

Situating Professional Development within the School Context: A Case Study of a Further Education and Training (FET) School

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ABSTRACT

Traditional professional development approaches to assist teachers to implement the new curriculum in South Africa have come under criticism. This is because these do not provide the ongoing, context sensitive support that teachers need to improve their practice. This has raised the importance of situating teacher learning within the school context. This study explored how a group of teachers gave meaning to and expressed their understanding of themselves and their experience of school-based professional development. The purpose of the study was to understand the nature of school-based professional development at an FET school.

In attempting to address the research questions, this study adopted a qualitative, interpretive approach. Since human interaction and context are important in the qualitative interpretive study, the tenets of symbolic interactionism were drawn on to guide this research study. This study also drew on the concepts of situated learning theory, which stresses the importance of context and therefore supports, the notion that learning opportunities should be grounded in environments where problems arise. This was a case study of a secondary peri-urban school in KwaZulu-Natal. It involved three teachers who were purposefully selected. Data was gathered through three qualitative methods i.e. observation, interviews and a reflective journal. A process of open coding was used to analyse and interpret data.

Findings reveal that the school did recognise the importance of schools as places where teachers can learn. However, the contextual factors such as inside politics, staff relations within the school, as well as the way management handled their role in managing professional development in the school made it a challenge to organise and promote collective teacher learning. It further reveals that as a result of the difficulties and inconsistency of the official professional development programme, teacher learning was in fact taking place in various other ways. These included department meetings, informal teacher collaboration and mentoring. The study also reveals that various contextual factors affected curriculum development implementation. These included a lack of resources, large classes and learners' backgrounds.

DEDICATION

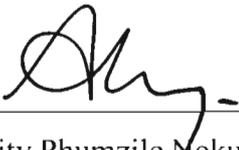
This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Phindelwa and my mother, Nonto, I am so grateful to have come from a line of strong women like you.

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- I owe my debt of gratitude to the teachers in this study for allowing me to work with them.

DECLARATION

I, Purity Phumzile Nokuthula Langa, declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted previously for any degree at any university.



Purity Phumzile Nokuthula Langa

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BED	Bachelor of Education
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CATIE	Capital Area Technology and Inquiry in Education
C2005	Curriculum 2005
DAS	Developmental Appraisal System
DoE	Department of Education
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
EMS	Economic and Management Sciences
FET	Further Education and Training
HDE	Higher Diploma in Education
HOD	Head of Department
INSET	In-service Education and Training
IQMS	Intergrated Quality Management Systems
LO	Life Orientation
LRC	Learner Representative Council
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
PAR	Peer Assessment Review
PTD	Primary Teachers' Diploma
SBPD	School-based Professional Development
SDT	Staff Development Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	Senior Management Team
STD	Secondary Teachers' Diploma
UK	United Kingdom

CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in South Africa lays a foundation for the goals of equal rights, and equal education opportunities based on the constitution. It aims at contributing to the political transformation taking place in South Africa, and teachers are expected to be key contributors to this transformation in the field of education. Although the principle of outcomes-based education forms the foundation for this curriculum, there are other principles that it is based on. It encourages a learner-centered and activity-based approach to education. It aims at developing a high level of knowledge and skills to learners, and integrates these skills across learning areas. It is also sensitive to diversity such as, poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability, and other factors (DoE, 2003). These principles see the role of teachers changing completely as they are expected to be agents of this change. This new role also includes involvement in a democratic curriculum as well as decision making which means teachers play a more prominent role in managing and making curriculum decisions in their schools and classrooms (Jansen & Middlewood, 2003). These reforms have raised the need for effective approaches to professional development that will assist teachers to implement the new curriculum.

To assist teachers in developing and implementing this curriculum, the department offered support, in the form of traditional methods of professional development such as, one day, or week long workshops (Adler, 2002). However, as the importance of professional development in educational reform has become increasingly visible and recognised, these traditional methods of professional development of teachers have come under severe attack as inadequate, inappropriate, and out of tune with current research about how teachers learn, and how expertise is developed (Mokoena, 2005). Research shows that although these workshops help teachers to understand and support policy, enacting policy roles is always a challenge (Adler, 2002; Mattson & Harley, 2003; Moletsane, 2004; Slonimsky & Brodie, 2006). This is because these do not offer context sensitive support and rarely serve the specific needs of teachers.

There is, therefore, a need to shift the focus from traditional methods of professional development to school-based professional development.

The reform initiative in education in South Africa that saw the introduction of school based professional development was the teacher appraisal system. This took the form of the Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS). One of the key principles on which this system was based on was the evaluation of individuals for developmental purposes. The developmental stage of the IQMS allowed schools to have a staff development team (SDT) responsible for the development of teachers within schools (ELRC, 2003). The introduction of the IQMS has stimulated debate and research on the nature of school based professional development but these have been done in the context of appraisal

Therefore, in the context of my research study, which is informed by the concerns about teacher learning in the context of curriculum change, I seek to understand how teachers learn in school-based professional development and how such learning inform teachers' curriculum practice.

1.2 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study is to understand the nature of school-based professional development that was occurring at an FET school and whether this learning had any influence on teachers' abilities to develop and implement the new FET curriculum.

1.3 Critical Questions

The study is guided by two critical questions.

- What is the nature of school-based professional development in the context of an FET school?
- How does school-based professional development inform teachers' practice?

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The focus of the study is school based professional development with a particular focus on a secondary school. The intention was to study a school's professional development programme and/or any other situation or incident that facilitated or contributed to teacher learning within the school. The school selected was a peri-urban secondary school located in a township just outside Durban. It serviced African children from the local community and a staff complement that was made up of African teachers. I worked with three teacher cases. These teachers were from three different departments in the school. They were chosen on the basis of availability as well as being information rich, with respect to the critical questions.

1.5 Rationale for the Study

My interest in this study began when I rejoined the teaching profession in 2005 in the midst of educational reforms in South Africa. I had five years of teaching experience before the new curriculum was introduced. Upon my return to the profession I had to make sense of the new curriculum and the expectations of teachers. To this end I attended a department workshop that was meant to prepare me to implement the new FET curriculum for Grade 10 in 2006. I found that the support and knowledge gained from these workshops, although informative, was sometimes not enough to help me deal with challenges that we meet in our schools when trying to implement the new curriculum. It is for this first reason that the present study looks at what teachers learn about curriculum development in school based professional development.

The second reason was that I joined my school staff development team which is responsible for developing and organising professional development programmes for educators. From my experience of working in that team, I realised that different teachers participate in and make use of the school based professional development differently. This is what motivated me to find out how teacher learning was occurring within the school. I feel that the study would contribute to my personal development and as a member of the professional development team, as insights gained from the study would inform the functioning of this team.

Finally, as research on school based professional development is very rare in South Africa, this research would contribute to the debate surrounding the role of school based professional development in improving curriculum practice. It would also contribute to the limited research on the new FET curriculum which would also be useful to the policymakers, curriculum developers, school managers and others who value professional development.

1.6 Research Methodology

This was a qualitative interpretive case study of one school, looking at how teachers learn in school-based professional development and the knowledge they gain from this, that help them to develop and implement the new FET curriculum. Since human interaction and context are important in this qualitative interpretative study, the tenets of Symbolic Interactionism were drawn on to guide this research study. The study also drew on the situated learning theory which stresses the importance of context, and therefore, supports the fact that learning opportunities should be grounded in environments where problems arise.

This study uses qualitative methods and procedures as it explores how a group of teachers give meaning to, and express their understanding of themselves, and their experiences of professional development within the school context. Three methods of data collection were used to answer the critical questions. These were observation, interviews and a reflective journal.

The process of collecting data in this research study proved to be very challenging. The research process constantly challenged my existing research skills. I had to continuously adjust and adapt my strategy as unexpected situations arose. I used observation as a tool to capture the different forms of professional development taking place in the school. As an insider researcher, who was part of the professional development team in the school I had planned to observe all activities that were organised by this team. When it became clear that the school was not going to stick to the pre-planned (supposedly official) professional development programme I had to find other ways of how teachers learned within the school. I began to observe

teachers' behaviour on an ongoing basis, and looked at any unplanned form of learning that took place amongst them. This was when teachers consulted, collaborated, solved problems together in any situation that arose in their classroom practice, or discussed issues related to curriculum practice. I also began to observe how teachers were supporting each other's development through departmental meetings. I observed these meetings and recorded the occurrences. All this was done to understand how teacher learning was occurring in the school. Non-participant observation was also used in classroom observations where I sat at the back of the class writing observations about the activities as they unfolded during the lessons. I used this to understand how teacher learning was playing itself out in classroom practice. I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each of the participating teachers. The first interview was used to capture biographical information of the teacher as well as the teachers' curriculum experience. The second interview was used to capture teachers' experiences of learning within the school. Data constructed assisted in addressing the critical questions.

My reflective journal was used to record reflections of any conversation that I had with the participants, and that participants had with their colleagues about their learning. I recorded how teachers collaborated, consulted colleagues on curriculum practice, exchanged tips, discussed challenges they met in classrooms, and helped each other solve those problems. The journal allowed me to reflect on these practices, and also to capture the kind of learning that teachers were involved in, whether consciously or unconsciously, documented or otherwise, planned or occurring naturally as teachers sought solutions from colleagues. The process of open coding was used to interpret and analyse data.

1.7 Preview of the chapters to follow

Chapter Two

This chapter provides the broad research conducted on areas that shape this study. It begins with the analysis of the literature on research conducted on curriculum reform and implementation. It also presents literature on the significance of context in teacher learning, (with special reference to teacher learning as situated within the school context) and research-based literature on different models of school based

professional development. It concludes with a reflection on the implications of literature review for the present study.

Chapter Three

In this chapter the conceptual framework that forms the main theoretical framework for this study is presented. A comprehensive discussion of the qualitative design and methods used to conduct research and ethical considerations is provided.

Chapter Four

This chapter provides a presentation and analysis of findings based on the research questions. It begins by providing a thick description of the empirical field and the three teacher cases. This is meant to give an understanding of the school context and teachers' backgrounds as these are likely to have an impact on how teachers learn and might also affect teachers' interpretation and implementation of the curriculum. It then presents data that answers the three critical questions that this study is aimed to address. It concludes by giving an overview of data gathered.

Chapter Five

This chapter offers a synthesis of the arguments developed and provides recommendations that have been derived from the study. It concludes by highlighting areas of research that need further investigation.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an outline of the purpose, scope, rationale and methodology of this research study. It concluded with an overview of the research study by providing a preview of the chapters to follow.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the literature on the relationship between curriculum policy and practice, and professional development in teacher learning.

In this chapter I will:

- Draw on studies in the gap between curriculum policy and practice.
- Discuss the significance of context in teacher learning, by drawing on the literature on teacher learning within the school context.
- Discuss the role of the school in the development of teachers, by drawing on the literature on different models of school-based professional development.
- Discuss the implications of this literature review for my research study.

2.2. Curriculum Reform and Implementation

This study is aimed at understanding how teachers learn in school-based professional development, and how such learning affect teachers' abilities to develop and implement the new Further Education and Training (FET) curriculum. In the discussion that follows I focus on the role of professional development in curriculum reforms, and research conducted on the implementation of curriculum reforms.

Modern curriculum reforms require teachers to make radical changes in their practice. They call for teachers to teach in new ways that are totally different from how they were taught and how they learnt to teach (Spillane, 2000). Therefore teachers need to think in new ways about the learners, subject matter knowledge as well as instructional practices (Putman & Borko, 1995). This has intensified the significant role of professional development in education. The role of professional development does not become just that of nourishing the growth of educators (Glover and Law, 1996) but also that of assisting teachers to transform their roles and improve on their practice (Guskey, 2000; Lesley, Siedentop & Yinger, 2006). This is even more relevant in South Africa where research on teacher practice shows that despite the

change in policy expectations of teachers' roles there is a gap between policy and practice (Jansen, 2001; Mattson & Harley, 2002; Jita & Vandeyar, 2006). It is for this reason that the role of professional development becomes even more important. These findings are important to the current study, as it seeks to study the role of school-based professional development in teacher learning.

Different researchers attribute the disjuncture between policy and practice to various factors. Jansen (2001) theorises this disjuncture as political symbolism. He argues that education policy in South Africa is best described as a struggle to achieve a broad political symbolism which reflects the broader political intentions of the state. In his work, he provides a theoretical explanation based on the evidence from description and evaluation of seven case studies of education reform in South Africa. These case studies provide evidence and elaboration of the theory of political symbolism as an explanation for non-implementation of policy in South African education reform after apartheid. Harley & Wedekind (2004), concur that C2005 was a political project and not a pedagogical project. They note that this curriculum brought together different teachers and different classroom practices under a single administration. This according to them was a clear signal that there will be divided effects in policy implementation. They draw on their own research, that of their students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, as well as insights from a review of publications including the sample of 20 higher degree dissertations. These researchers conclude that C2005 as a political project, has been relatively successful, but, this was achieved at the expense of it as a pedagogical project. C2005 overlooked the harsh realities of South African schools, and this meant that implementation in previously disadvantaged schools proved to be nearly impossible compared to the success it could achieve in previously advantaged schools. The pedagogical project was likely to be better attended by providing support to teachers that would take into consideration the context of each school. In the current study, the issue of context in school based professional development is foregrounded and carefully examined.

Radical changes in the curriculum require a lot from the teachers whose identities are within the traditional approaches which are totally different from those of the new curriculum (Jita & Vandeyar, 2006). This is a compelling reason for failure to implement the new curriculum. This claim is based on the evidence of the study they

conducted on the implementation of mathematics reforms. This study was based on the life history accounts of two primary school teachers. Using the data on contradictions between the reformer's visions, and the teachers' accounts of their lived experiences and identities, these researchers construct an account of why the goals of reforming mathematics in primary school classrooms in South Africa continue to elude even the latest form of reform proposals. They suggest that curriculum reformers should take into consideration teachers' previous experiences, give teachers opportunities to learn and unlearn in the context of the new reforms, and provide time for teacher learning to occur without teachers being compelled to perform and reform overnight. For most teachers, the reason for failure to implement the new curriculum was that the new policy system was not aligned with their personal and professional identities. Mattson and Harley (2002) studied the strategies that teachers adopted to try and make this new system work. These researchers drew on classroom-based research in KwaZulu-Natal, and suggest that the main strategy that teachers use is that of mimicry. Their coping strategy is that of mimicking the western ways so that they look competent. This reflects a broader pattern of mimicry adopted by the state to make South African education in line with that of the western world. This also meant that better resourced, historically privileged schools were more likely to be able to manage the new policies than historically disadvantaged schools. It is for this reason that a standard, uniform professional development programme is not likely to work in the South African context. It is therefore important to look deeply into the school-based professional development and develop programmes that consider the status of the school and serve the needs of specific schools.

Recent classroom-based research confirms the disjuncture between policy and practice (Prinsloo, 2007). He conducted a qualitative study on the perceptions of principals and teachers on the implementation of Life Orientation (LO) programmes in the national curriculum in South African schools. The study focused on the extent to which schools and LO teachers succeed in achieving the outcomes of the LO programmes. Data was collected from principals and teachers in 12 secondary schools in four provinces. Both principals and teachers described barriers, and identified problems they experience in achieving successful implementation of the LO programmes in schools. The main challenge for teachers was their training. They expressed their dissatisfaction of the one to three-day short courses which focused on

the new content and aims of the learning programmes. They criticised the knowledge of the trainers and facilitators from the department of education, claiming that such trainers and facilitators had little training knowledge, and little knowledge of the current conditions in schools and classrooms. The researcher recommended that the focus of the educators, policy makers and the department should be on the training and support of teachers to implement these programmes effectively. In the current study, I examine the extent to which training and support takes place within a school context.

The issue of the gap between education policy and practice is not exclusively South African phenomenon. In Botswana unsuccessful attempts have been made to change teachers' didactic classroom practices (Tabulawa, 1997). He attributes this failure of reform to its failure to recognise the deep-rooted authoritarianism on the part of teachers. He argues that the pedagogical innovations are social constructions influenced by the wider social context. In an empirical study that was carried out in the Department of social studies in a public secondary school, it was revealed that teachers were operating within a pedagogical paradigm that was the opposite of the proposed learner-centred pedagogy. The new learner-centred pedagogies threatened teachers' taken for granted classroom worlds, which were authoritarian in nature. In this study teachers defined teaching as a process of imparting school knowledge and making sure there was sufficient classroom order to make this possible. Learners on the other hand defined learning as a process of gaining knowledge from teachers. He therefore warns that when students and teachers fail to adopt certain innovations, we should not just concentrate on technical issues associated with the innovation delivery system, but also analyse the proposed innovation in relation to the values and past experiences of those upon whom we expect to implement the innovation.

