

Title: how can I effectively integrate sexuality education in my teaching practice in a grade 6 class? A teacher's self- study

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Abstract

This dissertation reports on the self-study in which I, as a practicing educator, reflect on my attempts at integrating sexuality education across three learning areas in grade 6 class over a period of one semester. Through the anonymous questionnaire, my grade 6 learners identified issues around sexuality that they would have liked to be taught. From this exercise, I then conceptualized a curriculum unit integrating the issues they identified. The dissertation documents and reflects on the process of my self-study of the process we went through during the curriculum unit, particularly in relation to integration of the controversial and complex issues around sexuality. It is from this reflection that I offer lessons learned from the process regarding, for example, dealing with emotions of self-study, the importance of teacher lives, and the capabilities that learners have in being effective partners in the learning process.




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Declaration

I Lungile Rejoice Masinga declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted previously for any degree at any university.



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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This dissertation reports on a self-study in which I, as a practising educator, explore the integration of sexuality education across three learning areas in my grade 6 class. In Chapter One, I first present the rationale for this study. Secondly, I specify the research questions that I am exploring through the study. Next, I give the working definition of sexuality that informs this study. I then discuss the theoretical and conceptual framework in which the study is located. Lastly, I offer a summary of the key issues covered in this chapter and also give an outline of the chapters to follow.

1.1 Introduction

I am an intermediate phase teacher; teaching grade 6 (ages 10-13, with a few learners up to 15 years old). Not so long ago, no one thought issues such as HIV and AIDS (being infected and affected), teen pregnancy, early exposure to sexual activities, abuse, and many other sexuality related issues would be relevant for children in this age group. differences between the issues that I had to deal with in my own school days and what the youngsters of today have to bear. In my primary years, a huge gap was presented when it came to issues of sexuality. Such issues were relegated to the “null curriculum” (Eisner, 1979) or what is not taught in schools, but could add value to the schooling experience. These issues were taboo and were never spoken of in any part of the “interactive curriculum” (Goodson, 1990) or what actually takes place in the classroom environment as the educator interacts with the prescribed curriculum. As there was a silence around sexuality in both school and home, our main source of information in these matters was the playground. My friends and I were educated by those girls who ‘had been there’ and claimed to know best. Now, I realise that most of the advice we received was “mis-educative” (Dewey, 1938/1963) and full of myths, and in fact tended to hamper our understanding. It also allowed the hidden curriculum—“what is not written down in any syllabus and are less obvious aspects of what we learn” (Christie, 1999, p. 124)—to

flourish as we learned more from what was not said at school or home but was observed by us as children. That is not what I want for the learners in my class. These days, in the context of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in South Africa (see Rehle, T., Shisane, O., Pillay, V., Zuma, K., Puren, A., & Parker, W., 2007), the responsibility of talking about matters such as sexuality has become a public responsibility. As an educator in a public school, I also have to play my role if we are to protect our youth from facing a bleak future that has no hope at all.

To respond to this imperative, for the past eight years, schools have engaged in the implementation of a life skills programme in the intermediate phase that is termed Life Orientation (see Department of Education, 2002). Sexuality issues are meant to form a key part of the programme where issues such as sex, pregnancy, homosexuality, love and other related topics are supposed to be discussed by educators with their learners. (I look more closely at the Life Orientation Curriculum Statement in Chapter Three of this dissertation). It is for this reason that I have had to stop and look at the progress that has been made so far. Are learners more aware of themselves as sexual beings? Do they understand the role they have to play in making the right decisions in all spheres of their lives? If they do, then why do I know of more learners in the intermediate phase at my school being sexually active and becoming pregnant at a very young age? With so much information supposedly being delivered to learners at schools regarding sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, why is change not visible in my school?

This study focuses on the ways in which I can effectively integrate sexuality education in my teaching practice to meet the needs of each child in my grade 6 class. For my research, I aimed to engage in a journey of reflection through which I could learn to understand my own interpretation of sexuality and how this might influence my teaching and integration of sexuality education in my grade 6 class. This was informed by my understanding that “an inability to recognise one’s shortcomings can be an obstacle to meaningful, mutual exchanges with others” (Mitchell, as cited in Allender, 2004, p. 18), such as my learners. I realised that “[examining] my motives, feelings, ego, fears, and interests” (Allender, 2004, p. 17) in relation to sexuality was also important in understanding how I dealt with sexuality education. However, this was a journey that I could not take alone. I wanted to take my grade 6 learners with me so that they too could

learn to understand their own sexuality and also meet challenges related to their sexuality. To do that, I had to understand not only myself, but also the learners in my class. The study aimed to begin a process of change and understanding for me and for my learners as we engaged in the integration of sexuality education in a range of learning areas. As a practising educator, I wanted to explore how my personal history affects the kind of teacher I have become as I engage with the curriculum of the day. I wanted my learners to begin to understand and have an open platform to talk about sexuality issues without fear of being rebuked by the significant adults in their lives.

1.2 The Key Research Questions

The following are the key research questions that guide this study:

- 1. Who am I as a practising educator and how can my understanding of my teaching practice assist in improving my teaching in sexuality education?*
- 2. What are my learners' immediate needs in sexuality education and how can my understanding of these needs help me plan and integrate sexuality education in my teaching?*
- 3. What programmes, policies, and resources exist in schools and the teaching context around me that I can use to further engage with my learners as we learn about ourselves as teacher and learners?*

1.3 A Working Definition of Sexuality Education

According to Ryan (1989, p. 217):

The nature of human sexuality has been the subject of reflection by philosophers, theologians, poets, novelists, sociologists, and even economists, to name but a few of the groups that have given systematic attention to this topic. Sexuality is an important part of our humanity and an issue that is vital to the survival of the species. It is therefore, a necessary part of the education we offer to the young. Yet sex has historically been an aspect of human relations shrouded in taboos and rarely talked about openly.

It is this cloud that has also engulfed the sexuality education curriculum of South Africa (see Baxen & Breidlid, 2004; Morrell, 2003; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005) and hence has had, in my view, a negative effect on the implementation and teaching of life

skills in schools. When I have asked my colleagues at school what they understand 'sexuality' and 'sexuality education' to mean, they have all only mentioned the sex act and biological sexual differences. This suggests to me that even those people that are supposed to understand and teach about sexuality are as in the dark as the learners they aim to educate. From there, I have begun to ask what sexuality actually is.

I understand sexuality as part of the total or whole person, including his or her sexual thoughts, emotions, experiences, relationships, learning, ideas, values and imaginings. There are a number of different aspects of sexuality that come into play when I think about sexuality education. One aspect is the *ethical*, which involves ideas, values, and moral opinions about sex and sexuality. Another aspect is the *biological*, which includes human reproduction, fertility control, sexual arousal and response, physiological cycles, and changes in physical appearances. A third aspect is the *psychological*, which involves emotions, experiences, self-concept, motivation, learned attitudes, and learned behaviour.

A related aspect of sexuality is the *social*. Young people's sexuality is influenced by social interaction. This includes interaction with parents, teachers, the media, and religious institutions. Friends are also an influential component in how young people see themselves in terms of sexuality, particularly in the age group of my class (Responsible Teenage Sexuality, 1998). Adults are continuously teaching the children in their lives about sexuality, both consciously by formal instruction as based on the prescribed or "preactive" (Goodson, 1990) curriculum for Life Orientation and unconsciously through attitudes and actions (Facts about Sexuality, 1987). Parents are the initial educators or socialisers of a child to the world. The parents are supposed to be the first contact the child has with modelled behaviours such as sexuality (Van Rooyen, 1997). Parents provide the influential settings of life patterns by their attitudes to male and female, all reflected within their cultural beliefs. However, in my view, some parents within my school community do not exhibit the type of behaviour that should be modelled by their children. More and more children are having to find their own way and their own answers to sexual questions. This is exacerbated by a high rate of alcohol abuse, children having children and thus still struggling with their own issues, the poverty that has resulted from the increase in unemployment, and the ever-increasing number of parents dying of AIDS-

related illnesses and leaving children to raise themselves. Furthermore, many families in my school community are single parent families where all relatives live together in the same house with uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins. The roles therefore become obscure as everybody pulls in different directions to survive.

There is also the *cultural* aspect of sexuality, which comprises cultural beliefs, norms, and practices. Within my school community, culture plays a key role in how children learn about sexuality. This is where boys and girls learn to view and relate to each other as the opposite sex. It is also where they learn about their own sexuality by observing and imitating the elders in our community. According to Walker, Reid, and Cornell (2004, p. 76) “a historical study of sexual socialisation amongst South African youth questioned the contemporary assertion that parents do not talk to their children about sex because discussing intimate matters is not part of ‘African culture’.” Walker et al. (2004, pp. 76-77) further suggest that, “In the 19th century, African communities were relatively open about sexual matters although the extent to which parents actually spoke to their children directly is questionable.” In a conversation, I had with an elder within my community, an 83-year-old grandmother of 16 grandchildren, I learned that talks about sexuality matters did exist within the African culture; however, it was not the family or parents of the children who conducted such talks. To illustrate, there were informal structures of older women for girls called *Amaqhikiza*. They were the resource for girls to learn about boys and sexual matters. These talks were not conducted within the compounds of the village; instead, they used excursions such as wood and water gathering. Although these talks were not formal and there was no monitoring by parents, the parents knew that these talks took place and they never questioned or censored them. Hence, there was no direct communication by parents on sexuality matters and, in my experience, this is still the case today in my school community. The silence is still there and the lack of family openness around sexuality issues is still there (Walker et al., 2004). Furthermore, because cultural practices such as *Amaqhikiza* appear to have fallen into disuse, many children in my school are not receiving sexuality education from their families or the wider community.

In my view, sexuality education is more than ‘the facts of life.’ It is rather a multifaceted and dynamic quality of people’s lives (Ryan, 1989). In schools, we need to

address sexuality in its full complexity (Ryan, 1989). It is essential to arm young people with knowledge that begins with the understanding of the self as a sexual being. Learners need to understand that sexuality is part of all the daily activities in which they take part throughout their life span as human beings. I believe that young people should feel that they can acknowledge and share the sexual emotions and questions they experience and that they can have better control over their own destinies.

1.4 Research approach and strategy

In my study, I aimed to examine the ways in which I could integrate sexuality education in my teaching practice to meet the needs of all learners in my Grade 6 class. I began my study with an examination of who I am as a teacher, and from this understanding, aimed at changing my way of being a practising teacher (Feldman, 2003). My study was based on the notion that if I want to begin the process of changing how I teach, I will have to study self and my own practice as an educator. Through this self-study, I did not want to just *study* how I taught sexuality education; I also wanted to improve my practice and in the process develop an open relationship with my learners that might assist them to better understand their own lives and actions in order to make informed choices. Hence, I elected to view my study from two theoretical perspectives: the *critical* and the *interpretive*. Both fall within the qualitative research paradigm.

The *critical* perspective assisted me to first create a critical consciousness of the realities that exist around the issues of sexuality in my teaching context. It allowed my learners and me to start “breaking down the institutional structures” (Henning, 2004, p.23) created by our own personal histories, where we had learned to view and practice sexuality. In addition, it allowed us “to start breaking down arrangements that reproduce oppressive ideologies” (Henning, 2004, p.23) by looking critically at how we saw and acted out our own sexuality, being influenced by gender roles, culture, communities, and formal and informal schooling. A critical perspective allowed me to engage in the process of engineering my future as a practising educator and also in helping my learners to find their right paths in life as we learned together about sexuality. This led to a critical reflection on our selves as teacher and learners (Henning, 2004). I hoped that the critical framework would enable my learners and me to begin a process of emancipation as we

dealt with what prevented us from talking about and addressing issues related to sexuality.

I draw on the *interpretive* perspective to analyse and interpret the data that I have collected during the process of teaching and learning. This allows me to construct knowledge not only by observing my learners, but also by descriptions of my intentions and my learners' beliefs, values, and reasons. It also involves meaning making and self-understanding. It allows me to understand the phenomena and events that are influenced by and interact with the social context as I look for frames that shape the meaning (Henning, 2004).

Taking a self-study approach to curriculum inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) allows me to scrutinise who I am as an educator and to understand why I act and teach as I do and how the self that I am today as a practising educator is affected and influenced by my own education. (I discuss my self-study research methodology in Chapter Two.) I use various curriculum concepts that assist me in developing and analysing the process of teaching and learning. These include: (a) Dewey's (1938/1963) notion of *mis-educative* experience, which refers to educational experiences that obstruct or distort the development of further learning; (b) the *null curriculum* or what is not taught in schools but could add value to the schooling experience (Eisner, 1979); (c) the prescribed or *preactive curriculum* (Goodson, 1990), which is official policy designed by the Department of Education; and (d) the *interactive curriculum* (Goodson, 1990), also termed the actual curriculum, which means what actually takes place in the classroom environment as the educator interacts with the prescribed curriculum. These concepts help me to understand and explain key issues in the study. In the analysis of the data, these concepts help me frame the findings in the way that offers clarity to the reader and also brings understanding of the process taken and meanings made. I am able to map my own experiences and make sense of them for the reader to understand.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on outlining the foundation for my study. In the chapter, I have offered a rationale as to why I have engaged in this type of study. I have also attempted to give a working definition of sexuality that informs the study. Also highlighted are the

research questions and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks in which the study is located. The next chapter, Chapter Two, describes the design and methodology used in the study. Chapter Three is a review of the policy and resource context. In Chapter Four, I represent data gathered during my study. In Chapter Five, I interpret the data that I represent in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT SELF-STUDY MEANS TO THE STUDY; THE METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

In this study, I explore how I can effectively integrate sexuality education in my teaching practice to meet the needs of each child in my grade 6 class. I look at my study as a journey of the self, the ‘self’ being all that makes up who I am: A woman, an educator, and a researcher, among others. According to LaBoskey (2004, p. 826), in self-study “the self is central and that means the whole of the self—past and present, emotional and cognitive, mind and body.” Hence, I have selected a self-study research methodology to address the research questions I outline in Chapter One of this thesis.

