changes

caused a furore in the education system and were primarily blamed for the standards' decline in the country's education system.

It is recommended that future curriculum changes should use the grassroots model or Social Interaction Model whereby an idea should be passed to the teachers and they initiate the changes which should be tried and tested before broader national scale implementation in line with the envisaged outcomes. The teachers' role is the interpretation of new curriculum ideas into local and class contexts. The centre curriculum innovators believe that teachers are professional and creative, so they give them freedom to implement new curriculum (Wagner, 1993; Brandt, 1997; Trubowitz, 2000).

### **5.3.2 Training requirements**

The findings of this study show that the majority of the foundation phase teachers needed a wide range of training on OBE, NCS and CAPS. This is necessitated by the fact that they should not only know that the current curriculum in use is CAPS but that OBE is the framework and NCS the 'conduit' for transmitting CAPS.

It is recommended that training on curriculum should be ongoing. This should be done at national, provincial, district, circuit and school levels. Teachers should be skilled on how to select content to be taught and how to assess as spelt out in the National Protocol for Assessment (DBE, 2010a).

### **5.3.3 Principles of curriculum**

The findings of the study show that the majority of the foundation phase teachers in Sikhulile Circuit schools are not clear on how curriculum principles are applied, therefore a recommendation is made that curriculum advisors conduct workshops countrywide. The aims

and objectives of the workshops will be to instil knowledge and understanding of the content of the prescribed curriculum to teachers.

A further recommendation is made to teachers to revisit the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, which indicates that the curriculum is based on life-long learning for all South Africans. The implication is that all teachers in the country have the responsibility to expose learners to different higher order knowledge and skills.

#### **5.3.4 Teaching and learning**

The study reveals that teachers lament too many learners in classrooms and limited resources in form of LTSM. Learners in the foundation phase are in their concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1971). Lack of these LTSM reduces teaching and learning to lecturing (talk and chalk) which is not appropriate at this level and also defies the philosophy of OBE which emphasises “child-centred learning.”

A recommendation is therefore submitted that foundation phase teachers need to ensure that a variety of teaching and learning activities are adopted and concrete objects are used in all lessons. The old Chinese adage says, “I hear I forget, I see I remember, I do I understand”, learners in the foundation phase need a lot of concrete objects in order to facilitate learning in an enabling environment.

#### **5.3.5 Assessment**

The findings from the sample also show that the foundation phase teachers of Sikhulile Circuit still have a gap in understanding how to design formal assessment tasks. They expect the teacher’s guide to give them everything. A recommendation is advanced that teachers be orientated on assessment in order to rate learner performance accurately to avoid

generalisation of learner performance. There should be uniformity of recording tools that would be simple and manageable such as assessing oral reading using a rubric or drama.

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There were limitations which applied to this qualitative case study. Firstly data was collected from fifteen teachers of Sikhulile Circuit who are all teaching in public schools. The sample size was limited due to financial, time and also human resource constraints.

The findings are based on these teachers who are confined to these rural schools and their challenges may not be faced by their counterparts in urban schools. Furthermore, their views cannot be generalised to reflect those of educators in other provinces.

Ten teachers answered questions from semi-structured questionnaires. Five were interviewed on a face-to-face basis. These were subjected to probing. Those who were interviewed obviously gave much more detail as compared to those who answered questionnaires as they were able to verbally express themselves. A larger sample size interviewed might have contributed to the richness of responses, aiding the findings of the study.

#### **5.5 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this research was to explore the challenges faced by the foundation phase teachers of South Africa due to repeated curriculum changes after democratic rule.

The qualitative approach was used with a sample of fifteen foundation phase teachers who were purposively sampled from the Sikhulile Circuit of Mpumalanga.

The findings of the study show that there were too many curriculum changes implemented without much effective training of the teachers who are supposed to implement them. This caused a lot of confusion on what to teach and assess.

The study also reveals that although the current curriculum in use (CAPS) is welcomed, it has its own shortcomings which are still troubling teachers such as selecting content and assessment tasks.

Recommendations have been made on future curriculum changes that the grassroots model or the Social Interaction model could be used which emphasises much consultation and communication between affected stakeholders before new curriculum implementation. Other recommendations are that the training of teachers on CAPS should be ongoing as many have shown lack of knowledge and skills on the constitution's expectation for education as a lifelong experience.

A further recommendation is submitted that further studies of this nature be carried out in other circuits, districts and provinces to look at curriculum refinements that will make a positive impact in the classrooms and hence improve South Africa's educational ranking worldwide.

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**Appendix A: Permission letter to the Department of Education**

Mrs S.N. Mabuza  
PO Box 126  
Kanyamazane  
1214  
[DATE]

THE CIRCUIT MANAGER  
SIKHULILE CIRCUIT  
PRIVATE BAG X1001  
KANYAMAZANE  
1214

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY IN SIKHULILE CIRCUIT

I, Sizani Nurse Mabuza am a Masters student at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

My research Topic: Exploring the effects of curriculum change on foundation phase teachers in South Africa: a case study of Sikhulile Circuit of Mpumalanga.