These findings make the role of professional development even more important as it takes into consideration the significance of context. This calls for a clear focus on professional development that will build the capacity of educators with the hope that school reform happens and is sustained over time. The present study looks at how teachers learn in school-based professional development, and how this learning prepares them to develop and implement the new FET curriculum.

2.3. The Significance of Context in Teacher Learning

There has been criticism on the effectiveness of the traditional professional development workshops used to assist teachers to implement the new curriculum in South Africa (Mattson & Harley, 2002; Mokoena, 2005; Moletsane, 2004; Slonimsky & Brodie, 2006). The government has offered ongoing professional development support for teachers to close the gap between policy and practice, and most of this support is in the form of traditional training workshops. Concern has been raised about the success of these professional development programmes, as research shows that although these workshops help teachers to understand and support policy, enacting policy roles is always a challenge (Slonimsky & Brodie, 2006; Mattson & Harley, 2002). Traditional ways of professional development do not offer context sensitive support and rarely serve the specific needs of teachers (Hansman & Wilson, 2002; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). The new curriculum requires teachers to be re-socialised to develop new attitudes, behaviours, and skills, for a radically new role. There is therefore a need for ongoing learning and relearning that should take place on a regular basis that is situated within a specific context. In teaching, context is very important; problems that teachers face change from time to time, recur and need to be addressed as they arise. These workshops might not be useful as teachers need to recognize, examine, and react to the various problems all the time especially if these concern classroom practice. More flexible, creative and cost-effective strategies that are school based need to be developed (Moletsane, 2004).

As mentioned previously teachers' work is context specific. Context in its spatial meaning refers to the organisational and cultural environment in which teachers work. We need to consider the multiple social interactions with colleagues, parents, principals, students; contested norms and values, the culture of a particular school; policy decisions and measures that constitute the political and structural framework. These are all part of the context of the working conditions teachers have to deal with and they affect the way teachers learn and change classroom practice (Mokoena, 2005). It is for this reason that researchers and teachers have made efforts to situate teacher learning within the school context (Fuller & Unwin, 2005; Eick, Ware & Williams, 2003). Traditional ways of professional development have limitations as they do not provide the ongoing, context sensitive support that teachers need to

improve their practice. It is therefore important, that we recognize the importance of schools not only as places for teachers to teach, but also as places for teachers to learn (Smylie, 1995). There is a need to shift the focus from traditional methods of professional development to school-based professional development. Professional development is not a one-size-fits-all, it needs to be planned in such a way that it fits the context in which teachers teach and their students learn (Loucks-Horsley, Love, Stiles, Mundry & Hewson, 2003). The context and the strategy used needs to be congruent for a professional development programme to be a success.

Learning and knowing are situated in specific contexts. For teachers, professional knowledge is developed in context and can be drawn on to be applied in similar future situations. This raises the importance of situating teacher learning within the school context where teachers can use acquired knowledge to improve practice, and be equipped with the skills to solve specific contextual problems. Adler (2002) raises the issue of the theory practice tension, which is about applying what has been taught in theory in professional development workshops to classroom practice. Theory gained from these workshops must be applied in a context of other challenges that teachers encounter in schools such as, dealing with poor-socio economic conditions and AIDS. It is not possible for traditional professional development methods to cover all challenges that teachers are likely to face in schools. This encourages teachers to look for alternative approaches to professional development such as school-based professional development that is context specific (Adler, 2002). Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth (2001) concur as they proposed a model of teacher community in the workplace. They argue that the major difficulty with the outside-the-workplace approach to teacher learning is that, it assumes that it is possible to remove teachers from schools, transform them in other settings, and then return them to the unchanged workplace to battle the unchanged state of affairs. They also argue that these models may change individuals but, they are not likely to have any significant impact in changing the workplace. These researchers call for a vision of professional community that is located within the workplace, one that offers the opportunity for the significant change in both the individual, and the social setting in which the individual works. They also point out that professional community cannot be generalised; a successful model for one population of teachers may not necessarily work for others.

Thus it becomes important for teacher learning to be situated within the school context.

2.4. Situated Learning

Teachers' work is context specific and challenges that face them change from time to time hence they need to be addressed as they arise (Moletsane, 2004). This supports the notion of situated learning. Learning is a result of a social process; it is grounded in people's daily actions and cannot be separated from the multifaceted environment in which it must be applied. Teacher learning is not an isolated activity in which teachers acquire knowledge from an independent body of knowledge, but teachers learn through daily interactions with one another as they negotiate and solve problems. How learning takes place, and the situation in which it takes place becomes an essential part of what is learned (Maistry, 2005). Because learning is situated in a particular physical or social context, the context in which learning takes place becomes very important. It is for this reason that the empirical field for this research study was a school-based professional development programme.

The framework offered by situated learning theory was useful in understanding and making sense of teacher learning, as it occurs in the teacher learning under study. Situated learning theory stresses the importance of context, and therefore supports the fact that learning opportunities should be grounded in environments where problems arise. It asserts that individuals need not be separated from their community or environments when taught, as learning involves developing practices and abilities in specific communities (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2003; Buysse, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003; Maistry, 2005). Learning is not seen as an acquisition of knowledge by individuals, but as a process of social participation. The nature of a situation therefore is seen as having a significant influence on this process (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Buysse, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003). In his work Wenger describes the purposes of a community of practice as that of increasing and exchanging knowledge, and the development of individual capabilities. People participate through sharing of knowledge and ideas about their common practices. It is through this participation that members develop deeper understandings (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). The focus of this theory of learning, is on learning as social participation. This

participation includes being active participants in the *practices* of social communities, and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities (Wenger, 1998). This theory integrates the four components necessary to characterise social participation as a process of learning and knowing. These components are:

- Meaning: a way of talking about our (changing) ability – individually and collectively – to experience our life and the world as meaningful.
- Practice: a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action.
- Community: a way of talking about social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing, and our participation is recognizable as competence.
- Identity: a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities

(Wenger, 1998, p.5)

This is particularly important in this study as situated learning has potential for teacher learning, especially in the South African context, where teachers are expected to be developed to implement the new curriculum in extremely diverse school setting.

There is a need to understand knowledge and learning in context, as situated learning involves people being full participants in the world and in generating meaning. It is for this reason that Lave & Wenger (1991) stress the significance of belonging to communities of practice. A community of practice consists of a group of people who spend time together, helping each other solve problems by sharing information and giving each other advice (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Learning is seen not as located in the heads of individuals but rather in the process of co-participation. In the communities of practice, there is a strong emphasis on participation-focused approaches such as, in-school mentoring, in addition to in-service training workshops conducted outside school (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2003). This view of communities of practice fitted well with this study as it helped me to understand the teacher learning processes that took place in school-based professional development. This study involved teachers learning within the school context as they interacted with one

another on an ongoing basis, and in the process helping each other learn. These teachers were in pursuit of a shared learning enterprise commonly focused on finding strategies to cope with developing and implementing the new FET curriculum.

2.5. Teacher Learning within the School Context

Research into teacher learning within the school context is rare in the South African context, but international research on teacher learning reveals a strong drive to situate teacher learning within the teachers' classrooms, and school sites. This approach has merits in that teachers' learning is intertwined with teachers' ongoing practice (Maistry, 2006). There have been studies on situated learning in teacher education, which regard context as an imperative in teacher development (Eick, Ware & Williams, 2003; Fuller & Onwin, 2005).

Jennings & Swan (2002) describe a qualitative study investigating the Capital Area Technology and Inquiry in Education (CATIE) model of situated professional development for technology integration in school and classroom. Learning was situated in the sense that educational technology experts were placed in schools on an ongoing basis. They collaborated directly with teachers and helped them to design technology-enhanced lessons. These technology experts taught teachers in real settings in real classrooms. As compared to this kind of professional development, traditional in-service had had little impact on this. New methods of professional development that focus on the development of local cultures of interest like this one have proved not only successful, but sustainable. These researchers attribute the success of the CATIE model to the fact that it reaches out to the teachers in the physical and social context of their practice. They highlight three conceptual themes of situated learning which resonate well with the current study: Firstly that learning is situated in a particular physical and social context. Teachers would learn well in a school context where they learn through practice and also where they can solve problems as they arise. Secondly that learning is social in nature. Knowledge is obtained from, and applied in, everyday situations. School based professional development would allow teachers to learn and apply learned knowledge and still get a chance to reflect on ways of knowing. Finally, that knowledge is distributed from an individual to the others. People learn from their actions and the actions of others. In a

school context teachers may learn from their practice and also from the practice of other teachers.

In his work Krueger (2004) gives a review of Peer and Assessment Review (PAR) programmes. The author draws heavily on the PAR programmes in New York. The PAR programmes allow for the individualised planning of a teacher's professional development. Individual strengths and weaknesses are identified and addressed on site with the benefit of someone willing to serve as a leader, who gives feedback that is both directive and positive. Evidence gathered shows that PAR programmes have potential for improving the overall quality of teaching and ultimately schools. It gives educators an ownership of their profession and makes them responsible for the course the professional development takes. Clark (2001) points out that one of the reasons why teachers are not keen on formal professional development programmes is that they are never involved in the planning and organisation of these programmes. In most cases they are not even consulted about their needs so decisions are made for them and not with them. Teachers' involvement can be accomplished by engaging them in experiences that promote teacher collaboration with colleagues within the school, as teachers need to be agents of their own learning and that of their colleagues.

In his work on district leaders' perceptions of teacher learning, Spillane (2000) examines the nature of teacher learning as employed by district leaders. He identified and defined two perspectives. The first one is a situative socio-historic perspective, which stresses that individuals cannot be separated from the environments in which the knowledge learned will be used. This is because learning involves knowledge that allows an individual to participate in a particular community. It is for this reason that learning opportunities need to be grounded in places that are meaningful to the students. The second one is the situated perspective, which sees teachers playing an active role in their own learning. It allows teachers to learn together by challenging, confronting and questioning one another in a positive and professional way. Teachers did not only understand reform ideas but also implemented these reform ideas through classroom practice. As a result they were able to solve problems that arose in the process.

These studies will inform the current study which seeks to understand the role of professional development that is situated within the school context, and whether this helps teachers to implement the new curriculum.

2.6. School-based Professional Development in the Context of Appraisal

When education reforms were introduced in South Africa the Department of Education issued a series of policy initiatives. In the midst of these reforms the department felt that it was important for them to ensure that the effective development of teachers happens. Part of this development was to be done within the school. This came through as part of the appraisal system. The purpose of appraisal is performance measurement for developmental purposes. Middlewood (2003) states that in the 1990s in England and Wales the main purpose of appraisal was the growth and development of individual teachers. He refers to the purpose of appraisal as threefold:

- Developmental: for professional satisfaction
- Accountability: to fulfil professional obligation
- Entitlement: to enable teachers to know how they are performing.

(Middlewood, 2003, p.128)

Appraisal of the performance of teachers has been used to enhance the quality and effectiveness of schooling (Middlewood, 2003; Motilal, 2006). The facilitation of the developmental part of appraisal in a school helps teachers with the identification of their professional needs, which assists in setting up targets that will result in facilitating the school's developmental plan (Bell, 1988; Middlewood, 2003).

Appraisal combines not only accountability but also support for development. Accountability is to be fulfilled by combining individual teacher's targets which stem from teacher needs. All these are incorporated into the school development plan. In this way teachers' needs are met by development which will improve teacher practice and improve the overall quality of teaching and learning.

In South Africa the first initiative of appraisal was the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS). DAS is described by Mokoena (2005) and Motilal (2006) as an instrument for teacher professional development aimed at enhancing teacher competency, and accordingly the quality of education. However, it was not to serve its

purpose. In his study Motilal (2006) investigated the implementation of the DAS in a primary school in KwaZuluNatal. His findings suggest that appraisal will continue to be a contentious issue at the school level. He further states that neither DAS nor any new system will solve problems at school. The success of any initiative will depend on how it is implemented in specific schools. He also states that appraisal is the beginning of a larger trend and that this larger trend will ultimately bring about changes in education through development and ongoing improvement in teaching and learning.

Mokoena (2005) conducted a study on how the implementation of government policy on teacher appraisal influence the way teachers strive to learn and change their practice. His findings suggest that DAS worked totally against what it stood for. The teachers viewed it negatively, they found it difficult to ascribe learning to their DAS experiences. This was as a result of the largely negative experiences of the policy implementation. Context also contributed to the disjuncture between understanding and practice in terms of teacher development, in particular teacher learning. The assumption that all schools are equal led to unequal consequences. Teachers from different contexts responded differently to the implementation of DAS. DAS according to Mokoena (2005) limits change for teachers especially in the area of professional development. It was evident that the department underestimated the complexities of teacher professional development which was to be realised through the DAS policy.

DAS was later replaced by the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) in South Africa. The IQMS was adopted after long negotiations between teacher unions and the state (Motilal, 2006). This was because the unions were not happy with DAS, which they viewed as only for accountability and evaluation. They wanted accountability to go together with the development of teachers. This is what the IQMS has tried to address. The IQMS is viewed as a policy that provides a platform for school-based professional development of teachers that is based on the needs of the teachers (Motilal, 2006). This is because the purposes of IQMS include assessing the strengths and areas for development and providing support and opportunities for development to assure continued growth for teachers (ELRC, 2003). The IQMS allows for a professional development programme for the teachers by the teachers.

One of its guiding principles is that it promotes individual professional growth of educators, and ongoing support for educators and the school. It requires the schools to have a staff development team (SDT) which coordinates all activities pertaining to staff development (ELRC, 2003). This senior management team (SMT) also has an important role to play in the development of teachers, as the principal is the compulsory member of the staff development team. It allows for collaboration amongst teachers, and also for schools to become places where teachers can learn.

In his work Mokoena (2005) states that when DAS was implemented teachers were not willing to be appraised. With the IQMS they are more willing, but, the only reason was that of the performance measurement that is linked to salary progression. The objective that IQMS is also for providing professional development is now lost. His findings reveal that teacher appraisal fails to influence teacher learning. He recommends that a complex process such as teacher professional development and learning requires:

- A well structured, coordinated and well supported teacher professional development programme.
- Linking teacher appraisal, teacher learning and practice for the appraisal to have an effect on classroom practice.
- Providing optimum opportunities in which teachers can learn and thus improve the quality of education.
- Considering various resource contexts and environments in which policies unfold.

(Mokoena, 2005, p.184)

In his article Weber (2005) makes an analysis of the IQMS using discourse analysis. He identifies and discusses three discursive tensions. One of them is the politics of accountability and the development of human resources. He identifies areas in the policy that are problematic and that might affect the implementation process. The first one is that although the IQMS was as a result of a compromise between teacher unions and the department of education on the issue of accountability and human resource development, the contradiction between the two is problematic. These two opposites exist alongside each other, and it is not clear how it will be resolved in

practice. Secondly, the structures required to implement the IQMS are undemocratic. They have marginalised two groups and their representatives. These are the learners and the Learner Representative Council (LRC), and the parents and the School Governing Body (SGB). This undermines the important role that these groups play in the teaching and learning process. The teams chosen to monitor the process enforce the existing hierarchy of control and line management within the school. Finally the IQMS does not provide for any substantive role for the democratically elected structures in deciding the development, improvement, and the future of public schools.

These studies will help us to understand the role of school-based professional development in the context of an appraisal system in South Africa that make it compulsory for schools to have staff development teams responsible for school based professional development.

2.7. School-based Professional Development Models

There have been a number of research studies done on dynamic approaches and professional development models that are school based and which promote interdependence and cooperation amongst teachers. These help in serving specific needs for the school. Guskey (1995) points out, the uniqueness of one setting will always be a significant factor in education. What works in one school might not necessarily work in another school. The teaching and learning process is a complex activity that is rooted in contexts that are highly varied. This makes it difficult for professional developers to come up with one universal answer to specific problems. This new school-centred approach to professional development encourages teachers to work together with their colleagues, learning with, and from them in their school communities, as well as reflecting critically on their daily practices, and developing their capacity to understand complex subject matters (Xu, 2003). One of the critical questions in this study is to understand the nature of school-based professional development in this school. This part of the essay will consider a wide range of literature on school-based professional development models.