In this chapter, I begin by defining self-study methodology, drawing on the work of education scholars who use self-study as a research methodology. Secondly, I briefly discuss the research paradigm in which my study is located. I then give a description of the research setting and participants. Next, I discuss my data collection process. I go on to give an indication of my approach to data representation and interpretation, To end, I consider issues of validity and trustworthiness and the limitations of the research design utilised in the study.

2.2 My Understanding of Self-Study Methodology

I understand self-study as a way of looking at myself and my actions as an educator in an introspective manner. In my view, self-study also involves looking critically at influences on the way I think, act, and interact with those around me and at how I perform my day-to-day teaching and learning activities in my school setting. In selecting a self-study methodology for my research, I aimed to challenge the long-standing silence over sexuality issues that have remained taboo and unspoken by my school, my community, and me. I wanted to awaken my own consciousness and ask myself what I was doing to assist the youth of today who find themselves lost and facing burning sexuality-related issues with no trustworthy source to turn to. I also hoped to interrogate my teaching of

sexuality related issues in order to challenge myself and to uncover what might be preventing me from openly teaching sexuality matters to grade 6 learners. I wanted to bring into the open the existence of the “null curriculum” (Eisner, 1979) (what is not taught in schools) that has been introduced by my own insecurities concerning the teaching of sexuality. In addition, I aimed to explore how learners’ past and present experiences come to the fore as they try to grasp and learn about their own sexuality (LaBoskey, 2004).

One of the key characteristics of self-study research is that it is “*self-initiated and focused*” [italics added] (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 842). Hence I, as a researcher and educator, have become my own research subject through choosing to study the pedagogic process that occurs as I teach issues of sexuality. I concur with Feldman’s (2003, p. 27) assertion that over the years, studies have been done *about* teachers, with interpretations of their practice understood and explained using the findings of these external studies. Feldman highlights the limitations of this tradition of ‘expert research’ by pointing out that the “educational research endeavour has been unsuccessful in making continued significant change” (2003, p. 27) in teachers’ practice. As an educator and researcher, I wanted a methodology that would empower me to take charge and control over my own journey as a teacher, particularly when integrating sexuality education within my teaching practice. I wanted to understand my actions and reasoning. I am concerned with both enhanced understanding of my classroom teaching in general and the immediate improvement of my practice. The change that I aspire to cannot be effected from outside me and thus I believe that self-study will allow me to achieve my goals.

Another significant characteristic of self-study research is that it is “*improvement-aimed*” [italics added] (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 844). As such, a key aim that underpins my study is to begin a process of change and improvement in how I teach and relate to the learners as we tackle complex and controversial matters of sexuality. In my view, education must be about change rather than the preservation of the status quo such as the silence around issues of sexuality. We cannot simply rely upon what we already know and practice as regards sexuality education because it seems not to have worked as the children continue to make harmful decisions for their lives. We must work against harmful repetition that hinders the process of true learning, for example, not talking about

a sensitive topic that has the potential to embarrass us (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 830). It is for these reasons that I concur with Zeichner's (1999, p. 12) view that "the impetus for the research often derives from a recognition of "shortcomings in [our] work and the gaps between [our] rhetoric and the reality of [our] practice." I have been recently sensitised to the presence of the null curriculum (Eisner, 1979)—what is not taught in schools but could add value to the schooling experience—when I have to engage in teaching sexuality related matters. I believe that if I had been encouraged to engage with sexuality matters in my own schooling, I would now not be faced with what I have termed my 'demons' regarding my teaching of sexuality education. Therefore, the null curriculum fed into my hidden issues of fearing to be open and frank about sexuality with children. This poses a shortcoming that as a practising educator that I had not previously been aware of. The 'demons' that haunt me need to be recognised and dealt with. Thus, the impetus for my study has been derived from this recognition of the demons that threaten my classroom delivery. As teachers, we need to learn from our 'demons' so that we can create new experiences for ourselves and those whom we teach. Self-study allows me to do so as I begin the reinvention of learning how to teach sexuality issues. It also allows me to enable others (the learners of my grade 6 class) to understand learning from experience by showing them how I do it myself (Russell, 1998).

Another important feature of self-study is that it is "*a look at self in action, usually within educational context*" [italics added] (Hamilton, 2006, p. 113). In this study, I am researching myself in action in the process of teaching and learning that takes place within my own school context. Using self-study, my learning will be processed through my previous experiences of sexuality, considering my personal history and cultural context. Like LaBoskey (2004), I believe that previously held assumptions about learning can be challenged through practical experiences. I also believe that my past plays a role in my teaching abilities. It has influenced how I teach and relate to my grade six learners as we engage in learning and understanding issues of sexuality. In conversations with fellow educators, I have discovered that in teaching sexuality related issues, educators often experience anxiety and concern over the expected language and content that need to be covered. This leads to what I have termed the 'demons' finding their way into the classroom as educators struggle to talk about issues such as sex and other sexuality

related issues. Hence, there is a lot that interferes with the actual curriculum being implemented as the hidden curriculum emerges. (According to Christie, 1999, p. 124, the hidden curriculum is “what is not written down in any syllabus and are less obvious aspects of what we learn”.) I have found that I am not excluded from the list. I too, when given an opportunity to talk about issues of sexuality, have found I have my own hidden demons have often disallowed me to engage openly with the learners as we discuss sexuality matters. These include my cultural learning about sexuality, which involved absolute silence around anything that was sexuality related. The emphasis was on maintaining virginity and staying away from boys. The reasons for this were never discussed and the language used by children was censored so as to have no sexual connotations. The use of sexuality-related words was forbidden. Body parts given euphemistic names, such as for vagina we had *ikuku* (cake). Hence, even today I find it difficult to say aloud the Zulu word for sex, let alone write it down in this thesis. These practices became a part of me and turned into ‘demons’ that hinder my present teaching. I now as a teacher want to use sexual terms in my teaching. I want to relate to the learners in a language they understand, but I cannot. These demons will continue to haunt me unless I openly deal with the past, which also includes my cultural learning about sexuality issues, and how these provoke silence within the schooling community and even in my own class.

Since the learners in my school present cultural influences similar to my own to some degree, I can relate to the deafening silence around sexuality in the community and the school. My past socialisation by my parents, my community, and school ignored the presence of sexuality and its implications for how I would view myself and relate to others. This often led to an enhanced level of curiosity as I fought the everyday adolescent identity crises, as well as attempted to form some kind of sexual identity. I recognise these internal struggles in my learners. As such, I believe that as educators we need to expand the learners’ horizons so that they can see possibilities rather than obstacles. This self-study was informed by the notion that to do that, we will have expand our own horizons by being open-minded to change as we attempt to educate the learners and deal with the silence around sexuality in our own lives. Similarly, we cannot help learners to detect and interrogate their biases towards certain aspects of sexuality that

they are not familiar with if we do not detect and interrogate our own views on sexuality related matters (LaBoskey, 2004).

In addition, self-study is “*interactive*” [italics added] (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 847). In my study, I have aimed at working in a participatory manner with the learners of my grade 6 class to re-learn how we relate to each other and to issues of sexuality (Hamilton and Pinnegar, 1998). Self-study is a tool for me as a researcher and educator to be conscious of the fact that knowledge about teaching can only develop through interaction between myself and the learners’ hopes and ideas (Korthagen, 1995). Knowledge can also be developed by giving and getting feedback from my research participants, in my case, the learners of grade 6. All this knowledge is received within a concrete educational setting. Knowledge created in this kind of environment is uniquely relevant for practice (LaBoskey, 2004). When designing this study, I realised that I needed a methodology that would allow my class and I to develop a relationship that shared the learning power in the classroom as we reflected on what we had learned and how it was learned. I needed to understand what the learners really wanted to know and question about sexuality matters (Brookfield, 1995). When reflecting on one’s interaction with others, it becomes critical to understand how considerations of power underpin, frame, and distort educational processes (Brookfield, 1995.). Hence, in this study, my learners and I have had to acknowledge the existence of power through which I, as the educator, have controlled and dictated what is to be learned and how it is to be learned. I came to understand that we had to come to an understanding about how that power might be shared and that such power is a privilege for all of us and thus could be taken away if misused. (I discuss this issue of power sharing and negotiation more fully in Chapter Five.)

2.3 The Research Paradigm

This study is located within the qualitative paradigm. Working in a qualitative framework allows me to:

achieve an in-depth understanding and detailed description of a particular aspect [sexuality education] of an individual [myself as a teacher] or group’s experiences [my grade 6 learners]. The qualitative paradigm also assists me in exploring how

[my grade 6 class and I] give meaning to [sexuality education] and express [our] understanding of [ourselves], our experiences and/ or world. (Yates, 1998, p. 138)

This was to facilitate an in-depth understanding and detailed descriptions of the “interactive” (Goodson, 1990) or actual sexuality education curriculum in my grade 6 class.

2.4 The Research Setting and Participants

Since the study is based on the self and those that are around me, my school, which is an intermediate phase school, was the selected setting for the data collection process. The school is situated in a township near Durban. The community surrounding the school is a mixture of middle and lower income families. The lower income families are in the majority. The school is surrounded by four-roomed houses and is close to former ‘squatter camps’ that were turned into two-roomed houses by the government. It is the learners from these homes that make up the enrolment of the school. The 54 learners in grade 6A (26 girls and 28 boys) were the participants in the study. The learners in the class were between the ages of 11 to 15 years old. Following the advice of other teachers who have engaged in self-study research in their own classrooms, I tried to “find ways to meld all elements of my research into what I already [did]” (Austin & Senese, 2004, p. 1253) in my daily work as a teacher. Instead of selecting a sample of learners to study, I gathered class work and information from all learners in my class and then used my judgement as a teacher to select examples that highlighted significant aspects of our learning and teaching process.

2.5 Methods of Data Collection

My study focused on the ways in which I could integrate sexuality education across learning areas in the Grade 6 class that I taught. To address the research questions, three learning areas were used: English, Economics Management Science, and Life Orientation. As illustrated in Table 1 (below), the data collection process was designed to answer the three critical questions that were set out for the study:

Research questions	Data collection activities	Types of data
1. Who am I as a practising educator and how can my understanding of my teaching practice assist in improving my teaching in sexuality education?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep a reflective teaching journal. 2. Learners keep diaries of what happens in each lesson. 3. Compile detailed lesson plans and notes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Journal 2. Diary entries. 3. Lesson plan entries and comments
2. What are my learners' immediate needs in sexuality education and how can my understanding of these needs help me plan and integrate sexuality education in my teaching?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct an anonymous needs survey in the class using self-administered questionnaire. 2. Learners produce posters on key issues. 3. Learners keep mini diaries to give ideas and ask questions. 4. Keep lesson plans and notes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey results. 2. Learners' charts 3. Learners' diaries. 4. Lesson plans and notes.
2. What programmes, policies and resources that exists in schools and the teaching context around me that I can use to further engage with my learners as we learn about ourselves as teacher and learners?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect relevant education documents relating to learning areas and sexuality and HIV/AIDS. 2. Look at the community of the school to identify relevant people who could provide appropriate information and support. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education documents. 2. Flyers. Posters, notes on telephone or face-to-face conversations.

Table. 1. Data Collection

2.5.1 The self-administered survey

I began the data collection process by looking at the second critical question, which asked: *What are my learners' immediate needs in sexuality education and how can my understanding of these needs help me plan and integrate sexuality education in my teaching?* To start exploring this question, I conducted an anonymous needs survey among the learners in the class through the use of a self-administered questionnaire (see Appendix A). This was intended to draw out questions and statements that would reveal burning, unasked issues the learners had relating to sexuality. I introduced the questionnaire to learners through a discussion in which I assured them of their autonomy to participate or opt out in the project and explained how the survey would be conducted. In addition, I assured them that their identities would remain anonymous throughout the study. This necessitated a careful explanation of the concept of anonymity and how it

would apply in the project. The learners and I then read the questionnaire together as a class and I explained the various sections and concepts in the learners' mother tongue (isiZulu) to eliminate any confusion. The questionnaire had a statement that asked learners to ask any questions and make statements. The learners were also given the opportunity to respond in a language they were comfortable in, although English is the school's medium of instruction. A full 50 minute period of Life Orientation was allocated for this purpose.

The type of learner questions and statements that resulted from the survey gave direction to the rest of the activities and lessons that were to follow. The questions varied from sex-related questions, such as, "why do boys always talk about sex?" to physical changes that the learners were experiencing. These were such questions as, "Should I tell when I see hair in my body?" Another set of questions resulting from the survey were HIV/AIDS-related. Learners asked questions such as, "Why are we not allowed see our parents when they are sick or dead?", "Is it ok if I don't cry when a parent dies?", and "Why do HIV positive people look like skeletons when they are sick?" (Refer to Appendix B for further examples of learners' questions.)

2.5.2The poster activities

Also forming part of the initial data collection process were posters that were produced by learners on key issues such as: *For the last 5 years of doing Life Orientation and life skills, what have you learned? What are your greatest fears in life?* For the poster activities, learners were divided into groups of six (to accommodate the large number of 54 learners in the class and the lack of poster materials within the school). They had been asked the day before to bring old newspapers and magazines from home and we also used some that we already had in the class box. To answer the questions, the learners had to use pictures with short sentences to explain the pictures.