To meet the requirements of this degree I need to conduct research on the above mentioned topic. I therefore request permission to conduct research on the 15 schools in the circuit with 15 teachers in the foundation phase. The information gathered will be used for research purposes only. The dates and times of data collection will be communicated and negotiated with all participants. Your positive response will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

.....  
Mabuza SN: Researcher  
(C) 082 977 7264  
E-mail: mabuzasn@hotmail.com

.....  
Prof MG Ngoepe: Supervisor  
University of South Africa  
(w) 012 429 8375  
E-mail: [ngoepmg@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ngoepmg@unisa.ac.za)

**Appendix B: Permission letter to school principals**

Mrs S.N Mabuza  
PO Box 126  
Kanyamazane  
1214  
[DATE]

TO: SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN SIKHULILE CIRCUIT

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT YOUR SCHOOL

I, Sizani Nurse Mabuza am a Masters student at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

My research Topic: Exploring the effects of curriculum change on foundation phase teachers in South Africa: a case study of Sikhulile Circuit of Mpumalanga.

To meet the requirements of this degree I need to conduct research on the above mentioned topic. I therefore request permission to conduct research in your school with foundation phase teachers.

The information gathered will be used for research purposes only. The dates and time of data collection will be communicated and negotiated with all participants. Your positive response will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

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Mabuza SN: Researcher  
(C) 082 977 7264  
E-mail: mabuzasn@hotmail.com

Prof MG Ngoepe: Supervisor  
University of South Africa  
(w) 012 429 8375  
E-mail: [ngoepmg@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ngoepmg@unisa.ac.za)

## Appendix C

### STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

#### **Exploring the effects of curriculum change on foundation phase teachers in South Africa: a case study of Sikhulile Circuit of Mpumalanga.**

The study seeks to investigate the problems affecting educators in the foundation phase caused by curriculum changes in the education system over the years and also present or illustrate the consequences that have been brought about by these changes. The advantage of your participation in the study would help generate data that may be used to stimulate further investigations and debates on this topical issue and thereafter improve the education system. Such improvement in the education system may lead to improved learning outcomes for learners in schools.

Data for this study will be collected via researcher administered questionnaires and face to face interviews. No participant names or contact details will be required on any data collection tool thus ensuring confidentiality throughout the study. The results of the study will be analysed and summarised, thereafter participants will be informed about the results of the study. Any uncertainties that may arise from the study will be clarified by the researcher.

There are no known risks that would arise from participation in the study, however, participation in the study would require 30 minutes of the participants time.

For further information, please contact:

Mabuza SN: Researcher  
(C) 082 977 7264  
E-mail: mabuzasn@hotmail.com

Prof MG Ngoepe: Supervisor  
University of South Africa  
(w) 012 429 8375  
E-mail: [ngoepmg@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ngoepmg@unisa.ac.za)

## Appendix D

### CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I, S.N Mabuza am conducting as part of my research as a master's student titled: Exploring the effects of curriculum change on foundation phase teachers in South Africa: a case study of Sikhulile Circuit of Mpumalanga

The research is conducted under the authority of the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice to participate, as consent, will be indicated by the provision of your signature in the below provided space. You can decline or withdraw from participating in the study at any time without any negative consequences.

All information gathered as a result of your participation in the study will be kept private and confidential.

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Date

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Signature of study participant

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Date

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Signature of researcher

(C) 082 977 7264

E-mail: mabuzasn@hotmail.com

Prof MG Ngoepe  
Supervisor  
(w) 012 429 8375  
E-mail: ngoepmg@unisa.ac.za

**Appendix E**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS**

**SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

GENDER	MALE		FEMALE		
RACE	AFRICAN	WHITE	COLOURED	INDIAN	
AGE	30-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	OVER 50
HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION					
TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN YEARS					
POSITION HELD IN SCHOOL E.G. HOD					
GRADE CURRENTLY TEACHING					

**SECTION B:**

1. What are your experiences regarding the curriculum changes that have been introduced in the foundation phase in post-apartheid South Africa?

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2. Which curriculum changes have mostly affected the foundation phase teachers in their classrooms?

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3. What are the major classroom challenges that the South African foundation phase teachers have met due to repeated curriculum changes?

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4. In your view, which strategies should be implemented in order to minimize the challenges faced by South African foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes?

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Thank you for participating in the interview and for your time spent.

**Appendix F**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS**

The researcher (interviewer) will greet the interviewee and hand over the letter of request to her/him. After the principal or school official (H.O.D or vice principal) has read the letter, the interviewer will request him/her to answer the researcher’s questions.

The challenges faced by foundation phase teachers of Sikhulile Circuit due to repeated curriculum changes (C2005, FFL, CAPS).

**SECTION B:**

1. What are your experiences regarding the curriculum changes that have been introduced in the foundation phase in post-apartheid South Africa?

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2. Which curriculum changes have mostly affected the foundation phase teachers in their classrooms?

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3. What are the major classroom challenges that the South African foundation phase teachers have met due to repeated curriculum changes?

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.....

4. In your view, which strategies should be implemented in order to minimize the challenges faced by South African foundation phase teachers due to curriculum changes?

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Thank you for participating in the interview and for your time spent.