2.7.1. Coaching

This model is when schools employ full time or part time coaches to develop teachers on an on going basis within the school context. These coaches work together with the teachers and principals observing their work, offering critiques and models of effective practice. They stay within schools over time, helping principals and teachers meet new challenges as they arise (Veenman, Denessen, Gerrits & Kenter, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). In school-based coaching learning is predominantly skills-based (Kennedy, 2005). Neufeld and Roper (2003) provide a guide to using coaching as an approach to professional development. The information they used to compile this guide came from their involvement in the evaluation of school reform in Boston, USA which included coaching in all of its district's schools; observation of the coaching strategy used in other districts; and examination of literature on coaching. Their analysis of this approach to professional development is also based on longitudinal qualitative studies of coaching in four states in America. For over six years they conducted in-depth interviews with coaches, teachers who work with coaches, principals and administrators; observed coaches in action; and did an analysis of documents related to coaches' work and literature on coaching. Their findings show that it has not yet been proven that coaching increase students' achievement, but they explain that this could be attributed to the fact that coaching is not yet broadly implemented, so there is no hard data linking it to student achievement. They provide clear evidence though that coaching increases the instructional capacity of schools and teachers, a known pre-requisite for learner performance.

2.7.2. Mentoring

Mentoring is commonly defined as 'a close, intense, mutually beneficial relationship between someone who is older, wiser, more experienced, and more powerful, with someone younger or less experienced. It is a complementary relationship... built on both the mentors and the protégé's needs' (Jeruchin & Shapiro as cited in Bullough & Draper, 2004, p.407). There are many schools that have opted for mentoring programmes where experienced teachers become mentors to new teachers, as well as struggling veteran teachers. These teachers provide support, observe and make

recommendations, and based on those observations, share materials and ideas to improve practice (Krueger, 2004; Bullough & Draper, 2004; Shulman, 2004). Although they are both school-based, mentoring is different to coaching in that the mentoring model involves an element of counselling and professional friendship, rather than just skills-based. It also promote one to one collaboration between two teachers (Kennedy, 2005). Luneta (2006) conducted a study to investigate mentorship and its relevance to professional development for teachers of maths. This study involved four teachers who were involved in the mentorship programme that included training in teaching practicum supervision and guidance for student teachers of mathematics and neophyte mathematics, teachers' induction. As much as they acknowledge the fact that their mentees improved on their practice as they changed from being good teachers to being excellent teachers, mentor teachers also acknowledged that as they trained in mentorship and engaged in the supervision and guidance of student teachers, they were in fact involved in continuous professional development that sharpened their instructional skills. Mentorship assisted these teachers to re-conceptualise and reflect on their instructional skills and critically evaluate their teaching strategies, as they interacted with student teachers, and neophyte mathematics teachers. This holds true to the fact that mentoring ought not to be about mentees' growth and development only, but about the mentors' professional development as well (Bullough & Draper, 2004).

2.7.3. Collaboration

There has also been a significant trend of collaboration between schools and universities which has seen the emergence of professional development schools (Rice, 2003; Crocco, Faithfull & Schwartz, 2003; Levin & Rock, 2003). Collaboration is defined as a situation in which people work together to promote change. This is a compelling approach to teacher education, which sees partnerships between secondary schools and universities, where universities help the schools to deal with their educational issues concerning the curriculum and classroom practice (Rice, 2003). This is usually done through action research, which allows teachers to ask critical questions about their own practice, and provides an alternative to the passive role of teachers as is usually the case with traditional professional development models (Kennedy, 2005). In their study (Levin & Rock, 2003) look at what happened when

five pairs of pre-service and co-operating teachers engaged collaboratively in planning, implementing and evaluating action research project to improve their practice during a semester long experience in their professional development school sites. They use the multiple case study design to understand how the experience of collaborative action research is similar and different across five cases. In four of the five cases participants found that the action research project helped them to develop a meaningful relationship that allowed them to engage in dialogue about their teaching and learning.

2.7.4 Communities of Practice

Kennedy (2005) raises the significance of the communities of practice framework in the professional development of teachers. This framework involves rethinking learning from an individual mind to a process that take place through participation, where people learn through their actions, and those of people around them to improve practice not through planned learning. One of the central beliefs of the communities of practice framework is that knowledge is situated. Because learning is situated in a particular physical or social context, the context in which it takes place becomes very important (Buysse, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003). Context is a very important concept in research on school- based professional development. Maistry (2006) conducted a study that examined how the essential tension between curriculum development and deepening subject matter knowledge is managed in a teacher learning community of novice Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) teachers. He states that as a model of professional development in education, the communities of practice framework recognises that knowledge is generated and shared within a social and cultural context. Although there is no research done on the communities of practice as formed within the school context, research conducted on this stresses the importance of context in teacher learning. This indicates that there is potential in forming communities of practice within the school context.

These studies will be relevant to my study as I seek to understand the nature of school-based professional development in this school.

2.8. Conclusion and Implications of the Literature Review

The review of literature offered the foundation for the present study by exploring parts of professional development in education that are relevant to this study. What emerged from this literature review is the information that will enable us to get a deeper understanding of this study. Information gained on the literature review includes:

- Education reforms and the challenge of implementation.
- Reflection on the significance of context in teacher learning.
- Discussion of the role of the school in teacher learning.
- Reflection on the existing research on school-based professional development.
- The school-based professional development models and its impact on teacher learning.

The literature reviewed shows a gap in the case studies on school-based professional development in South Africa, and a gap in studying school-based professional development that is not planned for research purposes. The present research study will look at how teachers learn in school-based professional development and how such learning prepares them to develop and implement the new curriculum.

Chapter three focuses on the theoretical/conceptual framework, research design and methodology of this research study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The chapter gives a comprehensive discussion of the theoretical and conceptual framework, methodological orientation and research design, data collection instruments, and sampling and procedures for attaining access and acceptance.

3.2. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

3.2.1. A qualitative study

This study sought to understand how a group of teachers learn in school-based professional development. It explored how these teachers gave meaning to, and expressed their understanding of themselves, and their experiences of professional development within the school context. A qualitative approach was effective as it allowed me to study these teachers in their natural setting. The distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research are that, it studies phenomena in its natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) and it stresses the significance of social and cultural context in situating different meanings and interpretations (Yates, 2004).

This study was guided by the principle of an interpretive framework. An interpretive framework has potential as it requires going into the participants' natural setting and experiencing the environment in which these participants create their reality (Radnor, 2002). It also regards all human action as meaningful, and as interpreted and understood within the context of social practice (Usher, 1996). It is based on the belief that it is not only by observation that knowledge is constructed, but also by explanations of people's intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning making and self understanding (Henning, 2004). This approach resonated well with my study, where my intention was to find meaning within social interactions, and where I foregrounded context as a significant factor that influences human behaviour. In this study both myself as a researcher, and the research participants were viewed as

interpreters, another of the significant characteristics of interpretive research. It was for these reasons that an interpretive approach was adopted for this study.

3.2.2. Symbolic Interactionism

Since human interaction and context are important in the qualitative interpretative study, the tenets of Symbolic Interactionism were drawn on to guide this research study. Symbolic interactionism is often used by qualitative researchers as they explore phenomena in its natural setting. It involves interpretive research that is concerned with how people see things, and how they construct their meaning (Henning, 2004). Symbolic interactionism originated within the social psychology discipline. It seeks to find common symbols and understandings that emerge to give meaning to people's actions.

There are three principles that govern symbolic interactionism. Human beings give personal meanings to things, and act towards those things on the basis of these meanings. These personal meanings that human beings give to things are developed from the social interaction that they have with other people. These meanings are negotiated, maintained and adopted in an interpretive process (Ward, 2003). This research study was guided by these fundamental Symbolic Interactionism principles. In this study this approach was used as I was trying to understand the process of human interaction, as it focuses on the meanings, actions and interpretations derived through social interactions.

Symbolic interactionists also believe that meaning is never fixed. It always changes when people get new knowledge or learn new things from their social context. This, as a result, affects the way people interact with one another (Ward, 2003). It focuses on the nature of how individuals interact and how the society is changing their interaction. It is about understanding social action from the perspective of social actors. The social context in which all this change occurs becomes very important (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

The concepts of symbolic interactionism that were relevant to this study were context and strategies. Drawing on the work of different symbolic interactionists, Maistry

(2005) gives a brief discussion on these concepts. Although context refers to situation or scenes of action, individuals draw their own definition of context from their personal interpretation of what appears to be real to them. A good example of this is that schools may have a range of different contexts and people have shown to have different interpretation of them. Contextual factors were very important in this school based research as they played a significant role in influencing teaching and learning. Schools have varied contexts and situations and different people interpret these differently. A closer look at the context helped me to understand how the teachers in this school defined and interpreted their actions. Strategies refer to ways of attaining goals. They are pedagogical means formulated by teachers to deal with challenges they meet in their work. These challenges may include inadequate resources, large classes, organisation of the school. Educational reforms force teachers to adopt strategies that will allow them to work. They develop a range of strategies that continually change depending on the nature of the situation.

Drawing on the work of Woods(1983), Maistry (2005) reveals that teachers' coping strategies are significantly influenced and affected by the situation caused by the school context which is made up of both external and internal factors. The external factors could be the curriculum and the social background of the learners. The internal factors could be physical setting, material structure of the classroom setting, biographical factors (social status and cultural perspectives) of teachers, large classes, and lack of resources. These coping strategies represented responses by teachers to situations caused by the contexts of the classroom and the school.

3.3. Research Design

There are selections of different approaches to research and each of these has a different research design. A research design is a plan of how one intends to conduct research. It determines what a researcher will look at, how data will be collected and how it will be analysed (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). This study drew on the principles of a qualitative case study design.

3.3.1. Selection of a case

A case can be an individual, a group, an institution or a community (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Gillham, 2000). In this study, the empirical field was a secondary school and it is for this reason that a case study approach was adopted. The decision to study a school was influenced by the nature of the critical questions (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). This study sought to understand how teachers engaged with school-based professional development programmes, and the knowledge they gained from these programmes and teachers' subsequent abilities to develop and implement the new FET curriculum.

The principles of case study relevant to this study are that:

- It provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles.
- It establishes cause and effect ...it observes effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect.
- Contexts are unique and dynamic, hence case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance.

(Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.181)

The school had to be that which had a planned school-based professional development programme. The intention was to study the professional development programme and any other situation or incident that informed teacher learning within the school. The school selected was a secondary peri-urban school in KwaZulu-Natal.

The choice of a case study methodology, articulated well with the theoretical and conceptual framework used in this study as it stresses the significance of context in teacher learning. In a case study phenomena are studied within a bounded system in its real life context. It allows the researcher to focus on the interaction between context and action (Henning, 2004). In this study teachers were studied within the school context with events occurring naturally where boundaries are clearly defined.

3.3.2. Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting research participants (Henning, 2004). After careful thought I opted for purposeful sampling. This refers to a process where the researcher chooses participants who are likely to be information rich with respect to the critical questions being posed by the research study (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005). I had to keep in mind that the criteria of selecting a case is that ‘it is important for a researcher to first begin by ‘identifying the boundaries of the case, breaking this down into ‘key players’, ‘key situations’, and to focus on what have been described as ‘critical incidents’ in the life of the case itself’ (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p.319). Purposeful sampling was important in this case as the school was characterised by internal personnel differences with regard to the operation and functioning of the school. For years the school had operated with two different camps within the school. There were two staffrooms for both groups with the Senior Management Team (SMT) belonging to these different camps. The boundaries on these camps were so intense that friendship across camps was regarded as a betrayal and members were keen to show loyalty to their respective camps. This meant that sampling had to be strategic. It was important for me as a researcher to convince key gatekeepers of the importance of my research project so that they could grant access (Maistry, 2005). I identified a Head of Department who looked influential. With his help I selected six teachers. My choice was based on current involvement, that they are teaching in the FET phase and are participating in professional development programmes as well as adequate time and availability (Babbie & Mouton, 2002).

A total of six who were selected agreed to participate in the study. I successfully conducted initial interviews with all participants. However, as the research process progressed three teachers withdrew from the study. The first teacher to withdraw was moved from teaching Grade 11 to teaching Grade 12, this meant that I could no longer work with him. The second teacher got a promotion in another school. I used my discretion to withdraw the third teacher whose actions showed that she was no longer interested. The three remaining teachers were interviewed and also observed in class. Working with only three teachers then allowed me time and space to go deeper with them.

3.3.3. Data collection

In this case study I assumed the role of an insider researcher; this is when a researcher has a direct involvement or connection with the research setting (Robson, 2002). This means that I was part of the context that I was trying to understand. As a teacher in the school where the study was conducted, and as a member of the school's professional development team which was responsible for developing and organising professional development programmes for educators, it was clear that I assumed the role of an insider researcher. It was crucial for me to give serious thought to how I managed this role, as in a qualitative study, the role of a researcher is of great significance because a researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Henning, 2004). This called for a special kind of relationship with my colleagues, one that involved developing and maintaining existing relationships, establishing trustworthiness, and developing mutual respect in order to gain access to the data (Maistry, 2006). This meant that I had to be sensitive to their needs and allow them to have some control of the process, even if it means continuous rescheduling of planned activities.

The process of collecting data proved to be very challenging. The research process constantly challenged my existing research skills. I had to continuously adjust and adapt my strategy as unexpected situations arose. I had to constantly develop my research skills by reading literature on research. Furthermore, I sought advice from peers and my supervisor. The extent of this challenge was not expected as there seems to be a romanticised idea, that social and educational research is a smooth process that is planned, carried out and conclusive findings are presented. However, this is misleading (Maistry, 2005). In many of the theses that I have read, there seems to be little or no mention of the hardships that researchers go through during the research process as researchers prefer to document these in research articles or research papers. This gives a false impression that if research is well planned it will run smoothly. Another reason I am capturing my whole experience is because I have positioned myself as a reflexive qualitative researcher who is painstakingly documenting the research process (Usher, 1996). This allowed me to detail the whole research as it unfolded, as well as the stumbling blocks and the breakthroughs. It further allowed me to capture details of how I influenced the research process, and how the context has influenced me. It is for these reasons that in this part of the chapter I have decided to

capture my whole experience of data collection, including the challenges that I had to overcome despite a well planned research.

3.4. Methods

In a case study, a researcher seeks a range of different kinds of evidence within the case setting. This evidence has to be collected, compared, verified and integrated to give the best possible answers to the research questions. A single source of evidence is not likely to be sufficient. The use of multiple data collection methods, each with their strengths and weaknesses, is a key characteristic of case study research (Gillham, 2000). It is for this reason that in this study three methods of data collection were used, namely, observations, interviews and a reflective journal.

3.4.1. Observation

At the core of the case study research, is observation. There are two types of observation that could be undertaken by a researcher in a case i.e. participant observation and non-participant observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In this study both were used. When a researcher takes the role of a participant-observer she becomes involved in the same activity that she is observing (Gillham, 2000; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). The researcher inquires into the site where they either live or work, observing while fully participating (Henning, 2004). This allows the researcher to keep her eyes and ears open, noticing things that under normal circumstances she would not notice. As an insider researcher who worked in the school and was also part of the professional development team in the school, I engaged in most activities that I observed. The advantages of participant observation are that a researcher is able to establish ongoing behaviour as it occurs, and is able to make appropriate notes about its significant features (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In this study I assumed this role to look at the nature of teacher learning in school based professional development. I had planned to observe professional development sessions, specifically looking at the style, facilitation, teacher participation, material used, content, duration, organisation, and any relevant occurrences that would answer my research questions. In the first professional development session at the beginning of the year the school decided to choose a

professional development team of which I was a part. All the teachers agreed to have a professional development session the first Friday of the month. All the dates were recorded in the school's calendar, and we recorded two per term. The first session did not take place and it was postponed to the following week because of the memorial service for one of the teachers in the school. The following week it was cancelled because it fell on the same day as a beauty contest in the school. In term two, more disturbances occurred and we never had any professional development session until the end of this study.