When the learners were answering the question about what they had learned so far in Life Orientation, they used, for instance, pictures of people smoking and the caption stating, "*We should not smoke as it can kill you.*" The issues highlighted by the posters also varied from fears of dying to fears of being adopted by somebody. What became apparent as the biggest fear was HIV/AIDS. As the poster activities were group activities,

I also gave the learners the option to write in their diaries what they could not share with their group. The responses from the learners became an important point of departure for the study as I attempted to answer the second critical question of: *What are my learners' immediate needs in sexuality education and how can my understanding of these needs help me plan and integrate sexuality education in my teaching?*

2.5.3 Keeping of reflective journals

To address the first critical question: *Who am I as a practising educator and how can my understanding of my teaching practice assist in improving my teaching in sexuality education*, data were also collected by both the learners and I keeping reflective journals. This is in line with self-study research, which is “always conducted in relation to the others who are our students, [and] input from them, whether direct or indirect, with regard to the aspect of our practice under investigation is [incorporated and they become informants in our self-studies]” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 848). Through the journals, the learners and I were able to document and reflect upon our experiences, thoughts, and views of our lives, as well as on the classroom activities that emanated from the learning programmes I had planned. Journals are valuable tools in self-study because they “provide both a descriptive and reflective record of events, and of personal responses to them” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 4048). An example of such a reflection from my journal is: *“This is not easy. I have to get the learners to focus on tasks more so the group activities. The noise gets to be too much for me sometimes.”* (Lungile, Journal, 15). An example of a reflection made by a child when we learned about stereotyping in the classroom is: *“Owu you Miss, you always think the boys are the ones who messes up the class as if the girls don't also throw papers on the floor and they don't clean until you tell them to”* (Ndumiso¹, Dairy, 20 July 2007)

Because the journals were meant to be a collective activity, undertaken by the learners and myself as their educator, I allocated time after each classroom activity for us to make our entries and to reflect on the activity. This allowed learners to reflect immediately after the lesson and assisted in alleviating the responsibility to commit to the writing of the journal after school. However, this was not an easy task to achieve as my

¹ For confidentiality, all learners' names have been changed.

learners and I both struggled to commit and engage fully to the task of writing. I later realised that the act itself was an unfamiliar practice for them and for me. It is my analysis that the learners and I came from a background that did not encourage expression of thoughts, let alone putting them on paper. In my own childhood and as a learner I was never asked for an opinion on anything that had to do with knowledge and how I received it. The teacher was the source of information that was neither criticised nor analysed. It took a while for the learners and me to understand what these entries meant. The struggle was a permanent fixture in the process. We had to learn that writing in our journals was part of the learning curve we had to go through. My learners and I needed to express our thoughts and feelings throughout the process. The journal was the main tool for the source of information that I had as I also attempted to answer the question of: *Who am I as a practising educator and how can my understanding of my teaching practice assist in improving my teaching in sexuality education?*

2.5.4 Lesson planning

The journal entries and the questions and comments that emerged from the questionnaire and the charts assisted me in designing the lesson plans and learning programmes that also became part of the data collected. I incorporated the learners' questions within the existing learning area programmes as designed according to the NCS (National Curriculum Statement) for the intermediate phase (Department of Education, 2002). That meant that I had to identify relevant learning outcomes² and assessment standards as I developed the learning programmes, work schedules, and lesson plans for grade 6. To illustrate, to deal with the learners' questions on violence and abuse, I used the Life Orientation Learning Outcome 1 (which states learners will be able to make informed decisions regarding personal, community, and environmental health), with Assessment Standard 4 (learners identify different forms of abuse and suggests strategies to deal with them) was used. Here a group activity of five case studies highlighting different situations

² In current curriculum policy (see Department of Education, 2002), learning outcomes are what a learner is supposed to have achieved by the end of each lesson. Learning outcomes are used to plan the learning programmes and work schedules and each learning area has its own set of outcomes. Each learning outcome has a set of assessment standards. Assessment standards are what the teacher is supposed to use to measure each learner's achievement for the learning outcomes.

of rape as a form of abuse used. Questions were given to steer discussions and the learners had to present their findings to the class.

Additional data were collected as we engaged in the learning process doing different activities that were planned around the issues of sexuality. These activities took a form of group, peer, and individual tasks, and class discussions. An example is an Economics Management Science activity that was an individual task where learners had to draw a flow chart of money coming in and out of their homes and identify how this money was earned as part of the work done in the role players in the Economic Cycle. With a peer, they had to compare their findings and work out the differences they noticed within these flow charts. Each wrote a short paragraph on what came out from their talk as an English activity. (A detailed description of these activities given in Chapter Four, which is the data representation chapter.)

2.5.5 Community-based people as sources of information

When I ventured into my research, the school was approached by an NGO (Non-Government Organisation) named Project Hope. They had a programme for the grade 6 class that covered HIV/AIDS issues and related topics. This provided me the opportunity to use this NGO as a additional source of information for the class as they came once a week with different people with appropriate support. We reworked their programme, as it also had to be in line with was to be taught in Life Orientation. Their main contribution was on HIV/AIDS issues related to children being infected and affected.

I had also targeted the community clinic as another source of assistance for my teaching of issues of sexuality. This however proved to be futile as I got excuses from the clinic officials of being understaffed and unable to spare the available staff to come to the school. However, they gave me some flyers that related to health issues such as T.B., HIV/AIDS, and other communicable diseases.

2.6 Data Representation and Interpretation

In an attempt to draw the reader into my research process, I have used a narrative style in Chapter Four to represent the data gathered during my study. In this way, I hoped to tell the story of my research journey in a vivid and evocative manner and to allow my reader

to relive the experience with me (Richardson, 2003). I interpreted this data using Feldman's (2003) advice where I used my reflective journal, the learners' workbooks and diary entries made by learners to show different perspectives on the same lesson or activity, I also provided clear and detailed descriptions of how I interpreted this data by looking for significant issues and themes that emerged from the classroom experience (see Chapter four and Five). In Chapter Five, I identify and discuss five 'revelations' that have emerged from the study. I also show how my recognition of and engagement with these revelations have resulted in valuable changes in my practice as an educator.

2.7 Validity and Trustworthiness

To establish and demonstrate validity and trustworthiness in my study I have drawn on Feldman's (2003) suggestions for validity and trustworthiness in self-study research. Following Feldman's advice, I give clear and detailed descriptions in this chapter and in Chapter Four of how my data was collected and what counts as data in my study. To support my descriptions, I offer examples of data that provide evidence of both my experiences and my learners' experiences: my lesson plans; the learners' class work from our daily activities; my reflective teaching journal; the learners' diary entries written in notebooks (also see Chapter Four and the Appendices). The use of my reflective journal, the learners' workbooks, and diary entries made by learners show different perspectives on the same lesson or activity As per Feldman's suggestions, I also provide clear and detailed descriptions of how I interpreted this data by looking for significant issues and themes that emerged from the classroom experience (see Chapters Four and Five). Lastly, as recommended by Feldman, I provide evidence of the value of changes in my practice as an educator that result from this study (see Chapter Five).

2.8 Limitations of the Research Design

The limitations for the study are brought by my choice of research methodology. The study of the self in educational contexts is a fairly new methodology and therefore the techniques and processes need to be made explicit to the research audience (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). For example, the language used and writing style used may lead to the study being regarded as not academic. It is important to note that self-study research aims

to be accessible to a wider reading community and to allow even those readers who are not in the academic world to have access to the ideas and insight gained through the study (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005). Another point to note is that this self-study research will provide in-depth insight into my particular classroom and therefore the findings of my study cannot be generalised. However, with this study I aim to begin a dialogue of the issues that will emerge from the study leading to further research. It is envisaged that the study will have some lessons for other educators to self-reflect on their practice, not just on issues of sexuality but all learning areas in the school.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I given my own understanding of self-study as a research methodology. I have also discussed the research paradigm in which the study is located. I have given a description of the research setting and participants and discussed the data collection process. I have also given an indication of the approach to data representation and interpretation. Finally, I have discussed issues of validity and trustworthiness and the limitations of the research design.

The focus of the next chapter, which is Chapter Three, is analysis of the existing National Curriculum Statement for the Life Orientation programme where I discuss issues such as looking at the context in which the Life Orientation programme was developed. I also critically look at the type of learner that is envisaged by the policy in relation to the type of teacher that is envisaged in the policy. In addition, I consider how the Learning Outcomes in the policy are weighted.

C CHAPTER 3

A REVIEW OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCE CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three, I engage with the third critical question that underpins this dissertation: *What programmes, policies, and resources exist in schools and the teaching context around me that I can use to further engage with my learners as we learn about ourselves as teacher and learners?* To address this question, I analyse the existing National Curriculum Statement for life orientation (Department of Education, 2002) for the intermediate phase. This National Curriculum statement is the policy foundation for all that is planned and learned in a grade 6 class. In addition, I review the school-level policies and the resources required in the effective teaching of sexuality education in the school in which I conducted the research.

3.2 An Analysis of the Life Orientation Programme

In the National Curriculum Statement of 2002, which is the prescribed curriculum for grades R to 9 in South Africa, Life Orientation is seen as a guide that prepares learners for life and its possibilities. It is meant to equip learners with values, skills, and knowledge for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society. The central focus of the programme is to develop the self-in-society. Its vision is to facilitate individual growth so as to contribute towards the creation of a democratic society, a productive economy, and an improved quality of life in the community (Department of Education, 2002). However, in this thesis, I am asking these questions: *To what extent and in ways am I (and my colleagues) prepared, able and/or willing to implement this vision and in particular, to teach sexuality education in the classes allocated to me (us)? In what ways is the prescribed curriculum itself facilitative of my role as a sexuality educator in my class?* To address these questions, it is imperative that

I examine the context in which the Life Orientation curriculum was developed for South African schools.

3.2.1 The context in which the Life Orientation programme was developed

Prior to the inclusion of the Life Orientation programme in the prescribed curriculum for South African schools in 1997, there was no compulsory programme of sexuality education in our country. In my view, this means that there was a significant gap in the prescribed curriculum. Because sexuality education often formed part of the null curriculum (Eisner, 1979), many learners looked for answers outside the formal learning environment. In the process, they learnt a great deal of mis-educative information, which has led for some to a loss of a prosperous or productive future. In my days as a learner, we had what was termed Health Education. What was covered within that programme was based on the body and its changing form. Issues of sexuality were not part of the programme. Therefore, we turned to those that were willing and assumed able to provide answers. Information included how not to get pregnant when you had sex. One such method was that as soon as you got home after you had had sex with a boy you jumped up and down one hundred times. Another one was to stand on your hands and also count to a hundred; that was said to redirect the boy's sperm away from your eggs. Obviously, many of my schoolmates in those years fell pregnant and the majority of those girls had to drop out of school.

Furthermore, during my training as a teacher, we did not have any module that related to how to teach health or sexuality education. In my view, that was an indication of how sexuality education was disregarded. The closest we ever got to a health-related issue was first aid lessons and there was nothing related to sexuality in those lessons. Through the emergence of HIV/AIDS, however, the Department of Education saw an urgent need for a learning area that spoke of sexuality-related issues that had not been spoken of before and therefore had become the null curriculum in schools and communities. This emergency response is highlighted by a speech given by Kader Asmal (who was the Minister of Education when the current National Curriculum Statement for

Life Orientation was developed) (as cited in Jones, 2001, p. 3): “sexuality education is essential at a time when our society is experiencing unacceptable levels of exploitation, violence, and sexual abuse of the young, a devastating HIV/AIDS epidemic, high incidence of pregnancy among schoolgirls and high risk-taking behaviour among our young people.” Asmal argued that sexuality education needed to be integrated into the ethos of schools and the curriculum (Jones, 2001).

What interests me about Asmal’s speech is that teachers’ roles are not mentioned or considered, nor are their teaching skills and orientation to teaching this subject considered. In my view, the assumption was that, as teachers, we would be capable of implementing and willing to implement the prescribed sexuality education curriculum in schools. No mention was made of the intensive preparation of teachers that would be necessary if teachers were to understand the implications of such a programme for them and the learners they were to educate. As such, teachers have been left to find their own way to effective teaching of this new and often controversial subject. For this reason, I decided to investigate my own preparedness and willingness to teach the subject. To do this, I undertook self-study research that would investigate my own practice and the various personal, social, and professional factors that have influenced it and the barriers against my effective implementation of sexuality education, particularly in the primary school.

A second aspect of the official Life Orientation programme that interested me was its conceptualisation of the learners currently populating the diverse range of classrooms in South Africa. I address this in the section below.

3.2.2 The learner that is envisaged by the Life Orientation programme

The Revised National Curriculum statement Grade R–9 for Life Orientation acknowledges that South African learners will have to find a place for themselves within a world that is becoming:

increasingly different from that in which their parents [and, I would add, teachers] lived. Despite political change, learners live in a complex and challenging environment. Crime and violence are affect virtually every school, community, and individual learner. Environmental issues affect the health and well-being of

many communities. Within this context, learners have to develop a sense of confidence and competence in order to live well and contribute productively to the shaping of a new society. (Department of Education, 2002, p. 5)

The policy further states that it is aimed at addressing learners' competence and productivity by guiding them to develop their full potential in all spheres of life. The focus is on skills that empower learners to relate positively and contribute to family, community, and society life in South Africa. These skills are meant to be developed in the context of exercising constitutional rights and responsibilities while displaying tolerance for fellow human beings, their cultures, religions, values, and beliefs. The policy further aims at facilitating the development of coping skills that equip learners to deal with the challenges of a transforming South African society. All of this is aimed to be achieved through the four learning outcomes that have been set for the Intermediate Phase, which includes grades 4 to 6. These are:

- The learner is able to make informed decisions regarding personal and environmental health.
- The learner is able demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities and shows an understanding of diverse cultures and religions.
- The learner is able to use acquired life skills to achieve and extend personal potential to respond effectively to challenges in his/her world.
- The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of and participate in activities that promote movement and physical development. (Department of Education, 2002, pp. 28-35)

The above-mentioned learning outcomes rest on the assumption that the learners entering the intermediate phase have a solid grounding in life skills from the foundation phase (grades 1-3) Life Orientation programme. These outcomes imply that the children entering the intermediate phase already understand and accept the personal responsibility they have in their lives. The outcomes also rest on the assumption that the children's past experiences have been a positive influence in their lives that will make them more open to the next set of outcomes. In my view, learners in my school lack the background needed for them to accept and adapt to the learning outcomes of the intermediate phase.

Hence, the intention of this study is to focus on finding out where my learners are actually coming from and to let them guide me into the kind of knowledge they are looking for.

A related consideration of the Life Orientation curriculum and the extent to which it is likely to be implemented effectively in schools lies in the ways in which the four learning outcomes are weighted.