When it became clear that the school was not going to stick to the pre-planned (supposedly official) professional development programme, I had to find other ways observing of how teachers learned within the school. I began to observe teachers' behaviour on an ongoing basis, and looking at any unplanned form of learning that took place amongst them. This was when teachers consulted, collaborated, solved problems together in any situation that arose in their classroom practice, discussed issues related to curriculum practice. This was prompted by one of the history teachers who, when she heard that I was a history teacher in my previous school, would come and ask for advice and share her frustrations. It then became our 'thing' to meet and discuss issues and I learnt a lot from her as much as she learnt a lot from me. This made me realise that there were different ways in which teacher learning was happening within the school. I began to observe similar behaviour in teachers. I also began to observe how teachers were supporting and developing each other within departments. The department meetings, whether formal or informal, appeared to be the vehicle that was driving teacher development at the school. This was when teachers from the same department were helping each other by sharing ideas, information, as well as resources. There were formal department meetings initiated by the heads of departments in which I was allowed to sit and observe. All these observations were recorded.

Non-participant observation was also used as it works well if used in addition to participatory observation (Henning, 2004). In classroom observations I took the role of a non-participant observer, where I sat at the back of the class writing observations about the activities as they unfolded during the lessons (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). I used this to determine what teachers learn from the school-based professional

development and whether there was any degree of transfer to the classroom practice. Although the observation schedule had a list of things that I wanted to focus on, while using this schedule I captured critical incidents in observation. These recordings formed part of the field notes.

Gaining access to teachers' classrooms proved to be challenging. It is important for researchers to bear in mind that negotiating access is not a once off experience. It is a process that demands continuous re-negotiating and strengthening (Maistry, 2006), especially when gaining access to teachers' classrooms. Negotiating access to teachers and their classrooms demanded extreme patience as teachers offered various reasons for postponements of appointments. There were instances where they seemed irritated with me, and were not keen to having someone in their classrooms. I had to go through a long process of rescheduling, reorganising and renegotiating with my participants. At the end I observed all three lessons. The fourth participant refused to let me inside her classroom. She postponed three times at very short notice. The last time she postponed, she told me that she was not feeling well and had to go home early which she did. After several failed attempts to secure another appointment, I then made a decision to withdraw her from the study as this was beginning to interfere with our relationship.

3.4.2. Interviews

If we want to understand why people do what they do, we need to ask them, as asking takes us to the realm of meaning. Interviews help us get the meaning that people give to the social situations in which they find themselves (Radnor, 2001). It is also important to note that even though interviews are useful and reliable methods of data collection, participants sometimes use them to create desired identities (Walford, 2001). It is for this reason that triangulation between methods was used in this study. This is the type of methodological triangulation that involves the use of more than one data collection methods in pursuit of a given objective (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

The interviews in this study took the form of semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews are the most valuable form of interviewing in a case study

research and if done properly they can produce very rich data (Gillham, 2000). Structured interviews allow little freedom for a researcher to make any modifications in the interview schedule, as they are characterised by closed situations whereby content and procedures are planned and organised prior to the interview. Contrary to that, semi-structured interviews are characterised by open situations where the researcher enjoys greater flexibility and freedom (Radnor, 2002). The characteristics of semi-structured interviews are that they attempt to establish rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. They allow the interviewer to create an atmosphere where an interviewee talks freely and is clearly understood. They ask questions that encourage participants to open up about attitudes, thoughts and feelings. They also allow flexibility, where a researcher is free to follow the participants' interests and concerns (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Radnor, 2001; Yates, 2004).

Before conducting initial interviews a draft interview schedule was piloted with a colleague. This allowed me to check my interview skills, as interviewers are expected to engage in different tasks which include: following the schedule, being flexible, asking questions, keeping track of the flow of the conversation, taking notes, listening and importantly maintaining the required face (Yates, 2004). Piloting allowed me to reflect on my schedule and my own interview. It made me realise that interviews require considerable thought. I therefore decided I will do one interview a day and allow myself time to transcribe before conducting the next interview. All first interviews were conducted at school and took about thirty minutes each. None of the interviews were conducted on scheduled dates as there were disturbances and postponements.

The first interviews were used to capture biographical information of the teacher, as well as the teachers' curriculum experience. The questions required participants to give details on: family background; schooling experience; pre-service training; professional development; and views, knowledge and professional development on the FET. Six teachers were interviewed, this took more days than initially planned, because I had to make sure that my relationship with the teachers was to a point where they were comfortable with sharing information that they would not normally share with a colleague.

The second interviews were used to capture teachers' experiences of learning within the school. At this stage of the research process, I was working with three participants. The smaller number of participants allowed me more time and space to go deeper, and get rich data from the remaining participants. Case studies are viewed as an in-depth study of interactions of a single instance, so the issue of numbers for a case study is meaningless (Opie, 2004). The second interviews were delayed. The teachers' strike that lasted 31 days meant that the interviews that were scheduled for term two were to be conducted during term three. This is the busiest term especially in secondary schools, because it is when teachers are finalising the syllabus, and preparing learners for preparatory examination. I had to exercise a lot of patience and felt like I was asking for too much from these teachers whose first priority was to teach. Eventually I interviewed two participants. The third participant stated that he was under pressure to finish work because he was teaching Science, and did not have time to spare, preferred to provide written responses and have a short discussion with me for any clarifications. As a researcher I was in a dilemma as to whether lose this rich data or allow this, and record the conversation in my journal. At the end I chose to do the latter.

There are no set rules for transcriptions (Walford, 2001), so I made a conscious decision to personally transcribe all of the interviews, word for word on the same day of the interview while the process was still fresh in my mind. This allowed me to begin the initial process of analysing.

3.4.3. Researcher reflective journal ✓

The use of a reflective journal enabled me to document changes in teacher thinking. As observation was the main tool of data collection in this study, I had to write field notes. This was essential to keep track of the phenomena under study, as keeping track of everything is central to good research practice in qualitative research (Yates, 2004). This reflective journal helped me to analyse complex situations, comparing and contrasting actions, and interpreting relationships (Germaine & Alfred, 2005).

My journal was used to record reflections of any conversation that I had with the participants, and that the participants had with their colleagues about the new

curriculum. The information recorded was very helpful in answering the first critical question. I recorded how teachers collaborated, consulted colleagues on curriculum practice, exchanged tips, discussed challenges they meet in classrooms, and helped each other solve those problems. The journal allowed me to reflect on these practices, and also to capture the kind of learning that teachers were involved in, whether consciously or unconsciously, documented or otherwise, planned or occurring naturally, as teachers sought solutions from colleagues. The journal also allowed me to capture my thoughts. This included my fears and frustrations. This proved to be a very challenging exercise for me because I am not used to documenting personal thoughts. I have never kept a diary, so to me the whole practice was new and it required getting used to. As I began to write more I felt comfortable with this and enjoyed it. ✓

3.5. Ethical Considerations

3.5.1. Gaining access

After the school was identified I negotiated access to the school. Access to the school was not a problem as I worked there, and the principal was keen on the whole process. A letter was sent first to the principal, which clearly explained the nature of the study. I had to keep in mind that gaining access to the participants has a major influence on the relationship that a researcher has with them, it also influences the way they respond (Yates, 2001). Gaining access to participants in this study was something that required a strategic plan. This is because this was going to determine the support I would have from my participants. It was important for me to choose an influential person, someone who was admired and respected by most teachers. Participants were chosen, and letters which stressed the status of participation were given to them.

3.5.2. Informed consent and confidentiality

In this study the specific moral and ethical issues that were considered in terms of the participants were informed consent, deception, right to privacy and right to withdraw (Yates, 2004). Teachers were given letters that they took home to discuss with their families. These letters gave a full explanation of the nature and purpose of the

research. The letters given to teachers assured them of confidentiality and anonymity. These letters clearly stated that data will be treated with strict confidentiality and used for research purposes only; and that the school, principal and teachers will not be named. This was meant to encourage teachers to give rich data that they would not give otherwise (Maistry, 2006). Many of my question involved exploring curriculum knowledge of the participants. This is something that teachers will not be willing to share under normal circumstances especially if it means admitting lack of knowledge in something that they are expected to practice. My participants displayed incredible honesty as they felt comfortable speaking about their lack of curriculum knowledge. This was because I created an environment in which they could express opinions without feeling uncomfortable or exploited (Yates, 2001). This was done through continuous assurance that matters discussed will under no circumstances, be discussed with other people. Participants were also informed that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time. This means that participants gave informed consent (Henning, 2004).

Ethical issues allow a process of building relationships with the research site. In my study, as an insider researcher, it was a case of rebuilding relationships on an ongoing basis. I was also mindful of not compromising ethical principles which is usually a case in educational research (Maistry, 2006). Although it was an inconvenience, and a drawback for my study, I had to withdraw one of the participants. Through her actions it was clear that she was not comfortable with my observing her lessons, even though she did not verbalise this. As soon as I did this our relationship went back to normal.

3.5. Conclusion

The chapter has provided a discussion of the theoretical, conceptual framework, and the methodological orientation, and research design. It also presented the data collection instruments, sampling and procedures for attaining access and acceptance.

Chapter four presents an analysis of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a presentation of empirical data that was collected to answer the two critical questions that guided this case study i.e.

- What is the nature of school-based professional development in the context of an FET school?
- How does school-based professional development inform teachers' practice?

This data was generated through three methods of data collection i.e. semi-structured interviews, observation and a reflective journal.

This chapter begins by providing a thick description of the empirical field and narrative vignettes of the three research participants. This will help to develop an understanding of the school context, and teachers' backgrounds as these are likely to have an influence on how teachers learn. They may also affect teachers' interpretation and implementation of the curriculum. Following this is a presentation of data of the nature of school based professional development at this school, staff development programme, department meetings, and strategies that teachers used to support their development. It also provides an analysis of the teachers' curriculum practice. It concludes by giving an overview of data gathered.

4.2. Understanding the empirical field

4.2.1. Description of the school

In order to understand teacher learning within the school, we need to understand the school context. Context refers to the social, organisational and cultural environment in which teachers work. These are important as they affect the way teachers learn and

change classroom practice (Woods, 1983). The school has been given a pseudonym for the purposes of anonymity, as required for ethical considerations.

Ithembaletu Secondary School

Ithembaletu is a secondary school located in an African township just outside Durban. It was classified as a section 21¹ school. Learners also paid school fees of R300 per child. It had an enrolment of one thousand two hundred and seven pupils which was made up of five hundred and eighty five boys and six hundred and twenty two girls. It had a teaching staff of forty which was made up of the school principal; two deputy principals (academic and administration); five heads of departments for science, humanities, technology, languages and commerce; twenty eight permanent post level one educators and four temporary post level one educators. It had a non-teaching staff of seven which consisted of two school secretaries, one permanent and one governing body paid; two school cleaners, one for indoor cleaning and the other for outdoors; and three security guards who alternated day and night shifts.

The school had classes from grade eight to grade twelve. Each class had an average class size of sixty pupils. These pupils came from different backgrounds. About ten percent came from middle class families; these had parents or guardians who were professionals. About ninety percent came from low or no income families. These ranged from unemployed to state grant funded parents or guardians and those who earned self-generated incomes from informal employment. The school was situated not far from a former men's hostel. About thirty percent of the learners lived in this hostel and had previously lived in a rural area.

The school had three sets of building that were built at different times in the school's history. Extensions to the school were currently underway. The school was

¹ Section 21 of the South African Schools Act, 1996: It states that all schools classified as Section 21 schools receive a lump sum, per-learner transfer for the payment for which they have responsibility. School governing bodies in these schools may deal directly with suppliers and contractors for the relevant budgeted items in accordance with standard procurement procedures (ELRC, 1996)

surrounded by a concrete fence. Although it had two gates, for security purposes, only the main gate was used. This gate had a, next to it, a small 'room' for a security guard who attended to visitors to the school. The main gate led to a tarred car park that could accommodate forty vehicles. Two parking spaces were provided for drivers with disabilities. This car park led to the two floored administration building.. The main door to the building led into a foyer that had a waiting area and the secretaries' work area. In the waiting area there was a huge school banner, and wooden benches. On the wall there were photographs of important events in the history of the school. These included pictures of dignitaries who had visited the school. There were also three framed school achievement awards on the walls. Behind a short wall was the secretary's work station which had two chairs, two computers, a fax machine, telephone, printer and bookshelves. On the left was the principal's office which was air-conditioned, large and spacious. This office was also equipped with a desktop computer, printer and telephone. Next to the principal's office was a room safe and a printing room that housed two large photocopying machines. On the same floor were two offices for both the deputy principals. These were also equipped with telephones, computers and printers. The school had a kitchen and a television viewing room. Three offices were available for heads of department. The school had a large, spacious staffroom with tables, chairs and cupboards for staff. However, only about half the staff members regularly used the staff room

The oldest building which was there in 1960 when the school opened was still in good condition. It consisted of classrooms with chalkboards and ceiling fans. The school also had a fully equipped woodwork room and home economics room. The home economics room had a big office. This was used by the staff which preferred not to frequent the main staff room. The newest building had offices for head of commerce and head of humanities department. There was also a small cafeteria where learners bought sandwiches and drinks at break time.

The school had a new media centre which was officially opened in 2007. This centre housed the new school library that was still in the process of being developed. Some library books were donated to the school. Most of them came from an independent school for boys that worked in partnership with the school to develop the library. Inside the media centre there was the teacher librarian's office, two unused

classrooms with whiteboards and an air-conditioned computer room which had fifteen computers.

The school atmosphere was that of friendliness. As soon as you enter the school you are greeted by friendly members of staff and you feel accepted and welcome, until you are exposed to the inside politics. The principal was a quiet and shy person who allows his friendly character to interfere with his ability to manage the school. During the school hours and in the presence of management, teachers spent time in the staffroom and classes were left unattended. Learners were seen walking about the school during lesson time. It appeared as if the social conditions within the school had left the teachers with very low morale. For years the school had operated with two different camps within the school. There were two staffrooms for both groups with the Senior Management Team (SMT), including the principal, belonging to these different camps. This made management of the school challenging as the principal had a group he regarded as 'friends', this made it difficult to discipline them. There was the other group that went out of its way to provoke the principal by not doing work, something he resorted to ignoring. The school appeared to have adopted a culture of tolerance and acceptance of this situation which seemed to be regarded as 'normal' by the whole staff.

4.2.2. The three cases

Teachers' biographical details and experiences are important as they affect teachers' ability to understand the new curriculum, and to eventually implement it. It was important to know who these teachers were, as this was likely to influence their dispositions towards learning. The intention was to understand what choices they made about their own learning and development within the school. These biographies will help us understand why, and how, learning takes place because learning and change are situated in teachers' own biographies. The data presented here is from the initial interview which was aimed at eliciting biographical information of each participant. The intention was to gain a deep understanding of the participants' backgrounds, and to later analyse whether this had shaped their responses to the school-based professional development programme. This was important as this study has sought to understand how a group of teachers give meaning to and express their

understanding of themselves, and their experiences of school-based professional development. I will now discuss the three teacher cases.

Cebo

Cebo is a Science teacher at Ithembaletu secondary school. He grew up in a rural area where he completed his primary education. Because he came from a poor family he regarded that part of schooling as a struggle. He later moved to the city where he finished matric. He went to a teachers college after his matric results failed to earn him enough points for admission for a medical degree. Although he finished his teacher training in 1997, his teaching career only started in 2002. He taught Science subjects in a rural school for five years. He later moved to Ithembaletu Secondary School to join the Science department.

Cebo speaks fondly about his schooling experience. In the following extract of an interview, it can be seen that his schooling experience influenced the way he taught.

R: Do you think your experience of learning has influenced the way you teach?

Cebo: A lot, a great deal because you know in the rural setting the schooling was the teacher and the book of course there were other teaching materials outside the school but you had to dig that for yourself as a learner. Probably in content subjects where a research has to be done than a rural setting is the best one because you are close to nature different kinds of trees, animals, rivers etc.

R: But specifically how does that influence the way you teach now?

Cebo: It actually had an impact because the more as a learner you are finding out information on your own relating to what you have been getting in the classroom it fulfils a lot, that's where the real learning takes place. I also encourage my learners to find information themselves.

Kwenele

Kwenele is a Travel and Tourism teacher at Ithembaletu Secondary School. He has taught in both rural and township schools. He was raised by his mother who was a nurse. From primary to secondary school he moved to eight different township and

rural schools. He took up teaching because his mother could not afford to send him to university to study law. He found himself in college studying to be a teacher. He believes that his schooling affects the way he teaches now. When asked about the way he was taught these were his responses.

Most of the time it (teaching) was teacher centred. Teachers would give you information and ask you a little bit for the feedback maybe in the questions or maybe in the class work and home work. This was not good, it made us not to think for ourselves, they thought we were not capable of thinking for ourselves.

His response to how his teachers have influenced the way he teaches was:

Yes there were good teachers and there were bad teachers. I remember this history teacher who was very good....I take a lot (from him) because he used to even when he is teaching it was like he was telling us a story not just may use information from a book he use to come up with so many ideas. He also allowed us to share our ideas and stories.

Zama

Zama is a Computer teacher at Ithembalethu Secondary School. She comes from a middle class family. Her father was a successful business man and her mother was a housewife. In her twelve years of schooling she moved six schools. She has worked as a temporal teacher moving from one school to another for over seven years, and has worked as a permanent teacher for the last two years. She has taught both primary and secondary school children, and has taught in urban and township schools. She became a teacher after a very bad experience with the hospital matron when she went to train as a nurse.

When I went for self application the sister tutor eh the way she treated me she chased me out from her office like a dog then I decided that day that I will not become a nurse.

She stated that she was very passionate about children and enjoyed working with them. She believed that her teaching was influenced a great deal by teachers who taught her. She tried to emulate her good teachers. She shared good memories about one of her high school teachers.

Zama: I liked the way she (Mrs X) addressed the class and the skills, methods she used. She just give topics and ask us to go trough the topic, to sit in groups, to find out about the topic to explore and to come in front of the class and present, that is where I even learn the (what can I call it?) the English language. I also do the same with my learners by allowing my learners to work in groups and present all the time so they can get used to working on their own and also to the language since we are not the 'model C' schools.

All three teachers showed varying schooling and family backgrounds. What was common amongst them was that they believed that their schooling experiences affected the way they taught in a positive way, and this might affect the new curriculum implementation process. In their teaching experience they had been exposed to different contexts. The teachers also have varying qualifications as shown in Table 4.1.

NAME	GENDER	AGE	TEACHING EXPERIENCE (SCHOOLS & YEARS)	FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS	CURRENT STUDIES
Cebo	M	35-40	-Rural Secondary School: 5 years. -Township Secondary School: 1 year	-HDE: 4 Year Diploma -National Certificate in Industrial Electronics	Not studying
Kwenele	M	25-30	-Township Secondary School: 1 year -Rural Secondary School: 2 years -Township Secondary School: 3 years	-STD: 3 Year Diploma	Not studying
Zama	F	35-40	-Township Primary School: 1 ½ years. -Township Primary School: 2 years -Urban Primary School: 1 year -Urban Primary School: 1 year -Township Secondary School: 6 months -Urban Secondary School: 1 year -Township Secondary School: 1 year	-PTD: 3 Year Diploma -HDE: 1 Year Diploma -BED Honours (Technology): 1 Year Postgraduate	Diploma in Environment and Community Development

Table 4.1: Teachers' general background

4.3. What was the nature of school-based professional development at Ithembaletu Secondary School?

In the previous section, a description of the school context and the participating teachers was presented. This would help us to understand whether there is a relationship between the school context and the nature of school-based professional development. This will also assist in determining whether teachers' experiences influence their understanding of school-based professional development, how they learn and whether what they learn inform their curriculum practice.

The nature of school-based professional development in the school was varied. Data gathered indicated that in the school there are diverse approaches to professional development.

4.3.1 The Staff Development Programme

The school had their first professional development workshop at the beginning of the year which was for team building and annual planning. This was a two day workshop which covered team building and annual planning. On the first day the school invited a former principal of an effective school to share his 'secret of success' with the teachers. He shared his experiences of successful teaching and his strategies of effective school management.

Extract from the report of observation of the Staff Development Weekend: 09.02.07 – 11.02.07

Venue: Holiday Flats, 100km away from the school.

Purpose: Team Building, a weekend away to restore spoiled staff relations and promote team work and also for annual planning.

1st Day:

A motivational speaker was invited to address the staff for the whole day. He was an ex-principal who now worked as a private motivational speaker for schools. The whole talk was a one man show with rare interruptions when teachers asked for clarification. He touched on issues like: school management, the role of the principal, deputy principal and HODs. He was sharing qualities that make a

good manager, using his past experiences as a principal of an effective school. He also shared his achievements as a young English teacher including his qualifications. He talked about the importance of a language policy and stressed that fluency in English is the best thing you can give to a child as a teacher. The facilitator took the form of story telling as his method and dwelled mostly on his experiences as both a teacher and a principal. I also noted and this was confirmed when I had a chat with him that the flip charts that he was using as notes had been used before and he uses them every time he conducts these sessions.

Although the teachers remember this staff development weekend they could not recall the specific topics that this person talked about. They only referred to him as just someone who was there but not someone they learned from. When teachers were asked about this experience these were their responses:

Cebo: During that weekend someone from outside a former principal who is now a motivator motivated us on team building and roles of management. He talked a lot about his experiences as a principal of a successful school which I think helped management.

Kwenele: The only thing we were doing was planning for the year. We went there for a weekend but the only thing we were doing is planning for the year. Someone was invited from outside to develop us how to do our work during the school.

Zama: There was a motivational speaker from outside who was motivating us trying to make us to be aware of some of the things and also to prepare us for the new year. Yes it was a team building thing.

They seemed to remember more about the second session on the next day. On this day a staff development team was chosen which was to organise school-based professional development throughout the year and they looked forward to that.

Extract from the report of observation of the Staff Development Weekend: 09.02.07 – 11.02.07

2nd Day:

Annual Planning: Selection of committees that ensure the running of the school in all areas e.g. cleaning committee, exam committee, entertainment committee, staff development committee etc.

Staff Development Team:

The selection of the Staff development Team was also done, it took the staff more time to choose this committee compared to other committees. This team consisted of two SMT members, the principal and deputy principal; and four PL1 teachers. Two of the PL1 teachers were new in the school. There was a short deliberation on the frequency and duration of these sessions. Teachers came with different suggestions ranging from every week to once in two months. All teachers eventually agreed on once a month (which worked out to be twice a school term) on every first Friday of the month. They all agreed that this team will work in consultation with the teachers in planning for all development sessions. All teachers agreed that they would leave the content of the development sessions open as these would depend on the teachers' needs. This is because, teachers said, these cannot be predicted and they depend on the different challenges they experience on different times of the year. There was a lot of enthusiasm and teachers were very positive about this and expressed that they were looking forward to this experience.

One of the advantages of situated learning in teacher development is that it gives educators an ownership of their profession and makes them responsible for the direction the professional development takes (Krueger, 2004). In their first staff development session of the year all teachers took part in selecting members of the staff development committee. The whole staff decided on the dates and duration of the sessions for the whole year. The staff development committee, it was agreed, would then consult with the teachers and plan the development programme. The programme was to be based on the specific needs of teachers. This was to be a 'contextualised' planning of teachers' professional development. The strengths and weaknesses would be identified and addressed on site with the benefit of the staff development committee which was meant to direct, guide and support the whole process. There was to be an ongoing consultation with the teachers so as to create a culture of collaboration and mutual acceptance, and responsibility for the staff development programme.

The school had a staff development timeslot set aside that all teachers agreed on. The development team organised and planned for the first development session. This was in response to the needs that were identified as important at that time. However, implementing the staff development plan proved to be challenging. In the initial planning, there were several distractions that made it difficult for the plan to

materialise. There were unplanned incidents that made it difficult for the planned programme to materialise.

The following extract from my journal dated 28.02.07 reflects on the meeting of the staff development team.

After several attempt to find a suitable date for the first meeting of this team we finally settled on a date and time where all of us were available. Unfortunately for other teachers especially management other things came up and they could not attend this meeting. Out of the six teachers who were in this team only two teachers turned up for the meeting. We decided to go ahead and plan because we were running out of time to plan for our first professional development session which is a week away. We decided that a lot of teachers needed guidance on Portfolio development this is what that session will cover. Another reason was that there was to be a visit from the 'district' and usually the first thing they ask for from the teachers is the portfolios. Our planning was detailed in terms of how the session will take place. We identified teachers who are good in this and those who went on training for this and decided they will be used. We also decided on the time, space and divisions. I later had a chat with these teachers and they were happy to help.

The following extract is from my journal entry dated 30.03.07

Unfortunately this session that was planned for was never done. It was postponed to the following week because of the memorial service of one of the teachers who had worked in this school. The following week it had to be cancelled because all teachers wanted to attend a beauty pageant for the learners. The week after that was the beginning of end of term assessment so that was it for the staff development for this term.

In this school the work context was not conducive to teacher learning. Staff development appeared not to be a high priority on this school's agenda; the result was that it was easily lost in the school calendar. An example of how other issues took preference over staff development was when the school opted for holding a learners' beauty pageant, instead of running a staff development session that was scheduled for the same day. The days set aside for staff development came and went and nothing happened. The negative views that teachers held about the staff development

programme is reflected in the comments below. When asked if the school has a professional development programme they expressed their views as follows:

Cebo: Yes it was initiated but never took off from the ground. At the beginning of the year we went away for a capacity building weekend. A committee was chosen and the school planned to have staff development sessions at least twice a term but nothing was ever done, nothing so far. There was a good plan for the year but it never materialised it was just theory.

Kwenele: To tell you the truth it is not working much because we were developed once which means we are not updated with the new things that are coming up. I am not happy with the professional development programme that's not happening right now at our school. This year we've done the staff development that was in February where this committee that was to develop us was chosen and help us with some new ideas that was going to help us to be up to date about the new curriculum but nothing happened.

The school had a staff development team as required by the IQMS policy. This team consisted of the principal, deputy principal and four PL1 teachers. With regard to the work of the staff development team, teachers concurred that this team was not functioning as it was originally envisaged. The school did not have development sessions as planned at the beginning of the year. The dates set aside for this were not used. These teachers attribute this to lack of organisation on the part of the staff development team, lack of commitment from management, as well as the fact that there were divisions amongst the staff. It seemed as if the relationship that management had with teachers affected the way the staff development team worked. The working conditions for teachers did not allow for an environment that was supportive of school-based teacher learning by teachers within the school. This became a stumbling block. The teachers revealed the following sentiments about staff relations and the role of management.

Cebo: Yes, if working conditions are not nursed, coordination could lose focus. There is a lot happening in this school in terms of staff relations, there is too much differences amongst teachers. This needs to be addressed because if teachers are not getting along well together nothing will ever be done successfully, not even with good intentions.

Kwenele: I think the commitment from management as well as the people that were chosen to develop us they are not committed so as they can help us to develop. I think they (management) are the ones who should make sure that we implement what we planned there they must implement it they must tell us do this right now and make sure that committee that was formed is doing its job because right now they are doing nothing there is nothing that they are doing.

Zama: Looking to the school as a new educator in this school I have been assessing that there are hiccups in the school there is no link between management and the teachers. The school is divided so that leads to the lack of doing the work properly. It was the right idea to include PL1 educators in this team but the only thing is that the PL1 teachers are ready to do the work but management will tell them that 'right now we are doing something else that is required by the department' or whatever that is where they get disturbed.

Other teachers in the school also shared similar feelings on how staff relations affect the work of the staff development team.

The following extract from my journal dated 30 August 2007 reflects the feelings of teachers on the non-performance of the staff development team.

I had a chat with four teachers from four different departments in the school about their views on the staff development team. They all expressed their disappointment on the lack of organisation from the staff development team. They were also very worried that when they were doing appraisal the previous year they all had certain challenges that they hoped the SDT will help them to overcome through development. They are about to be appraised again without proper development so they will probably be affected by the same weaknesses like last year. They feel that IQMS actually requires them to be developed so they felt let down by the SDT as they felt that this will affect their classroom practice as they are carrying on making the same mistakes. They felt that management is accountable for lack of development. Three of them believed that the SDT was not performing because of the bad relations and division amongst the staff. One mentioned that if in the workplace there is bad relations it is not possible to work as people guide against bias and victimisation. One of them also said it is not easy to offer help because people will feel undermined. Even if they (SDT) organise something some people might try to spoil that by criticising or not turning up, this has happened in the past.

The teachers raised an important issue of the IQMS which is viewed as a policy that supports school-based professional development of teachers depending on their needs of the teachers. This is because the purpose of IQMS includes assessing the strengths and areas for development, and providing support as well as opportunities for development to assure continued growth for teachers. This policy advocates school-based professional development as it requires schools to have a staff development team that will arrange for continuing development of teachers. This development team should, as required by this policy consist of members of the senior management team. The IQMS suggests a professional development programme for the teachers that teachers themselves are supposed to help develop. In this school this aspect of the IQMS was obviously ignored.

The senior management personnel that were part of the staff development team cited different problems concerning organising staff development within the school. Although they thought that teacher development was important, they found that there were many factors that made this difficult to happen.

The following extract from my journal dated 21 August 2007 reflects on a conversation with managers in the SDT.

The deputy principal mentioned four problems that make it impossible for them to organise development.

- **Attitude:** Teachers have a negative attitude about development, they associate this with the IQMS and this was not received well by teachers.
- **Staff relations:** Teachers do not feel that someone within the school knows more than them and can arrange development for them.
- **Time:** There is no official time allocated for school-based development so it becomes very difficult to plan especially because teachers are always busy with one thing or another. And also that you cannot force them to stay after school.
- **Lack of department support:** There should be both internal and external development. When managers cannot develop you then somebody from the department should come and do it. Even the internal one should be monitored somehow by someone from the department as it will never be successful if it is left just for the teachers.

The principal on the other hand was not comfortable discussing this but eventually shared his views. In our conversation it

became clear that he associated development with the IQMS. He believed that outsiders would do development better because they will know what to do. He also said that the IQMS (appraisal) is a long process so it is almost impossible to include development especially because there is nothing and nobody who monitors this. No one does a follow up and check if schools do the developmental part of the IQMS. What most schools and also his school concentrate on are the appraisal scores as these have to be submitted.

The principal associated teacher development with the IQMS. He saw it as an extension of this. It is for this reason that it was not prioritised. He was more concerned with the technical aspects of conducting the appraisal and writing a report. Follow-up teacher development did not appear to be an issue that he took seriously or even considered. The IQMS suggested that schools take responsibility for their own teacher development. as a result, there was no input or intervention from the department of education.

Data gathered suggest that the context in which teachers work determine how teacher learning played itself out. It further reveals that teacher learning is affected or influenced by various factors including staff relations, and commitment by management. In this school the work context did not provide opportunities for teacher learning. It was affected by several other issues that appeared to cloud and prevent any structured teacher development from taking place.

4.3.2. Where did teachers learn what they needed to know?

In the absence of a functional school-wide staff development programme, an alternative form of teacher development was occurring at this school. Members of the same department had developed a strategy of learning together. This took the form of teachers working together with their colleagues, learning with and from them, reflecting critically on their practices, and developing their capacity to understand complex subject matters. They did all this within their respective departments.

All seven teachers were present (Teacher A-G) including the HOD who chaired the meeting. When the meeting started the HOD circulated the agenda and teachers read and signed it. The first part of the meeting was about the syllabi. All teachers present were asked to give reports on how far they were with their work. If not yet finished they should provide plans for catching up. Some teachers were proud to say that they had finished and were now revising for exams. Other teachers shared their frustrations of challenges they encounter as they tried to ensure effective teaching and learning these included lack of textbooks, time is wasted by writing notes for students; poor attendance by learners; lack of commitment from the learners and the slow system of photocopying used by the school. Other teachers together with the HOD offered advice to the teachers who were struggling with their work. They suggested morning lessons and Saturday lessons, the use of new photocopying machines. As teachers complained about issues that affected their teaching and solutions were discussed. The HOD also promised to raise some of these issues to the SMT meeting and seek advice from them.

The second part of the meeting was addressing the high failure rate. The HOD gave teachers a report on the recent visit to the school by a team from the district. This team was not happy about the fact that learners are failing. They recommended that the school need to change for better. He explained that in their department the problem was mostly with Maths so the HOD proposed a meeting for Maths teachers. This is because Maths is the most failed subject and this has great impact on the results. They all discussed the breakdown of Maths results which was a concern. They all suggested a date for a meeting to discuss this issue and the HOD asked teachers to come with solutions.

Next was reflection on June Results. On this issue Maths teachers were excluded from commenting because they have a meeting coming up. The main problem was the high failure rate. The HOD asks teachers individually for solutions starting from Teacher A to Teacher G. Teachers suggested that a supporting task team which will include teachers, learners and parents should be formed to discuss issues that disturb teaching and learning. This solution got support from most teachers. They should all work as a group follow up on all discipline cases reported. HOD told his teachers that they should be exemplary, and should have a uniform method of discipline. If this is a success all departments will follow suit. HOD suggested another meeting to address issues raised on discipline. Another teacher raises absenteeism as a concern. She shares with the rest of group that she marks the register for every period. This would be discussed further on Monday.