3.2.3 The weighting of the learning outcomes in the policy

Each learning outcome (LO) in the policy is weighted against the other to determine the amount of time or number of periods the educator is to spend on each. When I analysed this weighting, what is being prioritised as issues of concern for learners and what is not became very apparent. To illustrate, in the policy, LO 1 (Health Promotion) is weighted at 13 % , LO 2 (Social Development) is weighted at 27 % , LO 3 (personal development) is also at 27 % and LO 4 (Physical Development and Movement) is at 33% .

Such weighting of the LOs created a dilemma for me as I set out to plan the integration of sexuality education in my lessons in the learning areas of Life Orientation, English, and Economics Management Science. What was of interest for me was the allocation of time given to LO 1 (Health Promotion), as it had the minimum time allocated. I find this hard to understand in the era of HIV/AIDS and the political and social rhetoric regarding the role of education and teachers in curbing the spread of the HI virus. Specifically, this weighting posed a dilemma for me in the context of the learners' questions about what they wanted to learn (as shown in the initial anonymous survey—see Chapter Two and Appendix B). For example, their responses and questions indicated that the bulk of what they would like to learn about, such as the physical changes that take place in boys and girls, sex, and others, could be located within LO 1, the very LO allocated the minimum time in the curriculum. The low weighting of LO 1 suggested to me that the Life Orientation policy does not really address the immediate day-to-day needs of each and every child in the classroom. Consequently, my self-study project was informed by the notion that sexuality education needs to shift from disease prevention towards promoting more socially-oriented health-enhancing behaviour

(Khoza, 2004, p35). Like Khoza, I believe that I need to teach learners about sexual development, sexual behaviour and its possible negative outcomes, sexual abuse, gender issues and power relations, among others . As a practicing educator, I need to be aware that when the learners come to my classroom they already have been partly socialised in sexuality through what they have observed in the environment around them and some through personal experience.

My frustrations grew as I discovered that the Life Orientation programme for the intermediate phase did not cover some of the issues that were highlighted by my survey. This meant that I had to look closely at the LOs of the other learning areas in which I was going to integrate sexuality issues to find opportunities for addressing my learners' questions. I decided that, for instance, in English the issue of homosexuality could be addressed through 'tolerance' as a learning content. It is this kind of creativity that the Life Orientation policy implicitly calls for as it defines the role of the teacher.

3.2.4 The teacher that is envisaged by the Life Orientation programme.

Notwithstanding its silence and low weighting of the particular LO which addresses health issues in the Life Orientation curriculum, the policy demands very complex and creative ways of interpreting the curriculum from teachers. For example, it stipulates that the role of the teacher is to plan lessons that are interactive and stimulate learner interest. It also requires teachers to be flexible and always take the needs and realities of learners into account (Department of Education, 2002). As I was planning my lessons, I started to wonder whose needs the policy was really referring to. The responses of the learners in the survey suggested to me that we adults are far from understanding their needs. In my view, the policy is based on assumed needs that we (the Department, teachers, and parents) think learners have. Do we really want, for instance, to acknowledge that they may want to know "*why does white stuff come out from the boy's penis?*" (a question posed by a learner in my survey)?

The policy also stipulates that the learning outcomes should be integrated into the other learning areas in that grade or phase. The policy further states that teachers need to have a clear understanding of the role of integration when planning the lessons. In my view, that suggests an assumption that teachers are already clear and comfortable with the

content of the policy and thus will be able integrate the learning outcomes in other learning areas. But do we really have teachers who are ready to deal with such questions and be as creative as the policy stipulates? Jansen (2001) highlights this dilemma when he shows how problematic the relationship between policy images of what a reformed teacher should look like and the personal identities of teachers (which define the understandings that they hold of themselves) can be. The responsibility that teachers have when teaching about sexuality is to be clear about the message or lesson we want learned by our learners for every lesson taught. Gordon & Ellington (2006, p. 252) state that “scripting theory suggests that students do not simply hear and enact sexual scripts presented to them in sexuality education, but instead actively interpret, revise, weigh and attach meaning to these messages”. If we as educators are not clear about the message we want to convey, or the message is entangled in our own world full of ‘demons’, then the outcome will be the continuance of the silence around sexuality issues.

✦ The reality for us as adults in the lives of these children is to acknowledge that they are sexually curious, and that some have experimented with sex in one way or the other, even at 11 years of age (the average age in my grade 6 class). According to Khoza, (2004, p. 35) “sexuality lessons are first learned from parents who have the primary responsibility for providing sexuality education for their children. As the child starts primary and secondary schooling, the responsibility expands to the teachers.” In the case of my learners, many parents are trying to make ends meet in the context of unemployment and thus they often neglect their responsibility for their children’s education. The neglected areas include talking about sexuality issues with their children. This has been exacerbated by HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has tended to leave many children orphaned and without any adult supervision and care outside of school. Consequently the school, including the teacher, increasingly has to take over the responsibility (Van Rooyen, 1997). The task is then left to teachers who, in my view, are not adequately prepared to step into this important role. As such, the responsibility that I have as an educator is to understand this extended role that I have to play, particularly as it relates to the teaching of sexuality issues in primary school. Proper sexuality education is meant to assist the youth, teenagers, and adolescents in understanding their own sexuality and helping them to make responsible decisions regarding their sexual health

(Khoza, 2004). Again, more questions arise from this assertion: Are parents playing an effective role as the primary caregivers and educators in relation to sexuality education? My assessment in the school community in which I work has been that they are not.

3.3 School-Based Policies and Resources

In addition to these national and provincial policies, schools are expected to develop their own policies that address the issues that impact on them as well as that assist and give direction to the running of the school and development (For each school, there are school-based policies that the school is supposed to develop that are meant to assist and give direction to the running of the school and development (Revised Curriculum Statement, 2002) Such policies include the HIV/AIDS policy, the Discipline policy and Safety and Security policy and others. In the school where I conducted my research, not a single one of these polices was in existence. Upon a conversation with the Head of Department in the school I was informed that the policies I was looking for were nonexistent and the school was about to engage in developing such policies. When asked why had it taken the school so long to develop such policies, I was informed that as a school they lacked the capacity to create policies and the parent body in the school was not literate enough to engage in such activity. To me this suggested that the school was functioning with no foundation or direction. It is these policies, such as the HIVAIDS policy, that are meant to guide the school in terms of dealing with the social ills that are affecting the learners of the school. It is through the direction of these policies that schools are meant to be guided in terms of action to be taken.

I then looked at the availability of resources within the school and community that would assist in the teaching and learning process. The school is a section 20 school (Norms and Standards given as paper money) where they place orders for teaching resources. Through that system, the school has managed to obtain charts, chalks, photocopier, fax machines, telephone, 34 computers for learners and one for the educators. The school also provides the learners with pencils, pens, rulers, workbooks and rubbers. The school is less than 1 kilometre away from the community library and is central for all learners in

the community and learners of the school to use. The school ground is gravel and that makes outside activities impossible.

Where the school due to its large numbers in the classroom falls short, the teachers are said to improvise and work with the available materials. In that way some of the activities that required teaching aids for teachers to engage effectively with the curriculum were made possible. It made planning and teaching easier. The dairies for the research that were used by the learners were provided by the school. The rest of the activities for the research were done with ease as I was able to copy the work for every child where needed.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have offered an analysis of the Life Orientation curriculum policy. I have also discussed the context in which the policy was developed. In addition, I considered the type of learner and teacher envisaged within the policy. I also looked at how the learning outcomes of the programme are weighed against each other, reflecting what is given priority within the policy. Furthermore, I discussed policies and resources within my school.

The focus of the next chapter, which is Chapter Four, is the representation of the data that was collected through a variety of activities done with the learners as we integrated sexuality education across learning areas such as Economics Management Science, English, and Life Orientation.

CHAPTER 4

HOW THE RESEARCH PROCESS UNFOLDED

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four, I aim to draw the reader into how I as a researcher, and also a practising grade 6 educator, have experienced the journey of my self-study research. In the chapter, I tell the story of my research journey in which I attempted to integrate sexuality education across three learning areas: Life Orientation, Economics Management Science, and English. I reflect on what took place by revisiting different phases of my study and I consider how my own concept of sexuality and my attitude towards the learners affected the learning process. I start by explaining how the journey began and I then revisit some of the experiences that my learners and I went through as we attempted to relearn and communicate with each other about sexuality-related matters. In this representation of my research data, I present data from one lesson or two lessons per learning area to illustrate what took place during the learning and teaching process. (I interpret this data in Chapter Five.)

I have chosen to use a narrative style to represent the data collected in order to tell the story of my research journey in a vivid and evocative way and to allow my reader to ‘relive’ the journey with me (Richardson, 2003). Self-study involves cycles of inquiry that may result in changes in practice over time (LaBoskey, 2004). Thus, I do not see this research as an endpoint, as research would typically be, but rather a beginning that is intended to contribute to the field of education by serving as an exemplar of practice to other practitioners and that might continue to inform my own and my readers’ thinking, teaching, and research (Griffiths & Windle, 2002). In that way, we will keep the story going as we further learn to educate about sexuality in a manner that may lead to positive, life-changing behaviour.

4.2 How the Journey Began

When I registered for a Masters programme, my only agenda was to get that degree and see what might come next. Thoughts of research topics and burning issues I wanted to explore were unthought-of. This was until I registered for the Contemporary Issues in

Curriculum Module where I was given an opportunity to really think about what my Masters meant. During one of the activities that we did, we had to think of three issues that could be turned into questions to consider for a mini-research project. I had three very different topics: (a) how teachers' interpretation of prescribed assessment requirements affected learning in schools, (b) school managers' understanding of the drawing up and implementation of policies in schools, and (c) the increase of teenage pregnancy despite the Life Orientation programme in schools.

Although one of the topics I selected was sexuality-related, I was not comfortable with the subject. However, I was encouraged to really think about why the issue of teenage pregnancy should concern me. My lecturer kept insisting I talk more about the issue. Through the explanation I gave, I became passionate about the topic and I began to realise how teen sexuality issues affected me as a grade 6 teacher. I started to become more observant of how the realities that exist in our schools put the young of today at risk. The final link that brought about the topic that I ended up pursuing was when I learnt about self-study as a research methodology in the same module.

Through the module, I came to recognise the role us teachers play in how learners interpret and use the knowledge we attempt to impart to them. I was encouraged to re-evaluate my own teaching practice. I realised that my feeling of anxiety about sexuality education was not due to not wanting to talk about sexuality; it was due to my reluctance to do so in the presence of young children. That led me to reflect on what sexuality meant to me and on how I was taught about sexuality related matters. I also came to realise that I might not be the only one who felt such anxiety when I had to even think about sexuality and children in one sentence.

The issue then became how I could deal with this anxiety while at the same time assisting learners to come to understand their own sexuality related anxieties and concerns in the context of a learning environment such as a school. Although Life Orientation is taught in my school, I felt it was not enough with just two periods per week. Thus, the final research question that I explored in my mini-research project was: *How can I integrate sexuality education in other learning areas in a grade 6 class?* This question and my experience of undertaking the mini-research project were the starting points for the self-study research that I report on in this thesis.

4.3 The Journey Continued: The Research

The module mentioned above paved the way for the actual research journey that I undertook for this thesis. When entering the process, I thought I already knew what I wanted to explore in my thesis. I also had a good idea of how I wanted to approach it. I took the topic of *integrating sexuality education* into the actual research process. I was just as scared as I had ever been in the beginning. I knew I was taking this topic to children whom I was not yet familiar with as it was in the beginning of the school year and I had no idea how they were going to respond to the process and the issues we would have to engage in. I also knew that they too were not familiar with me as an educator other than what they had heard from other learners.

I realised that I had to relearn how to teach sexuality related issues and that I had to find and work on the areas that might prevent that process from running smoothly. As part of the process, I felt that I needed to integrate sexuality matters across the curriculum. Hence, integration was an important component of my research topic. Integration plays a central role in the Outcomes-Based approach to education that informs current curriculum policy in South Africa (Department of Education, 2002). The policy suggests that the historically fragmented nature of knowledge can be overcome through integration. In my study, I wanted to learn to implement integration not for its own sake but rather to support the learning and teaching of sexuality-related matters in my classroom. The aim of integration was to allow me answer as many questions as possible that learners might ask by sharing these questions among diverse learning areas. The choice of learning areas for this integration were already predetermined for me as they were my 2007 teaching subjects in grade 6: Life Orientation, English, and Economics Management Science. Thus, these three learning areas became part of my research process.

What was first on the agenda for me was to critically analyse my current teaching practice in the classroom. I had to look at the manner in which I taught and approached my lessons and at the relationship that I had with the learners. This exercise literally became a journey of revelation and awareness, as I began to see how a typical day in my class involved a stereotypical learning process. I would arrive with a planned lesson

based on the learning outcome³ that was the focus for that period with relevant worksheets. The learning process was wholly guided by the prescribed or “preactive” (Goodson, 1990) curriculum, which in South Africa is termed the Revised Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 2002). As discussed in Chapter Three, I firmly believed that the curriculum policies were designed in the best interests of the learners of my class. I also believed that the implementation guidelines would make my teaching easy. However, I later found out that these guidelines were not nearly enough.

As I reflected on my teaching, I realised how I dominated every aspect of the classroom environment in an attempt to keep the order that I felt was important for effective learning to take place. The rules were firmly set by me as to how we were going to learn and communicate with each other. Nevertheless, I came to understand that, in order for my research to go well, I had to revise my thinking about being ‘in control’ in the classroom. I realised that I could not expect the learners to be part of the learning process when they had no power at all to make decisions about this process. I was also aware that the topics we were about to engage in were of a sensitive nature and that they might lead to discomfort for both the learners and me. I had to make sure that the learners felt that their voices mattered and that they felt respected by each other and me.