HOD encouraged and motivated teachers to try harder.

In this meeting, discussion was made of issues surrounding effective teaching and learning. Teachers shared concerns and solutions to specific problems. The main objective was to raise teachers' performance by finding ways to deal with challenges or issues that teachers encountered which affected their teaching. It allowed teachers to discuss specific problems and solutions that are relevant to their context.

Extracts from the observation report of the English department meeting dated 27.08.07

All seven teachers were present including the HOD who chaired the meeting. An agenda was read and teachers were asked to make additions but none were made.

The first part of the meeting was about the reflection of the previous meeting. This would help teachers to reflect on their planning and also see if they implemented all that was planned at the beginning of the year. This include plans on how filing will be done, daily preparation to be reflected in teachers' portfolios, continuous assessment (CASS) to be submitted monthly on the first Monday of the month.

The second part was addressing learner performance issues the reflection of 2007 results. The HOD reminded teachers that a tool to measure teachers is learner performance. The main problem that the department was facing was a high failure rate in languages. The HOD asked teachers to give reasons for the high failure rate and they can all help each other with suggestions on how results could be improved.

Teachers took turns in citing problems that led to the poor learner performance. These included lack of books, teachers found it very difficult to teach a language without books; large classes which made it difficult to monitor learner performance and to give learners individual attention. With the help of the HOD teachers offered each others advice in dealing with the issues raised.

The third part was about Continuous Assessment (CASS). They reflected on their January meeting. The HOD reminded teachers of commitments they made at this meeting which they were not honouring. These included honouring lessons, giving learners extra activities and having up to date portfolios. The HOD handed out the NCS Assessment Guidelines for Languages and reminded teachers to stick to the official requirements when assessing learners. He gave them a good example of assessing large classes that can help to

boost learners' work. A short discussion on CASS followed. The HOD confirmed that all teachers attended the NCS workshop on assessment. Teacher C raised the fact that the workshop did not help 'no gain and no benefit' but he gets help from colleagues. The HOD tells them that the new teachers in the department is an ex-facilitator so they can use her for any information. He reminded the teachers that the role of teachers is also to educate each other. Him as an HOD can learn from teachers and teachers can learn from HOD. He cited the IQMS that teachers need to be workshopped in areas where they need help. Anyone can do that as long as they are capable.

The next discussion was on curriculum issues like teacher portfolios, learner portfolios and setting of exam papers. Due to time (end of breaktime) meeting had to be adjourned. HOD did a recap of the whole meeting especially CASS and filing. The meeting was adjourned.

The HOD played the main role in this meeting. Teachers were free to discuss challenges they meet that affect the teaching and learning process. They helped each other address these issues and found solutions together. The HOD reminded teachers of the importance of learning from each other, promoting collaboration. A discussion of specific issues like portfolios and exam papers was also done.

In these meetings teachers were free to discuss issues concerning their teaching. These meetings provided an opportunity for teachers to renew their knowledge, share ideas and discuss matters those which were relevant to their personal teaching contexts. They also provide a venue for new learning of both the subject matter and pedagogical practices. The HODs initiated these meetings and although they had an agenda to guide the meetings, the direction that these meetings took was, as data shows, guided by the teachers' contributions to the meeting. This kind of process recognised and valued knowledge that was generated, and shared, within that social and cultural context. It involves rethinking learning as forms of participation, where people learn from each other. In these meetings there was discussion on the challenges that teachers faced in teaching their subjects, and ideas to overcome such challenges were considered and discussed. The head of the discipline appeared not be the sole provider of ideas. Teachers willingly contributed to discussions and appeared to be genuinely concerned about assisting their fellow colleagues' work, through personal teaching dilemmas.

The following extract from my journal dated 17.08.07 reflects on the conversation with the head of science.

Today I had a chat with Mr X on how he manages and develops his teachers. He told me that, as a department, they do have meetings sometimes formal and sometimes informal. If there is information about the new developments in the curriculum or in different science subjects that he wants to share with his teachers he calls them for a quick meeting. He has developed such a close relationship with his teachers that if he calls a meeting they all turn up. For an example when the new assessment guidelines came he gave the teachers copies and they had a short discussion on these for clarity and also to address any questions that teachers had. Usually they all contribute in answering questions that they have. After a couple of weeks they also met to discuss any challenges brought by these assessment changes so that they can all help each other. Before exams he makes sure that he calls a formal assessment meeting where they discuss assessment criteria. After exams they meet again to reflect on the exam process and discuss results. He is quick to stress that he does not give them the impression that he knows everything but that they are all in the process of learning.

This community of teachers consisted of a group of teachers who spend time together, helping each other solve problems by sharing information and giving each other advice. Learning, in these departments, is seen not as located in the heads of individuals, but rather in the process of co-participation. These meetings involved teachers learning within the school context as they interacted with one another on an ongoing basis, and in the process helping each other learn.

When I interviewed Cebo, a science teacher, he shared the same sentiments. He spoke of the department meetings as gatherings where teachers help each other learn.

Within the school in department meetings, we share ideas, hopes and information on different subjects. We develop each other because we discuss about conditions under which we execute our duties. Ideas and experiences are shared and some hindrances are cleared. Whenever information is gathered means to cascade the knowledge and skills are made available, in the form of report backs from workshops, seminars and meetings. In our meetings we share information that we gathered from workshops for planning, assessment etc.

This not only indicates that in these meetings teachers are afforded an opportunity to share ideas and solve each other's problems but also that they get an opportunity to share information they gain from outside school professional development.

The school had a school-wide approach to staff development but because it was not working well, staff development took place at the level of departments. However, some worked better than others. When these two teachers were asked about professional development within departments these were their responses.

Zama: We do not even meet in our departments to discuss curriculum problems. We have only met once as a department where we were discussing how we were going to assess our learners, the activities that we were going to give our learners and the excursions but all that was never done.

Kwenele: In our department the only meeting we had was at the beginning of the year, and then it was the only meeting that we had. It is now August, it is very unprofessional because if you are professional you must make sure that you have meetings, you collect the files and lesson plans. Right now I do not even have lesson plans because no one is checking them etc. There are so many problems that we have in my department.
In that meeting we discussed about the scheme of work, dates to submit lesson plans, the assessment but there was nothing specific about the NCS.

Although these teachers were not exposed to a formal school development programme, opportunities for professional development appeared to come from other less formal sources. Teachers had developed strategies to advance their personal development.

4.3.3 What strategies did teachers use to support their development?

The teachers in this school had developed unique strategies to advance their own professional development, and to develop competence with regard to the expectations of the new curriculum. These strategies enabled them to deal with challenges they encountered in their daily work as teachers. Teachers often engaged in informal collaboration with key individuals who were regarded as knowledgeable about the issue with which they needed assistance. This happened when teachers initiated their own learning by seeking advice and also offering advice to colleagues. They did this

within the school, where advice exchanged was relevant to the challenges they meet within the school context. Teachers worked together with individual colleagues or groups of like-minded colleagues.

When one of the teachers was asked if other teachers in the school have contributed to his learning this is how he responded.

Cebo: Yes we help each other with setting exam papers, moderate them, sharing books and ways of teaching. Especially because I am teaching in a township school for the first time, so it is important for me to ask so that I understand what my learners need.

He also believed that he has contributed to other teachers' learning.

Cebo: I have also helped teachers especially teachers who have been teaching for a long time who are not familiar with the new syllabus that comes with the new curriculum.

The challenges of making sense of a new curriculum resulted in teachers developing new relationships with each other. It brought teachers together as they tried to make sense of this curriculum. This promoted collaboration amongst peers. In the conversation I had with the HOD (Science), he emphasised this point by sharing the following information.

Journal entry dated 17.08.07

The HOD said the new curriculum is challenging, he learns a lot from the teachers as much as they learn from him. But he makes sure he reads as much as possible from the documents from the department about the NCS. He said he would not advise people to rely on just one person for advice whether it is a facilitator or subject advisor. Everyone is learning so we all should do it and learn from each other regardless of our positions at work. It is important to identify the strengths in your colleagues and ask for support from them.

Data gathered shows that there is mentoring going on in the school, but that is done informally. Mentoring refers to when experienced teachers become mentors to new teachers as well as struggling veteran teachers. In the context of the new curriculum new teachers can become mentors to a veteran teacher. Mentoring is more than teachers helping each other learn; it also involves an element of professional friendship. These teachers provide support by sharing materials and ideas to improve practice. In this school teachers got themselves closer to individuals who were more

knowledgeable about the new curriculum. They would develop an ongoing professional relationship that involved guiding the other teacher.

Journal entries, informal chat with three teachers from three departments dated 20.09.07

These teachers identified at least one person in the school that they share a professional relationship with. This means, according to them, that that person was someone who usually helped them with their teaching or sometimes just talk about their challenges and stress associated with teaching in this school. One of the teachers was a senior teacher who offers science subjects. She admits that she finds the new curriculum very challenging as she trained more than twenty years ago and she majored in Zulu and Biology. The science she is teaching now is totally different from what she knows. She identified a deputy principal who is well informed and knowledgeable about the new curriculum and made him her mentor. This means that she relies on this teacher for assistance. He has helped her with planning the work programme, lesson presentations and assessment. Sometimes she goes to this teacher to ask for help and sometimes it is that teacher who checks if she has a problem and offer advice if necessary. He also provides teaching material and assists her with experiments.

However, there were teachers in the school who felt that they were getting more outside support than school-based support. Although they received support from other teachers within the school, about general teaching matters, when it came to subject matter and pedagogical demands of the new curriculum in their specific subjects, they sought assistance from agents outside of the school. These extracts from the interviews indicate that these teachers benefited more from professional guidance that they received from outside school than from within.

Kwenele: The only help that I am getting is from the clusters that we go to or you consult teachers from other schools because I am the only one teaching Tourism in the school. In order to get help I have to consult teachers from other schools or call the subject advisor but the teachers inside the school they do not help much. I have got numbers of teachers that are in my cluster. If they have got something or information that has come I call them or they will call me and tell me do this and this like this so that you can achieve what goal. In the school they just give you documents.

In the next extract, the Computer teacher shared similar sentiments. As the only Computer teacher in the school she also relied more on support from her education specialist from the department of education

Zama: Yes there is a difference because in my subject every month we have got workshops from outside with my subject advisor and my cluster from outside. Because sometimes when I am stuck with my subject I have to phone him there and then. If I don't know how to set my papers , as I have said that I am teaching the subject that changes all the time as we know that technology changes every minute so I have to phone them all the time.

However, the same teachers believe that if properly planned and well organised, school-based professional development would be effective as it would address issues that arise within the school. When asked if it was important to develop teachers within the school, they spoke positively about school-based professional development and believed that it was necessary and would contribute to effective teaching. These were some of their responses.

Zama: I think as teachers if we meet maybe fortnightly and discuss the problems that we have in the classes or in our subjects that is where it is easy to identify our problems. That is where it's easy to give advice and helping each other with that.

Kwenele: Yes I think that it can help because as you know teamwork is very important, working together you can achieve a lot because if you work alone sometimes you can do things or you may lack confidence but if you are working together you can have confidence.

These teachers believed that the fact that there was no programme that accommodated all the teachers in the school made them feel isolated. It is for this reason that they relied more on outside support.

It became clear, that in this school, staff development took on different forms. This included a school-based professional development programme, department meetings and individual strategies that teachers adopted to support their development. Although the intentions of the school development programme were good and were accepted by most teachers, they were rather undermined by the realities of the school that

prevented the implementation process. These included the bad relations amongst teachers in the school as well as lack of commitment from management to support school-based development. The problems in the school surpassed teachers' enthusiasm to engage with the schools' programme, and this disturbed the collective approach to teacher learning. This though did not mean that there was no teacher learning within the school. In this school however, teacher learning occurred in ways that are subtle, unplanned and informal. Within departments collaboration was supported. Teachers met regularly and shared their experiences and in the process helped each other learn. These teachers shared ideas under the leadership of their heads of departments. These meetings provided a chance for new learning in both the subject matter and pedagogical practices. Other teachers came up with their own strategies to develop themselves. These included one-on-one collaboration and self-initiated mentoring. Teachers approached, and were approached by colleagues for the purposes of offering each other support. Others assigned themselves to colleagues who were more knowledgeable in the subject that they taught. All of this indicates that the school context plays a very important role in the direction in which school-based professional development takes.

4.4 Development and implementation of the new FET curriculum

One of the critical questions in this study was to understand how school based professional development inform teachers' curriculum practice. This part is intended to explore how what teachers learnt from the different approaches to professional development that they were exposed to in this school improved their curriculum practice. It tries to understand whether what they learnt affected their abilities to develop and implement the new FET curriculum.

4.4.1 Teachers' views on the new curriculum

The way teachers felt about the new reforms in education was likely to influence how they were to engage in its implementation.. Participating teachers had different views on the new curriculum. When asked about their views on the new curriculum these were their responses.

- Cebo:** It's very useful very important I wonder if the old order really thought about it in its regime and time of reign because it is so fruitful. I would say that it was the best decision that the government could take to change the curriculum.
- Zama:** I think is a good thing although there are disadvantages. It is (good) because I do not regard myself in the classroom as a teacher but I am a facilitator. And it allows me to make my learners to explore on their own than giving them everything. Its disadvantage is that it makes us to have lots of paper work than focusing on the learners. So the superiors believe on paper work than they believe on the learners getting knowledge so most of the time is wasted on papers rather than on the learners.
- Kwenele:** I think that this FET won't work in a country because in a country we look at the people, we want skills but this curriculum does not improve skills it's just information from learners they are going to, it's just the same as the old education it's just terms. The only thing that changed is terms and also they have changed the teaching from teacher centred to learner centred. I think this FET is not suitable for our country because we've been fighting for skills we have no skills people from other countries are coming with skills but we do not have the skills.

Cebo believed that changing the curriculum was the best thing that the government did. Zama felt that the new role of teacher and the learner centred approach were positive things about this curriculum, but was not happy about the amount of paperwork and administration that it required. Kwenele was not convinced about the usefulness and intentions of the new curriculum. He did not believe that it served the needs of the country. He pointed out that there had been no substantial change in the FET curriculum as the only change he saw was a change of basic terminology.

4.4.2 What hindered curriculum implementation?

When asked about the implementation of the new curriculum the teachers seemed very positive, but were quick to point out that as much as they understood the new curriculum, when it came to implementation the school context made this very difficult for them. They shared various factors that affected the implementation

process. These were some of the teachers' responses when asked about curriculum development and implementation.

Cebo: In terms of planning yes (I am ready). Planning is about checking what specific outcomes are you really prepared to achieve when you enter the classroom and then what assessment criteria do you use to achieve those outcomes and then at the end it is the assessment part. So it's easy to plan. It's easy to implement in the classroom but if the environment is conducive. In my present school it's really not easy because the teaching aids and the environment becomes a stumbling block just for the first step of the system to take off in the classroom so then we end up mismatching the two. The environment is not conducive. I think it will take some time as well for it to take off.

Kwenele: It is very difficult to implement some of the ideas not all of them. because our classes are not similar to other schools like the ex-model C schools, it is very difficult to implement some of these ideas because teaching 35 learners is difficult but teaching 80 or 90 like in our school it's very difficult to deliver this FET it is impossible. I'll say this FET especially in our school it won't work. The books are not available, it's very difficult to implement something without books, without information. I think even if, even when it comes to our learners I think the environment, our location, this FET is very very difficult to implement in the location because our learners do not even have money to go to a place where they will get information, at home they do not have computers etc. There are so many problems that we have here at school. Oh so learner-centredness is not really that possible. No it's not possible only teacher centred is possible.

These teachers cited problems like lack of resources and large classes as the challenges that affected the implementation of the new curriculum. Zama stated that the conditions in her school did not allow for effective implementation. She felt that problems like lack of facilities and the fact that her learners were not good in the English language made the implementation process difficult. She admitted that she sometimes made changes in her lessons to make them accessible to the learners in her school.

Zama: I can say it is not because the facilities are not enough. How can you have 20 learners that are doing computers whereas there are nine computers that are working and the room is too small for the

learners that means the atmosphere is not good for the subject. If you doing this subject you have to be good in English language so our learners mostly are from the townships, they are not used to the language, although we teach them so now I have to sometimes to look at their level of development. Because sometimes you find that the way the document says is not suitable for the learners that does not mean that if the document says I cannot change it. I can change so that my learners will be able to master the subject. I sometimes change the policy.

According to these teachers the school context, like lack of resources, large classes and the socio-economic background of the learners, affected the implementation process. Lessons observed indicated that the teachers' views and their feelings on the implementation process played themselves out in their classroom practice. When asked about the implementation process of the curriculum, Cebo stated that the environment and lack of resources as a stumbling bloc in the teaching and learning process in this school. He believed that it will take some time before the implementation of the new curriculum is effected in this school. This is clearly reflected in the lesson that I observed.

4.4.3 Teachers' curriculum practice

Professional development means learning by the teacher which becomes visible when there is a positive change in the teacher's practice, knowledge and attitude (Mokoena, 2005). The implementation of the new curriculum demanded that teachers' have a knowledge and understanding of this curriculum policy. Teachers had to interpret the policy so as to be able to implement it. Teachers in this study have had experiences of teaching and learning that have been within the teacher-centred approaches to teaching. These teachers were required to change their roles and act in totally different ways from the way in which they were taught in school. The lesson observed help undertstand whether teachers had adapted to the new teaching approaches that were prescribed by the new FET curriculum. The lesson observations concentrated on the resources, classroom environment, teaching approaches and assessment styles employed by the participating teachers. Table 4.2 gives a broad analysis of these lessons.

	Teaching approach	Assessment style	Resources
Cebo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher was the only source of information. - There was a high level of teacher-centredness - Teacher was guided by the textbook - Lesson proceeded in the same pattern - He used the telling method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He used the question and answer method throughout the lesson. - He used the same type of questioning that required learners to give short answers. - Learners had to make diagrams copied straight from the book - He assisted learners whenever they failed to give the correct answer. - There was no set task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher's textbook - Photocopied notes for learners
Kwenele	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher was the only source of information. - There was a high level of teacher-centredness. - Teacher was guided by the textbook. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He asked the same type of questions that required a one word answer. - He asked questions that required learners to recall information. - He provided the correct answer after the first failed attempt from a learner. - There was no set task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher's textbook - Notes from exercise books
Zama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The purpose of the lesson was clearly defined at the beginning of the lesson. - There was a high level of learner centredness. - She did not spoon feed the learners. - She explored alternative approaches to teaching and learning. - She adjusted to the situation of lack of resources in school and asked learners to bring advertisements. - She was resourceful and innovative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was a variety of questions asked (verbally) from one word answers to discussion. - She used concepts used before and integrated them with this lesson. - She ensured that learners explain these concepts to her. - In the discussion there was an integration of what happens in everyday life and the advertisement discussed. - Worksheet was clear and the instructions were clearly explained. - In the practical task there were different levels of questions given from easy to difficult. - The questions in the practical part were in line with the purpose of the lesson. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Computers - Worksheet - Advertisements

Table 4.2 An analysis of teachers' lessons

4.4.3.1 Cebo's lesson

Cebo had a crammed classroom with 50 learners and 28 desks with learners sitting in pairs in three rows. I was later told by the teacher that some of the learners were absent. At the front there was another desk that the teacher used as a table. There was

a big chalkboard and the only classroom display was a poster of a periodic table of elements. Learners had no textbooks but shared handouts photocopied from a textbook. The teacher was the only one that had a copy of a textbook. There were no other teaching and learning resources.

The extracts in this section are from a report of Cebo's lesson observed on 24.07.07

Teacher began the lesson by writing the lesson topic on the board: Electrostatics (Electric field lines and Intensity). He spends the first ten minutes of the lesson giving a full explanation of electric field lines. He was comfortable and at home and was familiar with concepts and explained them with confidence. He used the textbook to guide his teaching. In between his explanations he used the chalkboard to write the concepts or words that he was explaining to the learners and also to clarify things that he was teaching by writing short summaries. He also used a spider diagram but explained to the learners that he was using a spider diagram so that they would understand but they should not answer that question like that in the exams. At this stage the teacher involved the learners by asking them questions. Learners would check for the answers from their handouts and raised hands to answer. Every time they answered the teacher would write the answer on the board.

The teacher was very formal in his approach. He began by introducing the new topic in a narrative style. No questions were asked of the learners. They simply sat and listened to the teacher speak. He used the board frequently to explain the content he was teaching. He followed the same pattern for the first part of the lesson, that is standing at the front teaching and explaining. It was only very later in the lesson that he began to involve the learners by asking them questions of what he was teaching. He later explained that he did this to make sure that they understood what he was teaching.

The lesson took another form when the teacher was teaching the visual parts, he then encouraged the learners to participate actively in the lesson. More learners became interested and paid attention to the lesson. They worked through the lesson together with the learners using their handouts to draw the diagrams on the board, with the teacher explaining these diagrams to the class. At the end of the lesson learners were given a topic to read to prepare for the next lesson.

Halfway through the lesson learners were much more involved. The teacher asked them to come to the front to make diagrams. They took turns (voluntarily) going to the front to draw on the board. About five learners did this. These learners relied on the teacher for guidance. The lesson was a bit distracted and became chaotic as learners made fun of those on the board. The teacher would plead with them not to disturb the others. When these learners were stuck the teacher would finish the diagrams for them. The teacher explained to the learners about each diagram.

Those learners who were interested worked together, helping each other whenever possible. They enjoyed a good relationship with both teacher and with each other. There were others who preferred doing other things like reading and writing. The atmosphere was very relaxed. The teacher allowed learners to have personal conversations, to leave the room and to even take a nap during the lesson. As a result the class was noisy but the teacher continued to teach.

The teacher appeared to be using a very relaxed style of classroom management. There was too much chatting during the lesson which did not bother the teacher. Amongst his learners there were those who were active participants but the majority was not bothered. Some of them appeared to be listening but did not take part, others looked distracted by the noise, a couple had their heads on the desks and were sleeping. There were other interruptions that the teacher seemed okay with. In the middle of the lesson two learners left the room and on their way out they said their goodbyes to their friends. I was later told by the teacher that they had asked to leave early for some reason that he could not remember. Two learners came in and informed the teacher they were there to pick up the papers from the floor and empty the bin (they were serving punishment by the deputy principal), this distracted the lesson for a few minutes. A learner came to class to ask for choir members to go for practice, four learners left the class reluctantly.

4.4.3.2 Kwenele's lesson

The extracts in this section are from a report of Kwenele's lesson observed on 27.07.07

Kwenele had a large class of 60 learners and there were four rows of 32 desks with learners sitting in pairs. There was no teacher's table and the teacher was standing and

holding a book for the whole lesson. There was a big chalkboard and the only classroom display was a picture of a male celebrity. There was only a teacher's copy of the textbook and learners used notes from exercise books. There were no other teaching resources.

The teacher began the lesson by drawing on the previous lesson. For the first half of the lesson the teacher revised the previous work, he asked questions on the tourists attractions in South Africa. These questions covered Gauteng, Western Cape, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. He used the question and answer method. He would ask questions and learners would give answers and he would write those answers on the board. In instances where learners could not give answers he would provide answers for them (and this happened a lot). Every time the information is written on the board learners would take notes.

It appeared like this part of the lesson took longer than anticipated. The teacher seemed to be enjoying this part. He later explained that it was important for him to make sure that the learners fully understood that part before they could move on to the next part as these were linked. He later introduced the new lesson and used the same teaching approach that he used in the revision part.

He began this part of the lesson by writing the topic on the board: Tourist attractions in the SADEC Region. The first country that was covered was Zimbabwe which he wrote on the board. For the whole lesson the teacher used the question and answer method.

T: What is the capital city of Zimbabwe? (Half of the class has their hands up.)

P: Mbabane (they all laugh).

The teacher corrects her and tells her Mbabane is the capital city of Swaziland.

T: What is the currency of Zimbabwe? In S.A. we use Rands and what are they using in Zimbabwe?

(When no one answers the teacher tells them the correct answer.)

T: Who is the president of Zimbabwe?

P: Mugabe (They all know the answer and give it in unison).

T: Major Tourist Attraction in Zimbabwe?

P: Victoria Falls. (One learner shouts out)

T: In which river can you find Victoria Falls?

(Silence) Teacher provides clues. It's the second largest river in Africa. P: Nile. (One learner shouts out)

T: No! Zambezi River.

T: Another Tourist Attraction is Lake Kariba. What is a lake?

P: A lake is a fish (One learner shouts out)

P: Umfula omkhulu (another learner shouts out) they all laugh.

T: It is a man made dam surrounded by forests.

T: What kinds of tourists use this lake? (silence) Scuba divers and fisherman.

They go on to do two more SADEC countries, Malawi and Namibia using the same approach. To conclude the teacher advised the learners to use the library to study more attractions because they could not do all of them in class.

The teacher enjoyed a good relationship with the learners. Learners were working individually most of the time except when they were sharing notes because some of them had gaps in their notes. The learners enjoyed a good relationship with each other and with the teacher who joked a lot. The classroom was reasonably managed as the teacher ensured that all learners were paying attention. He did not encounter any discipline problems as learners seemed to be enjoying the lesson and were all eager to participate. It seemed as a norm that if learners wanted to answer a question they did not put their hands up but just shouted out. The teacher was very comfortable and displayed good knowledge of the subject.

4.4.3.3 Zama's lesson

The extracts in this section are from a report of Zama's lesson observed on 03.08.07

Although there were twenty learners for this class, there were only 9 in this lesson as the rest were waiting in the other room for their turn. This was because the computer room was too small and only 9 computers were working. There were only 9 chairs. On the wall there were posters of computer keyboards, different types of computers, rules of the computer laboratory (in all four sides of the room). The learners used two worksheets for this lesson. These were crossword puzzles with computer concepts which were given to them during the previous lesson, and computer adverts from newspapers and magazines that they were told to bring for this lesson.

The teaching approach used by the teacher was that of including the learners in all the activities that took place in the lesson. This was from the lesson introduction to the task given.

The teacher told learners to shut down their computers and sit one per computer. She told learners the title for the lesson and asked them to take out the worksheets they were using the previous lesson

and the computer advertisement they were told to bring to class for that lesson.

The teacher sat in one of the computers and told the learners to take their worksheets and gather around her. She told learners to read the instructions from the worksheet. She then clearly explained the instructions and the task. She also showed them a completed picture of how their finished work should look like. She explained the importance of adverts to the learners. There was then a short discussion on the purposes of different adverts that learners see everyday in billboards, magazines, newspapers etc.

The teacher performed the task in her computer with the help of the learners. They went through the worksheet together from the first instruction to the last. During this process she would ask them questions based on the information in the advertisement e.g. price, size, speed etc. Learners were able to describe all of them. She allowed learners to tell her where to click e.g. word art, border, add text etc. As they went on with the task, she asked the learners questions based on what they have done already during this task. They would respond to these questions individually or in unison. They all appeared to be concentrating on the task. The teacher advised them to jot down notes to use when they do the task on their own. They did not bother to do that and promised the teacher that they would remember.

The teacher spent a few minutes finishing the advert as the learners watched. She kept asking if they were still with her and they responded positively. When she finished learners went to their computers to work.

The assessment style used by the teacher was in line with the assessment standards that were clearly defined at the beginning of the lesson. From the beginning of the lesson the learners knew what they were working towards.

Activity: Individual task

The teacher told the learners to get on with work and that if they had any questions, they should put up their hands and she'll go to them. They worked quietly at the beginning. During the lesson about three learners had hands up, she would go to them. She did not want to tell them what to do but led them into remembering what to do on their own. The teacher was walking around the room, she would sometimes identify learners who were stuck and helped them. She left the room a couple of times to check the other group but learners worked the same way as they did when she was in the room. Halfway through the lesson they began to help each other when others got stuck. At the end they all saved their work in a disc and

the teacher promised to print it later in the principal's office as there was no printer in the computer room.

Learners worked together and were helping each other whenever possible. They seemed to enjoy a good relationship with both the teacher and each other. The classroom was well managed by the teacher, she left the room a couple of times but learners continued to work in the same way as when she was in the room.

4.4.3.4 A synopsis of teachers' curriculum practice

There were signs that learning had occurred to all teachers. The nature and the extent of the learning, however, varied with all three teachers. The degree to which what was learnt about curriculum development was used, was strongly determined by the context of the working conditions in school.

Zama's schooling experience, and how she was taught as a child appeared to have shaped her response to professional development. She recalled her favourite teacher who used skills and methods that allowed them to explore topics as groups and make presentations. This, she said, improved her English and also allowed for a learner centred approach to teaching. She went on to say she did the same to her learners. Again her teaching experience, post graduate qualification and ongoing studying was likely to have allowed her to embrace the new curriculum with well developed skills. She had positive views on the new curriculum. The only problem was that the lack of facilities in the computer room and the fact that very few computers were working. Moreover, large classes made the implementation process challenging. But her growing knowledge seems to have allowed her to adjust to a lack of resources and to become resourceful and innovative. She learnt to improvise. She prepared well for her lesson and objectives were clearly defined, and learners knew from the beginning what they were working towards.

Cebo and Kwenele on the other hand were not into ongoing learning. They also had different views on the new curriculum. Cebo believed that the new curriculum was useful. On the contrary Kwenele believed that it did not serve the needs of the country. For Cebo there were signs that learning had occurred because he said that he

was ready to implement this curriculum, but not in that school because the working conditions were not conducive to it. The main obstacles were lack of resources. This was clearly reflected in his lesson where he was forced to resort to traditional methods of teaching (telling method and question and answer method). This was because he was the only one with the textbook and the learners relied on him for notes. He tried to engage learners but could only do that to a certain extent.

Kwenele said that some parts of the implementation process were impossible. This was because of large classes, lack of books, and socio-economic background of the learners. Because of this, he believed a learner centred approach to teaching was impossible. This was visible in his lesson where he was the only source of information and learners only had hand written notes. He seemed to be familiar with the terminology associated with teaching and explained these terms well.

From what these teachers said, they claimed to have learnt. They were trying to do this in class but they failed because of the conditions in school

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter begins by providing a detailed description of the context of the empirical field. The narrative vignettes of the three research participants were also provided. These helped to develop an understanding of the school context and teachers' backgrounds as these were likely to have an influence on how teachers learn, and may also affect teachers' curriculum development. Then a presentation of data of the nature of school based professional development at this school was discussed. Data gathered suggested that the context in which teachers work determined the direction in which school based professional development takes. The staff development in the school was affected by various factors such as staff relations, lack of commitment from management, and various other matters that appeared to prevent any structured teacher development from taking place. In the absence of a functional school-wide staff development programme, members of the same departments developed strategies of learning together. This saw these teachers learning together with their colleagues, reflecting critically on their practices, and in the process helping each other learn. Other teachers in the school had developed unique strategies to advance their own professional development and to develop competence with regard to the expectations

of the new curriculum. These strategies included one-on-one collaboration and self-initiated mentoring. There were other teachers though whose professional development support came from outside school.

The final part of this section explores how what teachers learn from school based professional development, improved their curriculum practice. Although there were signs that learning had occurred to all teachers, the nature and the extent of that learning, however, varied. The degree to which what was learnt about curriculum development was used, was strongly determined by the context of the working conditions in school.

In Chapter five, I provide the synthesis, findings and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

A SYNTHESIS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide a synthesis of the study, outline the findings of the study, make recommendations based on the findings and reflect on the limitations and highlight areas of research that need further investigation.

5.2 A synthesis of the study

This study sought to understand the nature of school based professional development at an FET school, and whether this learning had any influence on teachers' abilities to develop and implement the new FET curriculum. The review of literature offered the foundation for the present study, by exploring parts of professional development in education that are relevant to this study. There are various factors that emerged from this literature review. It revealed that there is a gap between policy and practice of the new curriculum in South African education. The literature suggests a clear focus on professional development that will facilitate teachers' changing practice, and for the implementation of curriculum reforms. There has been criticism on the effectiveness of the traditional professional development workshops used to assist teachers to implement the new curriculum in South Africa. Adler (2002) raises the issue of the theory practice tension, which is about applying what has been taught in theory in professional development workshops, to classroom practice. Theory gained from these workshops must be applied in a context of other challenges that teachers encounter in schools. The traditional ways of professional development have not been a success, as they do not offer context sensitive support, and rarely serve the specific needs of teachers.