As the process of the research began, I had to talk with the children of the class about their involvement and the role they would play in the process. The learners had to give me permission to work with them and, during that initial discussion, I had to make sure they understood their rights and those of their parents. The issue of informed consent was especially important because of the sensitive nature of issues of sexuality. I explained to the learners that some of the activities would be anonymous and that they would have to assume pseudonyms for their diaries (I discuss these diaries as a data collection tool in more detail in Chapter Two). At that time, permission from parents had already been granted; this was first a verbal agreement and was then later followed by a signed letter (see Appendix A). During the initial discussion with the learners, I felt very uneasy as in my classroom environment I had always maintained a leading role, which

³ In current curriculum policy (see Department of Education, 2002), learning outcomes are what a learner is supposed to have achieved by the end of each lesson. Learning outcomes are used to plan the learning programmes and work schedules and each learning area has its own set of outcomes. Each learning outcome has a set of assessment standards. Assessment standards are what the teacher is supposed to use to measure each learner’s achievement for the learning outcomes.

served the purpose when it came to maintaining order and discipline. With 54 children in the classroom, I wondered how I was going to change to a situation where the learners shared the power with me, which I knew without a doubt had to happen if I wanted them to trust and respect each other and me. At the same time, I needed the learners to feel that they truly mattered. In the reflection that I wrote after this first discussion session, I showed this dilemma as I wrote:

I'm really not sure if this group of children is the right one for this kind of activity. Their grade 5 educators have already wished us good luck with them as, according to them, they are the worst group ever. I am not sure whether they will understand the process we are about to engage in. (Lungile, Journal, 24 January 2007)

All the children in my class assured me they did not mind being part of the research that we were to engage in. However, as I knew that sometimes, due to cultural teachings, children cannot say no to an adult, let alone one of their teachers, I gave them an option of pulling out if they felt they did not want me to refer to their work in my thesis. However, they were also made to understand that if they chose for me not to use their work in my research, they would still have to participate in the learning process as the teaching and learning would be done within assessed content. It appeared that the children had never before been given a chance to choose whether or not to be part of an activity in class and therefore they were not sure what to make of it. The results of that day were not clear to me as I wrote as part of my reflection:

I wonder if the looks I got were of them wondering if I had lost my mind or wondering how they can use this to their advantage. I feel as though this will not work, the practice of it looks as if it will be different from the plan. I will have to wait and see how they will respond to the anonymous self-administered survey. (Lungile, Journal, 24 January).

The anonymous self-administered survey (see Chapter Two and Appendix B) was the first learning activity that I did with the children as part of my research. This activity was vital to the process, as that was where the learners gave their input regarding their 'burning' issues of sexuality. These issues paved the way towards drawing up the learning programmes, work schedules, and lesson plans for the three learning areas that

were part of the process. The learners' understanding of the task was crucial. The idea behind the survey was to elicit a variety of questions and statements from the learners about issues that they thought were important to them regarding sexuality matters. Because the children are all Zulu speaking, I knew that language, with English as the medium of instruction at the school, could be a barrier to the learners' understanding of and response to the activity. Hence, the preliminary discussions were held mostly in Zulu to facilitate understanding. I gave the learners an opportunity to respond in any language that they felt comfortable with. Comfort was an important factor in this research, as I had to make sure that learners were always comfortable with what they were asked to do.

After the self-administered survey, the task left was for me to sit and go through each response written. I used A4 sheets of paper to write down questions and statements that were of the same kind; in that way I formed different categories, such as HIV/AIDS-related questions, physical changes, relationships, and sex. As I went through the survey responses, I experienced so many emotions that made me take more time than I had planned. As I wrote in my journal:

God Help! I still cannot believe some of the questions asked by the learners. The few that I have read shocked me. When I read these questions, I cannot help but visualise the learners in my head and this makes it difficult to read them, let alone decide on which learning area will best suit each question or statement made. I cannot help but wish all questions asked had nothing to do with the learning areas I was teaching. (Lungile, Journal, 6 February 2007)

The following are some examples of the questions asked⁴:

- *How can people tell that I am not a virgin?*
- *Why didn't I see my father when he was dead?*
- *Why do people marry when they already have children?*
- *What is abuse, I head it so many times on T.V.?*
- *Why do I wake up with my penis pointing up? Please do say I am growing up as this will not stop.*

⁴ Some of the entries and work done by the learners were in their mother tongue, isiZulu, and have been translated into English.

- *If someone abuse us at home, if we tell police or childline they can kill us, all of us what should we do?*
- *If my friend have HIV and she do not want to tell me and her other friend tell me and her family don't know she has HIV if I tell her family she can hate me. What should I do? (Learners' Responses to Self-Administered Questionnaire Survey, 6 February 2007)*

I had also given the learners a chance to write in their diaries what they thought of the task. I was disappointed to find that the learners were not very clear as to what they had to write about and because they knew that I would not know who they were, the majority did not bother to write anything. This made me despair until I realised that, to them, I was asking too much. It appeared that having to explain their thoughts and views on something was new to them. They were not sure how to deal with it. Although I had informed them that they were free to use their mother tongue in their writing, still very little was written. Most had pretended to be writing. However those who did write, like this one child, wrote, "*Awu Miss, I don't know what to say it was ok.*" (boy)

I decided to read the dairies and the responses to the survey at home and not in the class. I did not want the learners to observe the reaction I might have when reading their work, thus making them not want to do it again as they feel judged. How could I read out a question that said, "*How do I sex a girl?*" (boy)?

At home, I set about looking for commonality within the questions asked by the learners. The task to follow was allocating the questions into the different learning areas. One of the learning areas that came out strongly for integration was Natural Science, since some of the questions were about physical changes that the learners were going through, such as growing hair in some parts of their bodies and questions about where babies come from.

As I was not teaching Natural Science, I decided to approach the educator concerned with the idea of her using some of the questions to look into the policy for the learning area and to find relevant learning outcomes such as reproduction in human beings and animals. Her response after our discussions was positive and I believed that she would cover the questions as promised. However, I later found that she never bothered. I felt that I was not in the position to push her. Although some of the topics are

covered within the policy, she elected to ignore them. I realised that she must have her own ‘demons’ and who was I to judge when I had my own to deal with?

The responses the learners gave to the survey gave me hope that maybe we were going to be all right after all. I could see the commitment they had from the responses they gave. However there were those that I could tell were not interested and were just aiming to shock me. I must admit they succeeded in this, with questions such as “*Miss can you tell me how does a girl’s vagina looks like?*” (boy).

One of the follow-up activities that we did was poster creations, which we did in the Life Orientation periods. To create these posters, learners had to work as groups. As explained in Chapter Two of this thesis, the posters were aiming at eliciting more information to help plan the lessons. The learners created posters in response to prompts such as: *For the last 5 years of doing Life Orientation and life skills, what have you learned? What are your greatest fears in life?* The group tasks were rather daunting for me. Getting 54 learners to sit still and work in groups of six or seven and to focus on the task at hand was not easy. It was at these times that I had to think of ways to help them to settle down. One of the methods that I used was to appoint monitors for the each task who maintained order when my attention was diverted somewhere else. During the group tasks, I felt sure that by the end of the journey I would have lost my mind! However, I was very proud of the posters they produced through the noise and the, “*Please miss. She is not doing anything but disturb us*” (a learner).

The outcomes from the posters gave me some perspective as to where the learners were in terms of knowledge and understanding of sexuality-related issues. I gained understanding of how much of the learning outcomes already covered in previous grades they had mastered and contextualised. An observation that I made when viewing the posters was:

The content of the posters in my view shows how technical the knowledge the learners have is. Yes, they know how to be safe by not smoking or walking in the dark and they also know how we get infected with HIV/AIDS, which is just some of the sentences and pictures they have included in their charts. What I found to be missing in the posters is their understanding of what the information meant to them and their lives and how they relate what they have learned to the reality of

the same issues they wrote. Such as, one of the statements made by the learners was 'smoking kills' and I know for a fact that some of the boys in my class do smoke and have been caught smoking during break time (Lungile, Journal, 9 February 2007).

The challenge was then how I could teach the learners in a manner that would enable them to gain not only facts, but also understanding of the issues in connection with their own lives and situations.

Later, with all the information from the survey and the poster activities, I had to sit down and work out the 'how to integrate' part. This was not an easy task. Life Orientation and English seemed to be straightforward; however, with Economics Management Science it became a little difficult. Not all learning outcomes could integrate sexuality issues. An example is Learning Outcome Four, which is where learners are expected to demonstrate knowledge and the ability to responsibly apply a range of managerial, consumer, and financial skills. With such a learning outcome, it is difficult to integrate sexuality issues and I did not find relevant questions and statements from the survey and posters that could fit with Learning Outcome Four. I had not anticipated this dilemma. In addition, some of the learners' questions could not really be located within any specific learning area. I remember the frustrations I had and I found myself thinking, "*I cannot do this!*" (At that time, as I explain in Chapter Two, I, like my learners, was not yet familiar with writing a journal and so some of the valuable data in my view was missed.) Eventually the planning took shape as illustrated in the following sections. It should be noted that not all the work planned and taught could be included in this thesis and therefore only a portion of the work done during the teaching and learning process is presented in the following sections:

4.3.1 Life Orientation

In each learning area, I had to identify learning outcomes and assessment standards that would relate to the issues highlighted by the learners' questions and statements. For the Life Orientation learning area, I identified Learning Outcome One, which is health promotion. With this learning outcome, I was able to use Assessment Standard Three, which is explaining communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and available

treatment, and evaluating prevention strategies, in relation to community norms and personal values. I could also use Assessment Standard Four, which is identifying different forms of abuse and suggesting strategies to deal with them. Learning Outcome Two, which is social development, was also identified. I could link this to Assessment Standard Three, which discusses effects of gender stereotyping and sexism and abuse on personal and social relationships. This allowed integration within a learning area to take place. The type of questions that could be dealt with in relation to these learning outcomes were those that related to relationships between boys and girls, forms of abuse, gender differences, and HIV/AIDS, to name but a few.

The following is a lesson I used as a stage to open up topics for debating as a class. This was one of the most informative and revealing lessons that we engaged in, as it challenged me and exposed learners to issues and feelings that were revelations for them. This, in my observation, was more so for the girls in the class. This observation was supported by the comments they made in their journals after the discussions such as the comment “ *today I had fun with the boys and girls, but I did not know that they can even say the way we wear our clothes is wrong. If I wear stomach out and short skirt that does not mean I love boys. Miss I want to say to the boys when they say girls sell their bodies that they do not know why. Some of them have problems and others are trying to help their parents eat and paying their fees.* (Amahle, Dairy, 21 July 2007) . In the lesson, we looked at different forms of rape existing within the community and the world. The lesson was structured in this way: In groups of seven, mixing boys with girls, the learners had to read different case studies, which I took from an activity book of sexuality education. They had to read and explain to each other the content of each case. They then had to answer the three questions that were part of each case. The learners had to write down the responses they agreed on and select a reader and a presenter, who would read the case to the rest of the class and the responses the group gave to each question. After each presentation, there were discussions on the case and the responses given by the group and the rest of the class had a chance to have a say in the issues.

The following is an example of one of the cases given to the class:

CASE D

Dudu is 14. Her boyfriend Vuyo is 18. He tells her that if she loves him she must have sex with him. Dudu is crazy about him so after a lot of resisting she agrees. She tells him she is not on any contraception. He says that's ok, a young girl won't get pregnant and anyway, a child will prove him a man and her a real woman. Dudu does not really enjoy the few times they had sex because she is frightened and she knows her parents will be furious if they find out. Then she discovers that Vuyo is also seeing another girl. He comforts her saying that all guys must sleep with lots of girls but he loves her most because she was a virgin. He warns her to stick to him- and say he will beat up any guy messing with his property. Dudu is heartbroken, but loves him so continues to sleep with him. Then she falls pregnant. Her parents ask the father is and when she tells, they lay a charge of rape against him.

The group then had to answer these questions:

1. Was Dudu raped?
2. Were her parents right to lay a charge?
3. What are the chances of Dudu getting HIV/AIDS from Vuyo?

This particular case caused the most arguments in the class, as boys could not understand why it was seen as rape when they were boyfriend and girlfriend. They felt the girl was just angry that the boy had other girlfriends and that the parents should not have interfered as it was between the boy and the girl. I have never struggled so much not to express an opinion. The boys in the class dominated the debate, which lead to girls starting to doubt themselves. I wanted so much to give them an explanation as to why the parents had laid a charge. The responses of the boys also angered me so much. As I later reflected when I still could not get the debate out of my head:

I felt so out of control of the lesson today as I wanted so much to inform the boys of the legal part of having a relationship with a child of 14 when you as a boy are 18. When one of the boys asked me, "Miss is it still a crime if a girl of the same age has a relationship with a boy under 18?", I felt the double standards of the community as he went on to say, "but Miss the community does not say anything when older women have relationships with younger boys. However when we boys talk to young girls we are shouted at and told that we are dirty boys. (Lungile, Journal, 18 July 2007)

I felt the reasoning of the boys in my class was typical of boys and men. I wanted to answer on behalf of the girls, not as their teacher, but as a woman who had strong opinions about relationships between boys and girls. It was also a revelation to me that I was not as uncomfortable with some issues as I had assumed I would be. When the learners exhibited openness and frankness in their opinions, I found I also became relaxed. When I reflected back on that lesson, it showed me the growth of the relationship between the learners and myself:

This lesson went better than I thought. Even though I had to postpone some of the presentations to other periods, I do not mind. As long as I got them talking, I really do not care. I feel I have gained some headway with the learners. I do not honestly think I could have had this kind of reaction if it were normal teaching and learning. I do feel that the girls were sometimes not part of the discussion. I am not happy with the times in the debate when the boys totally dominated the talks. The way that I later saw it was they felt intimidated by the boys who started to talk louder and with feeling and the girls gave their power to the boys and to me it seemed like they fell into the habit. I tried to draw them in by provoking them with some of the statements that the boys said. Still it did not help. (Lungile, Journal, 18 July 2007)

This lesson was just one of the highlights for me as an educator to reflect on creating open discussions on such issues and allowing the learners to talk and listen to each other. I know that although the girls did not participate fully, they could not help but hear from boys what they truly felt about girls and relationships.

Another such lesson was on, “*What do we think about boys and girls?*” In this lesson, I divided the learners into boys- and girls-only groups. The work was anonymous and the groups had to write down what they thought of the opposite sex. I read out the responses to the class and the opposite sex that the statements were about had to respond to the opinions the other had about them.

What stood out was that during the responses made by the boys, I really experienced embarrassment like never before, as one of the boys stood up and said, “*Miss, I feel it is only fair that I agree with the girls that boys only think about sex when they see them. You see, with me every time when I see a girl the first part of my body that*

sees her is my penis. I get an erection and the penis is the one that leads me to her. It has nothing to do with how she looks.” He then turned to the rest of the boys in the class and told them to agree with him as he was telling the truth. He went on to say, “*Miss, I do not know what love is but I know what I need to say to get the girl.*” I was mortified. It did not help that the boy who made the comment was the ‘hunk’ of the class and most of the other boys followed his lead. Hence, when his hand was up, it took me a long time to point to him to hear what he had to say. I always knew whatever he had to say would either disrupt the flow of the lesson or irritate me intensely. However, I also knew I could not ignore him for long.

After he finished talking, I had no idea how to respond to his statement. The girls were very embarrassed, while the boys laughed so hard I had to contain them to listen. I did the best that I could to ignore this boy and his statement and I took a decision that for the rest of that lesson I was not going to point to him. I later wrote in my journal:

Oh my GOD!!! That boy. I could kill him for his statement. At the back of my mind, I knew he made a good point that was necessary for the girls to hear, but did he have to do it in front of the whole class? Mind you, the whole point was made in Zulu and it sounded so raw and so not right! I was not comfortable at all. It did not help that he assisted his words with hand gestures for emphasis. Today, the reality of my demons came to life. I could not stand to hear that kind of talk from a 15-year-old boy in my own language. I also realised today how much we hide behind English in my case, as it made it unreal to me, it softened it for me, and made it sound like I was not saying those words. (Lungile, Journal, 12 July 2007)

4.3.2 Economics Management Science

For this learning area, I chose Learning Outcome One, which is the economic cycle, with Assessment Standard Three, which is different flows of resources and services in the economic cycle such as the flow of money (wages) to households in exchange for labour. I also selected Learning Outcome Two, which is sustainable growth, and development, where we explore past and present economic history, different role players in the economy, and ethics and the economy. With Learning Outcome Three, I used

Assessment Standard One, where children research and analyse standards of living and patterns of consumption in modern societies where people specialise and trade to satisfy needs and wants. These two learning outcomes were then integrated with the Life Orientation learning area using Learning Outcome One with Assessment Standard Three (see the preceding section).

One of the lessons I designed involved looking at how natural disasters and pandemics affect the stakeholders within the economic cycle (government, households, and businesses). The lesson title was: *How does HIV/AIDS Affect Families and Businesses?* I gave learners a story of Phumi Dlamini to read:

Phumla Dlamini

Phumla Dlamini is a hairdresser. She did part time domestic work to pay for her training at collage. Now she has a hair Salon in her small house in Sebokeng. Phumla supports her mother and younger brother and sister. Two years ago she had got HIV from her boyfriend. Now she is quite sick and can only work a few days a week. She cannot afford to pay for the special drugs to treat HIV/AIDS.

Questions asked:

1. Is Phumla a consumer or producer in the economic cycle?
2. How does Phumla's illness affect her ability to work?
3. What will happen to the money flow from the consumers if Phumla can only work a few days every week?
4. How does her illness affect her family?
5. How does her illness affect her customers?

This activity gave us the opportunity to look at HIV/AIDS as a pandemic that affects the lives of everybody concerned. I gave the learners a set of questions that they had to answer as individual work. However, like most of the lessons, we had a discussion as a class on Phumla's predicament. I purposefully made sure that in most of the lessons we had an open discussion that we shared as a class. This opened issues up and gave everybody an opportunity to ask questions and to listen and learn together.

In this kind of lesson, we got a chance to deal with issues of having somebody ill in the family and how that could affect everybody. We had to talk for the first time like

adults about death. After this lesson, I had such respect for the insight the learners had. I became aware of my preconceived idea that children could not talk about death in an open platform. It also made me realise how much the children in my class knew about such sensitive issues as some had experienced these first hand. One of the learners reflected on the lesson by writing (in Zulu):

In 1996 my mother was sick and her friends were gossiping that she was HIV positive. However, she only had T.B. and she did not care, as she knew she did not have AIDS. When people want to make fun of her they would pass by our house saying HIV. She was sick for a long time. She got better, those people who were laughing at her the majority of them are now sick, and others are dead. I never want to laugh at sick people because I do not know what the future holds for me. Maybe I will be the one sick. I will never laugh at anybody. (Aphiwe⁵)

The learners were able to use the Economics Management Science lessons to reflect on their own home situations and relate them to what was learned. This is illustrated by the following reflection on the flow of money into the household to meet needs and wants:

What I did not like when I was little my father did not leave us any money and he never bought me anything until I was older. However although my heart bleeds I hold no hate for him. I did not like sleeping without food for two days only eating pap [maize meal] only. God knows everybody knows their own home situation. (Sindiswa)

Reading the learners' responses gave me the strength that I needed to move forward with the work. I found I lost my shyness. The learners' issues became real to me and I knew whatever personal difficulties I had with the content, their situation superseded everything.

4.3.3 English

In English, I made use of all four learning outcomes, which are Listening, Writing, Talking, and Reading. Sexuality was used as the teaching content for the term with creative writing as the focus. I developed most of the English lessons from the lessons that we had done in the two other learning areas. For example, after we did the Phumla

⁵ For confidentiality, all names have been changed.

story in Economics Management Science, I gave learners a short reading (see Thandazile's Story in Appendix C) as a reading comprehension activity. The learners read the story in their sitting groups and assisted each other in explaining difficult words and finding them in the dictionaries provided by the school. We later read the story together as a class. The story came with questions based on the reading. One of the questions asked, "How did you feel about Thandazile's situation after reading the story?" One of the learner's responses was:

When I read Thandazile's story I felt sorry for her. If I were Thandazile, I would ask for help. I would say to her Mrs Ndaba may I ask you can you please take me to the orphans home. If she said all right, I will like to go with Zodwa, Sipho, Gogo and aunty Dudu. We are going to live a happy life with all other children and I can go to school and aunty Dudu can get a job. (Zamandosi)

In addition, one of the most interesting activities that we did in English was the story writing activity. This is where we first learned the difference between a fiction and a non-fiction story. We also learned new words, such as the difference between a fact and an opinion. Each child had to write both types of stories. For the fiction stories, they had to write a story that was life changing in a positive or negative way. In my journal, I highlighted what I found interesting about these stories:

I cannot help but wonder if the learners are not using their own life experiences and making them seem as if they were made up. The details of incidents are real and the emotions they went through when they wrote stories of illness, death of relatives, and abuse, I wondered how much of it is fiction and how much is real. This made me feel there is so much more in their stories that a mere research process will not even begin to touch on the issues. What I found most interesting with the stories was the majority of the stories were of negative events and very few on positive events. I realise that as teachers we really need to work on our issues because we have children that need us to be there for them. Our role as teachers seems to be growing each day. I just wonder if we are ready for it. (Lungile, Journal, 10 August 2007)

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to draw the reader into how I have experienced the journey of my self-study research. I have told the story of my experience of integrating sexuality education in the three learning areas that I taught. I have also reflected on what took place by revisiting different phases of the research reflecting on how my concept of sexuality and attitude towards learners affected the learning process.

Throughout the teaching and learning activities and everything that took place, I found myself lost within the study. I began by looking into my 'demons' that prevented me from effectively engaging with the learners when dealing with sexuality matters. The learners were part of the process in discovering and dealing with these demons. In the end, in my view, the demons that emerged within the learners in terms of what they had to deal with made my own issues unreal and unimportant to me. As I planned each lesson, I found I was thinking more on how it would make a difference in the learners' lives. My issues and anxiety took second place to thoughts of how each day I could make a difference in a child's life in a profound manner that would matter to him or her.

In the following chapter, Chapter Five, I interpret the data presented in Chapter Four by identifying and discussing five significant revelations that have emerged from the study. I also consider how I could build on these revelations to improve my future practice and I highlight some possible lessons for other educators.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA INTERPRETATION **WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS SELF-STUDY? IMPLICATIONS FOR** **POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH**

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Five, I interpret the data that I represent in Chapter Four of this thesis. This data was collected during the self-study research journey that I undertook with the learners of my grade 6 class. Through this study, I explored how I could integrate sexuality education across three subject areas in my teaching.

I began this self-study with hesitation and uneasiness about the journey I was to engage in. I felt out of control of what was to take place as I was about to be taken out of my comfort zone which I was accustomed to in my teaching environment. I was putting myself, my beliefs, my assumptions and my ideologies about teaching and practice under scrutiny (Austin & Senese, 2004) As stated in Chapter Three, I had preconceived ideas as to how the prescribed curriculum was to be implemented and also of the relationship that I was to have with the learners in my class. I was oblivious of the existence of the null curriculum (Eisner, 1979) and the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968) in my daily practice as an educator.

However, the research process has in many ways been a revelation for me as an educator as I have begun to think more deeply about my understanding of the concept of sexuality and its implications for how I teach and relate to my learners as we learn and discuss sexuality-related matters. My self-study journey has required me to first acknowledge that as an educator, woman, and researcher, I have my own 'demons' that prevent me from talking openly about sexual matters to children of the age of 11 to 15. I realised that these 'demons' contributed to how I selected and delivered sexuality-related content (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2004). It is important to note that the self-study journey is something I could not have done on my own. I had to involve the learners of my class who became active participants in the teaching and learning and researching

process. Through their input, they gave me another perspective on what took place in the classroom (LaBoskey, 2004).

In this chapter, I identify and discuss five significant ‘revelations’ that have emerged from my study. I show how my recognition of and engagement with these revelations have resulted in valuable changes in my practice as an educator (Feldman, 2003). I also consider how I could build on these revelations to improve my future practice (LaBoskey, 2004), not just in relation to issues of sexuality education, but in my teaching practice as a whole. In the final part of the chapter, I look beyond my own practice to consider how my study could offer some lessons for other educators to self-reflect on their practice (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). I also examine the implications of my self-study for policy as well as for further research.

5.2 The Revelations of the Study

While I acknowledge that I still have a long way to go, through this research journey, I have discovered the teacher I can be and should be if I am to make a positive contribution to the learners that pass through my class each year. To achieve that I have attempted to discover the means within my control to help my learners improve the quality of their learning (Austin & Senese, 2004). These learners are dealing with matters that are beyond their years and are desperate for a chance to understand their situation in a fashion that will benefit them in a lasting manner. As we learned together and as I collected data for my self-study research, I became aware of the following ‘revelations’:

5.2.1 *Integration of Sexuality Education*

To begin my self-study research, I had to plan what was to be learned and, as I explain in Chapter Four, integration of sexuality in the three learning areas chosen was an significant part of the research process. It was important that sexuality-related issues were integrated in a fruitful manner in Life Orientation (LO), Economics Management Science (EMS), and English so that I could address as many as possible of the questions that were raised by the learners in the initial anonymous survey (see Chapter Two and Appendix B). However, as I acknowledge in Chapter Four, I did experience difficulty with this integration since not all Learning Outcomes could accommodate sexuality

issues. Also, some of the learners' questions could not be located within any specific learning area. Still the work had to be done and I did it the best I knew how with mistakes made and corrections done on the spot as I ventured into unknown territory.

Despite these difficulties, the value of integration became apparent to me during teaching and learning. For example, as I show in Chapter Four, one of the lessons I designed for EMS involved looking at how natural disasters and pandemics affect the stakeholders within the economic cycle (government, households, and businesses). This lesson gave the learners a chance to read stories and talk about how pandemics such as HIV/AIDS can have an effect on their family life and that of the country as a whole. They also learned that what takes place within their family spreads to all within the economic cycle. As I indicate in Chapter Four, the individual work and class discussion that took place during this lesson allowed the learners to not only learn facts about natural disasters, but also to connect this learning to pressing issues in their own lives.

5.2.2 Fear and Anxiety

As my self-study research journey began, it became clear that I first had to *acknowledge the existence of the fear and anxiety* that I, as the teacher-researcher, felt towards the process I was to engage in. As I show in Chapter Four, I was not so sure that the group of learners were the right candidates for the type of activities we were to engage in. My doubts were due to the comments made by their previous educators who warned us that they were badly behaved children. Consequently, I was not sure whether they would understand the process we were to engage in. The learners' initial reactions did not help to ease the anxiety. The looks that they gave me made me wonder if they thought I had lost my mind or if they could use this new way of doing things to their advantage. The practice of my research looked as if it would be difficult from the plan.

I also had to acknowledge that the learners themselves had misgivings about the process. Because I started my research at the beginning of the school year, one of the major factors that contributed to this sense of uneasiness was the lack of familiarity between the learners and me as their educator. It was also the fear of the unknown, as none for us really knew what the outcome of the process would be. This anxiety was something we had to work on for the process to run its course. We needed to become

familiar with each other as the issues we were to engage in needed the kind of trust that can only be achieved when you know each other well.

To illustrate, at the beginning of the process, I observed that many of the learners did not respond well to the writing of the journal. Most of the learners showed their anxiety by not writing in their journals at all. Those who did write were not responding to the instruction of the day. Some only pretended to be writing and some were not interested and just aimed at shocking me (see Chapter Four). In addition, I too experienced a reluctance to reflect on my experiences in my own journal. The lack of journal writing on my part was evidence of the dilemma I was experiencing. I was not trusting of the ability of the children to comprehend the issues we were going to be dealing with and thus engage productively in the class work. As mentioned in Chapters Two and Four, the practice of journal writing was as unfamiliar to me as it was for the learners.

It is my observation that when dealing with the issues related to sexuality or other similarly sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS, it is clear that there should be some foundation of a relationship between the educator and the learners. That way you will have a strong base for teaching and learning. Moreover, in my view, any form of teacher research that is of sensitive nature cannot be done properly in the first term of the school year, as there is not yet a good working relationship that can help the learners to respond well to the process.

5.2.3 The Development of New Forms of Classroom Relationships

During the research process, I found there was a *development of a new relationship* between the learners and me and among the learners themselves. The relationship between the learners and me before the process of data collection was a distant but friendly one. I was their teacher and they were the learners whom I would have for the year and then they would be gone the next. What I knew of them was enough to make us able to teach and learn the prescribed curriculum as I was paid to do. However, the journey that we undertook together changed the status quo that existed in the class. An environment that was conducive to openness and communication was created. I felt the bond that was slowly built within the classroom. Through our discussions and the journal

entries that were made by the learners, it was clear that slowly but surely there was a shift in how we looked at and related to each other. This led to us being able to be open about issues that would have otherwise been unspoken and ignored. This was evident in some of the entries that were made by some of the learners when we lost one of the teachers who was a close friend of mine. For example:

Today I have learned a lot about reading and writing stories. I'm so glad that I have a teacher that teaches us so fairly and what I love her for because she's full of happiness and heartness. But Miss Masinga I would like to say sorry for your loss. I saw how you were angry when you heard that your best friend [a colleague I worked with] past away you have to put this in your mind, the one you love the more they go. Sorry I wish you can know me, but things happen without us knowing when. It is unbelievable; she just stayed a few days at the hospital. The time is the time you will never change it he is the only and the one father that knows the time.

From your learner

Sorry! Sorry! Sorry! Sorry! Sorry! (Mbalenhle, Diary, 30 May 2007)

This reflection from one of the learners made me realise how far we had come in our relationship as teacher and learner. I had come to a point where I was able to be emotional in their presence and they were able to acknowledge and respond to that grief. In the past, there would not have been an opportunity for them to share those kinds of thoughts with me. It showed me that they felt our relationship was at a point where they could relate to me on highly emotional issues such as death. In my view, this is especially significant because in the community where the school is situated, death is much of a taboo subject as sexuality is. This newfound relationship was tested as we engaged in open discussions where every learner's view was accepted and responded to.

The reception the learners gave to the study became *my source of strength* as the teaching and the classroom became my main source for the self-esteem and fulfilment and vulnerability I needed (Zembylas, 2004) as I moved from one lesson to the other. It made me as an educator want to do more and improve my communication skills. The work that was produced by the learners and their enthusiasm towards what was learned was an energy booster for me. I was also inspired by the insight they showed into some of

the issues taught, such as the reflection that was written by Aphiwe (see Chapter Four) as she responded to how others treat sick people. She reflected on the treatment her mother received from some members of the community when they assumed that she was HIV positive. Her insight showed how we human beings should refrain from judging as we do not know what the future holds for us and that we should not laugh at those who are sick as we may be the ones who are sick in future. Another insight that made an impression on me was Sindiswa's reflection (see Chapter Four) as she wrote of how even though her father was not a good provider, she held no hate for him. This is strength that I needed as I was challenged in more than one occasion to share the power in the classroom to allow the learners to grow.

In a learning situation, there is always a power struggle between the educator and the learners. Each has an agenda for the time spent in the classroom and it is not always the same agenda. This issue of *power sharing* became an important factor in the relationship I was hoping to achieve with my learners. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, in my classroom environment I had always maintained a leading role, which served the purpose when it came to maintaining order and discipline over 54 learners. I wondered how the power would be shared with 54 learners. It became clear for me that it is a battle that I slowly won. From the onset, I empowered the learners by giving them the opportunity through the anonymous survey to have a say in the content they were to learn. My aim was to make the content relevant to them and their immediate needs.

In the beginning, the issue of maintaining a controlled atmosphere was a concern for me due to the learning environment with 54 learners in a classroom. Giving the learners a voice forced a power shift to gradually happen as they became aware that their voices mattered not only to me but also to each other. In addition, the issue of respect was a constant struggle as at each turn they had to be reminded of the need to show respect for each other. I also came to the realisation that in the end they were still children who were unfamiliar with having power and therefore took advantage of this at some point. It is on such occasions that they were also reminded that power is something that should be cherished as it can be taken back as easily as it was given. In some instances, I had to fight myself as I struggled with my response to specific individuals who seemed to test my 'demons' to come out with their comments that were uncomfortable for me. My

unease was brought on by the type of language that the children would sometimes indulge in, such as the use of Zulu sexual terms in the classroom, which in my ears sounded terrible. Also, as illustrated in Chapter Four, some of the boys would want to dominate the conversations of the classroom.

5.2.4 Open Class Discussions

I believe that through talking the learners in my class were able to ask each other questions and comment on or supplement each other's utterances. In this way, their thought processes on issues discussed were affected (Postholm, Wold-Granum, Pettersson, Flem, & Gudmundsdóttir, 1999). Therefore *introducing more open discussions* than written activities was a source of the growth in the classroom relationships. During those discussions, I was forced to take a 'back seat' and allow the learners to lead and direct the flow of the discussions. I came to the realisation that although I knew much more about teaching and learning in general but they knew far better how to make learning real and meaningful for themselves (Austin & Senese, 2004) That led to the emergence of a range of relevant topics during the different lessons in all three learning areas. These discussions brought about the type of data that I would otherwise had not been able to gather, such as talking about the private thoughts each sex had about the other. It gave made girls and boys reflect on what the others had said. See, for example, in Chapter Four, the articulations of the boys on what attracted them to girls. That is why I concur with Vygotsky (as cited in Bakhtin, 1984, p.24-25) who argues that "learning processes which are created through social activity influence what happens in the participants. That the development of our higher mental functions first occurs in social context on the intramental level."

The class discussions also gave an opportunity for *HIV/AIDS to be discussed using a different perspective*. Discussions such as these tested my abilities considerably and also opened my eyes to the fact that as teachers we cannot even begin to know the amount of wisdom the children have attained through their own experiences. In the discussions, it seemed as the disease was disempowered and no longer given a silent status in the class. Learners had a chance to reflect on the attitudes towards HIV positive people within their community. In their reflections, some even shared a personal

experience of the negative reception that HIV positive people receive from us as the community. Moreover, through the discussions the disease stopped being something that is experienced outside but was made part of the class, which made it real. The learners got to a point where they felt comfortable enough to talk about HIV/AIDS without fear of being laughed at. This was evident when one of the boys came to school with an information booklet that his mother had given to him about HIV/AIDS to share with other learners. He knew that the children already knew that his mother was HIV positive and it did not matter to him, as the experience in the class had shown him he was not alone.

The study took a turn for me as it became less and less about my 'demons', as stated in Chapter Four, but rather about the learners. The study showed me the strength that I did not know I had. I grew up in a cultural background that did not encourage children to talk and question; it is a skill I had to learn as an educator and was tested to the limit during the study. This was due to the fact that not only was I allowing the learners to have opinions, but the sensitive nature of the topics discussed could have given me enough reason to revert to the old way of doing things.

5.2.5 The Role of Language

Through the study, I was made aware of *the role of language* in reinforcing my own demons. As an educator, I knew that the significant role the child's own language plays in their learning as language is identified in our education policy as a possible form of learning barrier (Department of Education, 2001). On some issues, the learners' use of their mother tongue, isiZulu, became a source of discomfort for me, as highlighted in Chapter Four when a boy in the class made a statement in Zulu explaining why boys get attracted to girls. His use of words such as penis and erection in Zulu mortified me. I had never before been conscious of how sexual terms and related content affected me when said in my own language, isiZulu. I found I had no problem when the learners said the words such as 'sex' in English, however when said in isiZulu I felt cold all over as I looked at whose mouth that word was coming from. Using Zulu brought the effects of my own culture back into the class, as it felt as if I was breaking or betraying some silent code of not talking to children about sexuality.

It is a discomfort that I cannot honestly say I have overcome. I could not bring myself to even finish reading some of the learners' written journal entries (in Zulu) without embarrassment creeping in. Before I engaged in the process of collecting data, I already had preconceived ideas as to how I would feel towards some issues that were bound to emerge from the research. However, through this process I learned that you may never know what you are capable of achieving until you become part of a learning process. It is true that the experience that I underwent while doing the research took me through all possible emotions that as an educator I would not have experienced were it not for the research I undertook.

5.3 My Offerings

Change is an enemy that disallows us to venture into territories that test and question how we are as teachers. Through participating in this journey of the self as an educator, I have been given an opportunity to relearn how to be an effective educator, particularly in terms of teaching about sensitive issues such as sexuality. When you are given a chance to reflect on your actions as a teacher, you get an opportunity to become real with yourself and this leads to a beginning of changing that which needs changing. You get the opportunity to look closely enough at your practice, actions and beliefs to question yourself then take charge of your own ongoing education (Austin & Senese, 2004).

During the data collection process, I found myself relearning who I am as an educator and coming to understand how my practice could begin to change. The lessons learned that I wish to share with other educators go beyond my self. They also involve lessons that I learned about the capabilities that learners have in being effective partners in the learning process. The experience from this journey has taught me that schools and teaching are going through a shift that not only engages practice but also affect my fundamental beliefs in what teaching is meant to accomplish, how it is done, who my learners are and what is possible for us to achieve (Caine & Caine, 1997).

5.3.1 Dealing with Emotions of the Study

I have learned that teaching is not just a technical enterprise, but is linked to our personal lives and emotions (Zembylas, 2004). During the study, I went through a variety of emotions as I integrated sexuality matters in other learning areas. I had moments where I wondered what this was all about and doubted my own progress. I realised that what took place in my classroom could not solve the social ills of the community and those issues that profoundly affect our learners. I learned that the hard way when after we had been through the process of integrating sexuality education for many weeks, a child in my class informed me she was raped when she had been to a nightclub. This devastated me, as issues of alcohol and rape were major topics we had covered and had intensive discussions on. I felt the whole process was a failure, as here was this 14 year old child, who was part of the learning process, telling me she went out drinking and found herself being raped.

It was not until I was given a chance to look at it in from different perspective in discussion with my supervisors that I realised that although the rape itself was bad, the fact that the learner felt close enough to me to tell me about what had happened to her symbolised the relationship that has developed between us. She now felt comfortable enough to tell me all this without fear that I would judge her. That showed the distance we have travelled together has began to bear some fruit. I had to acknowledge that prior to this project, she would probably have kept silent and not informed me of what had happened to her.

5.3.2 The Importance of Children's Context to Learning and Teaching

Although the aim of the study was to look at my educator self in action, I soon realised that the understanding of the other participants in my research journey was equally important. In my case, this was the understanding of the learners of the grade 6 class as we attempted to learn how to teach and learn sexuality related matters in a productive way.

I have learnt that, as educators, one of the most important skills we need to learn is to work at being conscious of the context that the learners are coming from. The learners in your class will be the reflection of their context. When unnoticed or

unmonitored, the learners' context can have negative affects on the progress that you aim to achieve in your teaching. The understanding that you have of the context will inform how you relate and proceed with the planning and delivery of lessons and how you communicate with your learners. That skill became an important element for me as I was dealing with a sensitive issue of sexuality; therefore, I needed to understand the background of the learners and the cultural practices of sexuality. That understanding also informs the kinds of activities that will be planned in relation to the learning outcomes selected for each lesson that will best suit the learners it is intended for. Through this study, I have become more aware of the outside influences that may affect the behaviour of the learners in my class as they struggle to find themselves.

5.3.3 Understanding your own Background and Context as an Educator

Through this study, I have learnt that, as an educator, it is imperative that you also learn to understand your own background and its implications for how you will be as an educator in your classroom. That understanding will bring your attention to your limitations and the possibilities that are there for effective learning to take place. My own culture has a silence on sexuality matters and I have not been raised or taught to talk about sex and other matters. Therefore my 'demons' were created and were maintained when unnoticed and unmonitored.

5.3.4 The 'Demons' as a Source of Strength

As teachers, we need to be aware that when we enter the classroom it is more than the educator in us who is standing in front of the learners but all of who we are. In my case, it is a Zulu woman, an educator, and a researcher. All these characters come into play as I attempt to interact with the prescribed curriculum. As we interact with the curriculum, many of our experiences and beliefs came into play. We all have issues that may hinder the process of learning and teaching; however these should not be permitted to disturb the process of growth and development in our practice. The demons I started with when I began this study are in no way vanquished. I have however been made aware of their presence and am now aware when they have the potential to hinder the learning process. As an educator, I have to learn to identify my demons and this is what this study was all

about. In the process of the study, I learned to find ways to gain strength to overcome my demons. In my case, it was the strength given to me by the learners and their willingness to trust and involve themselves in talking about sexual matters. They made it 'ok' to talk to them about sex and other issues; this not to say I did not have my 'screaming' moments, but they became less important as time went on.

5.3.5 The Value of Learner Participation

The self-study methodology that I chose for this study gave me the reason to value the learners in my class as important participants. In self-study, knowledge is said to be best understood, transformed, constructed, and articulated by the self in collaboration with others (LaBoskey, 2004). I learned a valuable lesson that the learners in our classroom can be the greatest inspiration for you as an educator. In the study, I allowed the learners to have a voice in what they were to learn and that was the most fruitful move I made for both of us. The learners brought to the table the willingness to learn and the need to understand once they were sure that what they had to say mattered to me as their educator. This could only take place once I have realised that they were all different and them to be life long learners, they had to discover what works best for them. As their teacher, I had to learn to take my place at their side not at the front of the classroom (Austin & Senese,2004).

I was also given a chance to evaluate myself as an effective educator, which I have always thought myself to be as I thought once I have taught it so they have learned it (Austin & Senese, 2004) When learners feel they have a voice within the classroom, they begin to own their learning process and start to contribute in the manner that is more effective for both you as their educator and them. When learners feel they are part of the learning process, they can give you a chance to validate your presence and input by responding positively in the learning process. The attitude of the learners begins to change as they know the outcome of the learning will also reflect on them as they had to evaluate their own input within the classroom. They give us a different perspective on their issues that enables us to plan our lessons to meet their needs and not what we assume to be their needs. It is not enough to put learners into groups or to allow them to work as peers, and to assume you have included them in the process of their learning.

Learners should have an input into the issues that may be utilised in the classroom. This could be applied to all learning areas.

5.3.6 How to View Curriculum Critically

One of the skills that I had to learn as in this study, was to view policy documents with a critical eye and to identify loopholes and shortcomings of the policy. In that way, I was able to improvise and devise methods that could lead to effective teaching and learning. When reading the learning outcomes, I learned to analyse the content each intended to cover in relation to what the learners needed to know. Hence, I focused on involving the learners to give input into what they needed to learn to meet their immediate needs. I have learned to know that although it is designed to, the curriculum of the day does not solve the social ills of the community. This I observed as the learners and I involved ourselves in the process of learning and teaching.

We have learners that come into our classrooms already experienced in some of the issues that we intend to educate them in. As an educator, one of the realisations that I had was that the prescribed curriculum does not tell us how to deal with issues that have already occurred and how to assist the learners overcome them. I learned that the curriculum couldn't solve the social ills of the society on its own. In my view, it assumes that learners are yet to experience social ills and by going through the Life Orientation programme, those social ills can be prevented. However, I have realised that it does not mean after you have taught them all will be well in their lives. However, it should be realised that all we can do is to conscientise learners to the existence of such ills as death, rape, hunger, and many more. We can try to help them to prepare themselves to deal with them as they occur.

This cannot be achieved by one educator in a school, but should be the responsibility of every educator responsible for the learners. The whole school needs to engage in the integration of important issues such as sexuality into the content of everyday teaching. In this way, when learners walk out of my classroom, I could know that the next educator will continue to provide consistency in relevant knowledge and skills. In that way, we will enable them to face the outside challenges. As educators, we need to be aware and to acknowledge that we are in a battle with outside experiences that sometimes contradict

what is learned at school. In addition, we should realise that those outside influences tend to be strong; the only weapon we have as educators is the curriculum policy, and how we use it to address these social ills. My growth as an educator came from having attempted to educate to the best of my ability, with demons and all. I also realise that as an educator I have no choice but to invent curriculum lessons, techniques and programmes. My professional survival dictates that I adapt my teaching situations to the materials available to the learner present and to the expectations of the community (Caine & Caine, 1997).

5.4 Conclusion and Implications

5.4.1 Implications for policy makers

The policy makers will first have to acknowledge that today's children of the intermediate phase (10 to 13 year olds) are also changing thus the curriculum of the day needs to keep up with their developments and experiences. The curriculum needs to facilitate this change by being relevant to the needs and issues that will speak to the child of the day. Also that in 2007 the children of the intermediate phase are no longer asexual instead some are active sexual beings who are in active sexual relationships. Therefore the curriculum needs to identify that aspect and make provisions that will assist educators to speak also to the children who say, "so I am already sexually active, so what?" Educators need to be armed with the tools within the curriculum that deals with the 'after'. How do you assist a child that has experienced the issues that the curriculum is intended to prevent from happening? The curriculum needs to aim for more than just prevention but also remediation and assisting learners who have been affected thus needs skills and knowledge to deal with the outcomes of these experiences. The curriculum needs to include the children's voices and let them have the opportunity to have some say to what they need and feel is important to help them face and deal with the challenges that they are going through.

The department of education needs to acknowledge the importance of training schools and how to develop the necessary policies such as HIV/AIDS and discipline. In that way schools can develop supporting systems that may further assist learners to confront the challenges they are faced with. One of the important tasks for the provincial department

of education is to facilitate the working relationship that is supposed to be existing between the social and health departments. There is an increase of the learners needs this relationship needs to be strengthened and functioning. However, through my own experiences in this study it became an impossible task to even get the local clinics to be interested in coming to the school. I have a growing number of learners in my class who are under the care of social services, however I have yet to meet the social worker working the cases.

5.4. 2 Implication for schools

Schools needs to recognise the importance of the policies such as HIV/AIDS that supplements the short comings of the curriculum and also extend on it. They give guidance to how the school within its own context and provide counselling that is relevant to the children of the school. Schools further needs to understand their own context and the learners they aim to educate. In that way as teachers, develop an understanding of the needs of the learners and challenges that we may have to face. In that way be able through our policies be proactive in preventing and remediate where need be.

Teachers as the immediate people in the school environment that learners are in contact will need to have compassion and understanding of the background of the learners. The implication is that we have to change our attitude towards the learners in the classroom. As schools, we need to have support systems that will support learners as well as educators to face the realities of school. We need to be vigilant in keeping track of the home situation of the children in our schools. In the school where the study was conducted there have been many instances where the school have had children living alone and the school not even aware of the death of the parent or guardian. Parental involvement needs to be strengthened and monitored in schools where as a school we also involve them in learning programmes that will also help them help themselves.

5.4.3 Suggestions for further research

Through reading literature for this study, it became clear that as a society we still do not want to view intermediate learners as sexual beings. Hence, most of the readings and research that has been done has been of the FET (Further Education and Training) phase. We need to acknowledge and research the changing sexual patterns of children in the intermediate phase and their readiness in their development to handle such activity. We also need to further look into child involvement in the learning process. How does it influence the understanding the children will have if they are made part of the planning? What are the changing roles of teachers as they are made to assume the parental role for the children and their readiness to take on such a task? In today's context how much does cultural beliefs and norms influence how as teachers and learners view ourselves as sexual beings?

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to interpret the data that has been presented in chapter four. I have identified and discussed significant revelations that have emerged from the study. I've also shown and discussed how these can offer some lessons for other educators to self reflect. I have discussed implications for policy makers and school suggestions for further research that could be pursued, influenced by this study.

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APPENDIX

Appendix: A

Letter of consent for parents

Dear Grade 6 parent/ guardian

I am presently studying for a Masters in Education degree at the faculty of education, university of Kwazulu – Natal. As part of the course work for this degree, I am required to conduct a short study of teaching learning in my classroom. I am focusing my study on how to integrate sexuality education in all learning areas effectively.

With permission granted by the department of education and the principal of the school Mr. _____, I would like to refer to the Grade 6 A class-work as evidence in my study. I will only refer to your daughter' /son's class work if I receive written consent from you. Please be aware that your response to this letter will not in any way affect your daughter's/ son's participation in my lessons.

If I receive your consent, I will draw upon your daughter's/ son's class-working a way that respects her/his dignity and privacy. Her/his name or any other information that might identify her/ him directly will not be used in the study. They can also withdraw from participating at any given moment if they want to.

I would appreciate it if you could take sometime to consider my request and discuss it with your daughter / son. Please complete, sign and return this letter by _____.

Thank you for your assistance.
Yours sincerely

Ms. L. R. Masinga
(Grade 6 A class / Life Orientation teacher)

(school principal)

Supervisor: Prof. R. Molentsane Contact number: 031- 2601169

I ----- (name of parent/ guardian), parent/ guardian of
----- (name of learner) hereby confirm that I have discussed the
contents of this letter with my daughter /son and give / not give (circle one) my consent
for Ms. ----- to refer to my daughter's/ son's work in class as
evidence for her study on how to effectively integrate sexuality education in all learning
areas.

February 2007

Mzali womntwa oka Grade 6A

Njengo thisha womntwana wakho, ngifundela ukuthuthukisa indlela engifundisa ngayo umntwana wakho. Izifundo zami ngizenza ne nyuvesi yakwa Zulu-natal (University of KwaZulu –Natal). Njengengxenywe yeziqhu, kudingeka ngenze ucwaningo ngokufunda nokufundiswa kwabantwana esikoleni. Izifundo zami zibhekele ekubukeni ukuthi yiziphi izindlela ezingcono esingafundisa ngayo abantwana ngezempilo nokuziphatha (life skills and sexuality education).

Ngemvume engiyigunyazwe umnyango wezemfundo(department of education) kanye no thishanhloko wesikole u ----- . Ngifisa ukusebenzisa imisebenzi esizobe siyenza nabantwana ukuyicwaninga ibe isibonelo kumsebenzi wesikole. Uma ungivumela, ngizosebenzisa umsebenzi wabantwana ngaphandle kokusebenzisa amagama abo. Ngiyathembisa ukuthi konke okuzofundwa nokuzokwenziwa kuzobe kuhambisana nemithetho kahulumeni futhi ingane izohlala ivikelekile njalo. Impedulo yakho njengomzali ayizukuphazamisa indlela yokufunda phakathi kwami nomntwana.

Ngokuvumelana nawe ngiyosebenzisa umsebenzi womntwana ngendlela efihlekileyo engeke ibeke umntwana enkingeni noma emahlonini.

Ngingathokoza uma nixoxisana nomntwana ngalencwadi .

Ngicela ningigcwalisele, nibuyise esikoleni lencwadi ngo -----

Ngiyabonga.

Miss L. R. Masinga
(Grade 6A class/ Life Orientation teacher)

(School Principal)

Mina _____ (igama lomzali) ka

_____ (igama lomntwana) ngiyifundile incwadi

saxoxisana nomntwana, nginika imvume/ angiyiniki imvume (dwebela okuyikho) ku

_____ ukusebenzisa umsebenzi wendodakazi/

Ndodana (dwebela okuyikho) yami emusebenzini wakhe wesikole lapho efundela

ngokufundisa kangcono nge zifundo zempilo nokuziphatha (life skills and sexuality).

Appendix C

Some of learner s' questions and statements from the self administered survey

- 1) Is it bad to like it when a boy touches you?
- 2) Why does my step father hate me?
- 3) Why am I made to say the Lord's Prayer when I go Shembe church?
- 4) Why is having sex wrong or why do people say it is wrong?
- 5) Why we are not allowed to visit when parents are in hospital?
- 6) It scares me when I think of my grandmother dying?
- 7) When my parents died it was painful I don't know how I will feel if aunty is to die too.
- 8) I hate living with my relatives and I do not like their children.
- 9) When is it the right age to have a baby?
- 10) I hate that I had to hear it from the street that my mother is positive.
- 11) How can I tell my parents that I love them?
- 12) I get excited all the time in the classroom and I hate it why does it happen?
- 13) I fear that my stepfather will abuse me again.
- 14) I am scared that if my mother dies I will have to take care of the other siblings.
- 15) Who should be blamed if a relationship goes wrong?
- 16) I don not think that it is wrong to sleep with boys when everybody is doing it?
- 17) I like a girl in the class miss but she is already 'Sihle's' girl.

APPENDIX: D
THANDAZA'S STORY

Colour section

One day when Thandazile got home from school, she got a big fright. Her grandmother, her aunt, and her brother and sister were nowhere to be seen! She started to cry and ran to find Mrs Ndaba, a member of the Community Child Care Committee. Mrs Ndaba helped Thandazile to look for her family but they couldn't find them at any of the houses. Then a neighbour told Mrs Ndaba that she had seen Aunty Dudu at the hospital.



The next day Mrs Ndaba took Thandazile to the hospital. They saw Aunty Dudu, who was very sick. Then they found Zodwa and Siphon, who were with the hospital Child Care worker. Their grandmother was there too. Mrs Ndaba took the children and their grandmother back to their home. Thandazile felt very happy to have her family back home. She also

felt happy because Mrs Ndaba said she would ask the Community Child Care Committee to help the family get food so that they would not have to wait for neighbours to bring them food any more.

APPENDIX: E

3 LESSON PLANS ONE EMS, ONE ENGLISH AND ONE LIFE ORIENTATION

Lesson plan Life Orientation

Lesson: forms of abuse Duration: 4 weeks		Grade: 6 A Date: 12 July 2007
Learning Outcome: L O 1 Health promotion LO 2 Social development	Assessment Standards Lo 1, AS 3 and 4 Identifying different forms of abuse and strategies to deal with them. Lo 2, AS 3 Effects of gender stereotyping and sexism.	Integration:
Linking with previous lesson: Children's rights and responsibilities		
Core Knowledge: -Understanding the term abuse and reason for abuse. - Kinds and forms of abuse. - Strategies in dealing with different forms of abuse. - identifying forms of abuse in community.		
Learning Activities and Assessment: <u>Group work</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Learners read and answer questions based on case studies given.- Presentation of answers to class- Class discussions <u>Individual</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ask 5 people in the community what they think abuse is and write the answers down.- Report to class the different definitions they found in their research.		
Forms of assessment: Presentation Reporting Mini research	Resources: Dictionary Work books Community people Worksheet (case studies)	

Lesson plan
Economics management science

Lesson: How does HIV/AIDS affect families and businesses?		Grade: 6 A
Duration: 4 weeks		Date:
Learning Outcome: L O 1 Economic cycle	Assessment Standards AS 3 Different flows of resources and services in the cycle such as flow of money to households	Context: Natural disasters and pandemics
Integration: L O 1 & 2, AS 3		
Core Knowledge: Economic Cycle Role of households in cycle, different flows of resources and services, rights and responsibilities of each of the participants.		
Learning Activities and Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyse a case study of the affect of HIV on small business and households. - Answer and discuss questions based on Phumla’s story. - Identify other effects of HIV/AIDS in the community. 		
Forms of assessment: Case study Test Discussions	Resources: Work books Text books Community life Media	

Lesson plan
English

Lesson: Creative writing		Grade: 6
Duration: 2 weeks		Date: 2 August 2007
Learning Outcome: 1-5 listening, writing, reading and viewing thinking and reasoning.	Assessment Standards	Integration: LO 3, A S 6
Linking with previous lesson: Reading of fiction and non-fiction books.		
Core Knowledge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read with understanding the story of Thandaza. - Write a fiction and a non- fiction story. - Express compassion using writing. - 		
Learning Activities and Assessment: <u>Individual work</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read and answer questions on the Thandaza's story - Write a paragraph on how can they relate to the story and how does it make them feel. - Write a story that is fiction and one that is non -fiction. - Interview individual for the non-fiction story. 		
Forms of assessment: Story writing Interviewing Comprehension		Resources: Work books Work sheet (Thandaza's story) A 4 paper Individuals from the community Dictionary