The review of literature also reveals that international researchers on teacher learning make a strong case for situating teacher learning within the school context. A discussion of the significance of context in teacher learning is made. This reveals that

school-based professional development programmes regard context as an imperative in teacher development, and support a drive to situate teacher learning within the teachers' school sites. The literature review also gives a discussion of existing research on school-based professional development. It discusses a number of research studies done on dynamic approaches and professional development models that are school based and which promote interdependence and cooperation amongst teachers. The literature was of particular significance to the present such as research into teacher learning within the school context, which is rare in the South African context. Research that has emerged is that which looks at teacher learning within the school, in the context of the appraisal policies which focused on the performance measurement for developmental purposes.

The conceptual framework that guides this study drew on the concepts of symbolic interactionism (Woods, 1983) and situated learning theory (Wenger, 1998). The data analysis shows that context played an important role in the direction which school based professional development took. Context in its spatial meaning, refers to the organisational and cultural environment in which teachers work. A closer look at the context helped me to understand how the teachers in this school defined and interpreted their actions. Data analysis revealed that there were contextual factors regarding the working conditions that teachers have to deal with, and these affected the way teachers learned and changed classroom practice. Teachers' coping strategies were significantly influenced and affected by the situation caused by the school context which is made up of both external and internal factors. The external factors were the curriculum and the socio-economic background of the learners. The internal factors were, biographical factors of teachers, large classes, and a lack of resources (Woods, 1983). These coping strategies represented responses by teachers to situations caused by the contexts of the school.

Situated learning theory, stresses the importance of context, and therefore, supports the fact that learning opportunities should be grounded in environments where problems arise. It asserts that teacher learning is not an isolated activity in which teachers acquire knowledge from an independent body of knowledge, but teachers learn through daily interactions with one another as they negotiate and solve problems. How learning takes place, and the situation in which it takes place,

becomes an essential part of what is learned (Maistry, 2005). It asserts that learning involves developing practices and abilities in specific communities. Data analysis reveals that the school did acknowledge the fact that it is important for teachers to be provided with opportunities for development within the school context. The fact that teachers met and planned for a professional development programme, means that they saw the importance of this.

The choice of a case study methodology articulated well with the theoretical and conceptual framework used in this study, as it stresses the significance of context in teacher learning. In this case study I assumed the role of an insider researcher, as a teacher in the school where the study was conducted, and as a member of the school's professional development team, which was responsible for developing and organising professional development programmes for educators. As an insider researcher I captured my whole experience. This is because I have positioned myself as a reflexive qualitative researcher who is painstakingly documenting the research process (Usher, 1996). This allowed me to detail the whole research as it unfolded, the stumbling blocks and the breakthroughs. It further allowed me to capture details of how I influenced the research process, and how the context has influenced me.

Guided by the critical questions, open coding was used to analyse data. This revealed that the direction in which school based professional development took was affected by contextual factors. The programme planned did not work, because in its planning the contextual factors were not taken into consideration. Professional development in this school was varied. Teachers within the same school were experiencing development differently. This was because of the context of the working conditions of teachers. Teacher development took the form of department meetings, collaboration, mentoring and outside support.

5.3 A summary of the key findings

In the light of the critical questions these are the findings that emerged from the analysis.

5.3.1 There were contextual factors that impacted negatively on the official staff development programme.

The school acknowledged the fact that it is important for teachers to be provided with opportunities for development within the school context. Teachers met and planned for a professional development programme. The staff development committee, it was agreed, would then consult with the teachers and plan for the development of teachers based on their specific needs. This resonates well with a situative perspective which asserts that individuals need not be separated from their community or environments when taught, as learning involves developing practices and abilities in specific communities (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2003; Buysse, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003; Maistry, 2005). School-based professional development needs to be planned in such a way that it fits the context in which teachers teach, and their students learn (Loucks-Horsley, Love, Stiles, Mundry & Hewson, 2003). If the school-based professional development programme fails to recognise the inside politics of a school, it will have little or no effect on teacher learning. This study reveals that the lack of recognition for the divisions within the staff, interfered with the plans of the development committee. All the teachers voiced out their concerns on the bad staff relations, and concurred that it was difficult for the committee to work under such circumstances. Relations with colleagues are regarded as crucial for promoting teacher learning within the school. Teacher learning takes place in relationships where the self is formed and strengthened in the context of its relations with others, and this is very important for professional development (Mokoena, 2005). In work contexts where relations affect the organisation of the school it becomes a challenge to organise and promote teacher learning.

The study also revealed that there was dissatisfaction in the way management handled their role in managing professional development in the school. This was despite the

fact that the leadership of the principal in managing the process of development, is critical (Lumby, 2003). In a school the principal holds a whole school view and is responsible for the quality of teaching and learning, and therefore the development needed to achieve it (Lumby, 2003). As the accountable officer in the staff development team, the principal did not show the required commitment, resulting in teacher development not being prioritised at this school. This appeared to be a compelling reason why official, formal staff development, did not occur at this school. School principals therefore play a significant role in determining the nature of professional development that is likely to take place at a school.

5.3.2 Teachers learned within the micro (departmental) learning communities.

Sharing with colleagues is very important. This is when teachers are given time to engage in discussions about content and pedagogical issues in the subjects they teach. It is important that teachers are provided with opportunities that encourage teacher participation enabling them to develop meaningful practices (Mokoena, 2005). The study revealed that in this school there were teacher communities operating within some departments. There was co-participation of teachers at the level of departments. In these department meetings, teachers worked together and helped each other learn. There was evidence of discussions of curriculum practice, as well as challenges that teachers faced in the school. They would help each other solve these problems. This is supported by Xu (2003) who asserts that there is now a growing interest in the new school-centred approach to professional development, which encourages teachers to work together with their colleagues, learning with and from them, in their school communities, reflecting critically on their daily practices, and developing their capacity to understand complex subject matters.

5.3.3 Teachers developed strategies to support their professional development.

Informal teacher collaboration

Teachers' involvement can be accomplished by engaging them in experiences that promote teacher collaboration with colleagues within the school, as teachers need to be agents of their own learning and that of their colleagues (Clarke, 2001).

Collaboration is defined as a situation in which people work together to promote

change (Rice, 2003). The study shows teachers collaborating with their colleagues in search of ways to improve their practice. This is supported by the situated perspective which sees teachers playing an active role in their own learning. It allows teachers to learn together by challenging, confronting and questioning one another in a positive and professional way (Spillane, 2000). This is when knowledge is distributed from an individual to the others. In this school, through collaboration, teachers learnt from their practice and also from the practice of other teachers (Jennings & Swan, 2002). Teachers initiated these meetings on their own to seek support from colleagues that they have identified as information knowledgeable.

Mentoring

Mentoring is when experienced teachers become mentors to new teachers as well as struggling veteran teachers. These teachers provide support, share materials and ideas to improve practice (Krueger, 2004). This study reveals that there were teachers who had identified colleagues within the school who became their mentors even though there was no official programme for this.

Support for teachers from outside the school

This study reveals that some teachers were getting outside school support. They initiated their own strategies of development through networking, where they contacted members of their clusters or curriculum specialists. School based development should also involve outside support or networking where necessary. Outside support seemed to be more helpful for some teachers. The support in this school happened within departments, and even teachers who initiated their own development with colleagues did this within departments. Those teachers who were the only subject teachers in the school felt isolated and they sought support from outside the school.

5.3.4 Context influences curriculum practice

This study reveals that there were signs that learning had occurred for all teachers. However, the nature and the extent of that learning varied. The degree to which what was learnt about curriculum development was used, was strongly determined by the context of the working conditions in school. There are many contextual challenges

that influenced teachers' abilities to implement the curriculum. These include a lack of resources, large classes, and learners' soci-economic backgrounds. These were practical realities that affected the implementation.

5.4 Recommendations

Having identified the key findings the following section makes the following recommendations.

- Teachers' working contexts need to be taken into consideration when designing school based professional development.
- Various models of school based professional development should be taken into consideration when developing a professional development programme, and teachers need to be part of decision making when it comes to model choice.
- There should be more support for informal collaboration within schools
- There should be a system in place for monitoring support within the school.

5.5 Limitations

As this was a case study of one school, the issue of generalisability does not apply as we cannot generalise based on just one school. Data are limited as they were collected from three research participants. The number of lessons observed was not adequate to determine how teachers benefit from school based professional development. More time would have been needed in the field. As an insider researcher while I attempted to be reflective and reflexive, I struggled with managing my role as both researcher and participant in this research project.

5.6 Further Research Possibilities

The following areas still need to be investigated:

- What kind of school based professional development programmes need to be designed for teachers in different resource contexts?
- What contextual factors do we need to consider for effective school based professional development programmes?

5.7 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to understand the nature of school-based professional development at an FET school, and whether this learning had any influence on teachers' abilities to develop and implement the new FET curriculum. Conclusions drawn from the findings reveal that school based professional development needs careful planning and implementation if it is to be effective in terms of helping teachers with curriculum change. It is clear that there is a strong move to situate professional development within the school context, as this would better serve the specific curriculum needs of teachers. It is evident that the school based professional development has its own challenges. Contextual factors affect how school based teacher learning take place in a school. It therefore becomes important to take into consideration the various aspects of a school context when designing school based programmes, as constraints of the school context are compelling factors that hinder the implementation process.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Phumzile P. N. Langa
Tel: 0315031791 (Home)
Cell: 0726277831
Email: pumi_langa@yahoo.co.uk



The Principal

Sir,

Request to conduct research at your school

I am a secondary school educator who is currently enrolled at the University of KwaZuluNatal for a Masters in Education. I am conducting a research study as part of the fulfilment for this degree. The purpose of this study is to understand how teachers learn in school-based professional development programmes and how such programmes affect teachers' abilities to develop and implement the new Further Education and Training (FET) curriculum. Your school has been identified as a valuable source of information for this study. The findings of this research will certainly be of value to you, the participating teachers, your school, curriculum developers as well as other FET teachers.

I humbly request your permission to conduct research at your school and assure you that the data will be used for research purposes only and neither the school nor the principal nor teachers will be named. The research will take the form of interviews, lesson observations as well as observations of the school's professional development activities.

You have my assurance that the research will not infringe on your normal school programme or have any financial implications for your school.

I thank you for your time and hope that my request meets with your approval.

My supervisor's contact details are as follows:

Dr S.M. Maistry
Tel: 0312603457 (Work)
Email: maistrys@ukzn.ac.za

Yours faithfully

Phumzile P N Langa

Date

APPENDIX 2

Miss Phumzile P. N. Langa
Tel: 0315031791 (Home)
Cell: 0726277831
Email: pumi_langa@yahoo.co.uk



To: _____

Participation in research study on Professional Development

I am a secondary school educator who is currently enrolled at the University of KwaZuluNatal for a Masters in Education. I am conducting a research study as part of the fulfilment for this degree. The purpose of this study is to understand how teachers learn in school-based professional development programmes and how such programmes affect teachers' abilities to develop and implement the new Further Education and Training (FET) curriculum. You have been identified as someone who could make a valuable contribution as a participant in this study. I humbly request your participation in this research project. The findings of this research will certainly be of value to you, your school, curriculum developers as well as other FET teachers.

The research will take the form of observations and interviews. For observations, I will take the role of a non-participant observer. I will observe the school-based professional development activities. I will also do two classroom observations. These observations will be arranged at a time and place that is convenient to you. Two interviews will be conducted and these interviews will take about 30 minutes each. Before the interview, I will arrange a time and place for the interview that is convenient to you. During the interview, I will ask questions and make some notes on your responses. With your permission I would like to tape the interview to help me remember what was said and I assure you that I will erase the tape once it has been transcribed. After writing up the data I would like to discuss it with you to check that it accurately reflects your viewpoint. The interview data will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only and neither the school nor the principal and teachers will be named.

You have my assurance that the research will not infringe on your normal school programme nor have financial implications for you. Permission will also be sought from your principal, should you be willing to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw from participation in the study at any time.

My supervisor's contact details are as follows:

Dr S.M. Maistry

Tel: 0312603457 (Work)

Email: maistrys@ukzn.ac.za

I thank you for your time and look forward to a mutually rewarding experience with you.

Yours faithfully

Phumzile P. N. Langa

Date

APPENDIX 3

Interview 1

1. Tell me about your family background as you were growing up.
2. Can you describe your schooling experience as a pupil?
3. Do you think that your experience of schooling has influenced the way you teach?
4. Why did you become a teacher?
5. Where did you receive your teacher training? What formal qualifications do you hold?
6. Can you describe your teaching background?
7. How would you describe your knowledge of the subject that you teach?
8. What forms of professional development have you been involved in?
9. Are you currently studying?
10. What are your views about the new FET curriculum?
11. What professional development have you received concerning the new FET curriculum?
12. Are you totally prepared to implement this new curriculum? Why?
13. How do you think the new curriculum will affect your teaching? What will be the same? What will be different?
14. What would you say is the role of the teacher in FET?
15. Are you familiar with the learning outcomes applicable to the subject that you teach in the FET band?
16. Do you understand the Assessment Standards for the grades that you teach in the FET band?

APPENDIX 4

Interview 2

1. What percentage of your time do you allocate to preparing your lessons? What percentage are subjects in the FET band of your total teaching load?
2. Are you familiar with the outcomes applicable to your subject? (Read one). What does it mean to you?
3. Do you find the professional development programme in your school beneficial/useful? How? Explain. Which aspects of the programme did you find especially useful?
4. If you were to compare your current knowledge of your subject to your knowledge at the beginning of the year, is there a difference? Explain...
5. What type of learning do you think the professional development programme in your school has initiated for you? What aspects of the programme do you think have particularly helped your learning? Any suggestions of how the programme can be structured to assist your learning?
6. How has the programme impacted on your classroom practice?
7. What, if anything, have you been doing differently in your class? Have you made any changes that you can attribute to the programme.
8. What type of opportunities do you feel this programme provide for talking about your classroom practice or the new curriculum in general? In what way do you feel these opportunities assist your learning?
9. Do you share your classroom practice experiences with other teachers in your school? Explain.
10. How do you see the role of other teachers in your school in assisting your learning? Have the other teachers in your school contributed to your learning?
11. Is there a connection between what you learn in other professional development workshops and the one in your school.
12. Describe your involvement in assisting teachers in other schools with their classroom practice. Has your school's programme had any effect on this? Explain.
13. How is the school's professional development programme different to any other form of professional development that you have been involved in?

APPENDIX 5

Examples of Journal Entries

15 March 2007

It is exam time and teachers are very busy with invigilation and marking, but I thought I will use this time to interview teachers because there has been a lot of postponing and I feel that I am not getting anywhere. I was very disappointed today, I had set up a date to interview Cebo today. Because it was payday teachers were excited and asked the principal for a school to finish early. The exam was moved from the afternoon session to the morning session. This interfered with my plans because I could not ask this teacher to remain in school with me while everyone was going home early. We decided that we were going to postpone this interview to the following day.

16 March 2007

No interview again today. Immediately after the morning exam session there was an urgent meeting about the incident that happened in one of the classes that involved a teacher and a learner. This meeting took longer than anticipated. By the time it finished everyone was ready to go home. Cebo apologised to me for having to postpone again.

26 March 2007

I am still struggling to secure interview dates for the remaining teachers. Something always come up that interferes with the set dates. I am beginning to even think that these teachers are trying to avoid me. Sometimes I think they are not keen on doing this. Some of the excuses they give are not really serious. They always find a lame excuse to cancel or delay the interview and this would lead to one postponement after another. I can sense that they are irritated by me every time I talk to them about this. I do not know whether it is anxiety or just nervousness. But I will be very cool and continue to exercise my patience and to reassure them that there is nothing to worry about.

APPENDIX 6

Guidelines for Classroom Observations

1. Physical Environment

Number of students:
Classroom condition:
Classroom displays:
Chalkboard:
Desks:
Chairs:
Teacher's table:
Windows:
Door:
Seating arrangement:
Moving space:
Visibility:
Ventilation:

2. Teaching and learning

Role of the teacher:
Teacher preparedness:
Pedagogic content knowledge:
Teaching strategies used:
Outcomes clearly defined:
Assessment standards covered:
Rate at which knowledge is introduced:
Teaches content in context/abstract:
Activity organisation:
Learner participation:

3. Resources

Charts and worksheets:
Resources appropriate to the language competence and culture of the learners:
Other teaching and learning resources:
Use of textbooks:

4. Classroom Environment

Class cohesion or friction:
Engagement or rapport:
Classroom management and control:
Values pupils' experiences: