

**THE EXPOSURE OF IN-SERVICE TEACHERS TO THE
NOTION OF THEMSELVES AS CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS:
AN ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH TO THE
PROMAT EDUCATIONAL STUDIES (CURRICULUM) COURSE**

by

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*To me [action research] is essentially an activity for pragmatists
and sceptics, really. Not for evangelists and not for idealists.
Because it is the art of the possible.*

(Elliot, 1991: 44)

ABSTRACT

This study was based on the Promat Educational Studies (Curriculum) course which introduced curriculum concepts to a group of forty-two rural KwaZulu in-service teachers, studying for the final year of their Primary Teachers' Diploma in 1996.

The study was primarily interested in the responses of these teachers as they explored curriculum concepts and developed their own understandings of curriculum.

Research questions focused on the teachers' personal views of the notion of curriculum and the suitability of various curriculum models that could be used in their classrooms. Action research was proposed as a valuable tool for teachers to reflect on their classroom practice in a systematic and participatory manner, with a view to improvement in the process of teaching and learning. Action research was also used as a teaching methodology in presenting the Educational Studies programme, thus providing the teachers with an opportunity to experience action research. The questions also focused on the views of teachers concerning their possible role in the process of curriculum development, change and decision-making in schools.

data collecting methods
Prior to the programme, data on teachers' notions of curriculum were obtained by means of a questionnaire. Journal writing, lecturer diaries and classroom discussions were used as a means of collecting data during the course of the programme.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as a summative form of data collection and triangulation.

Findings suggested that teachers, prior to the Educational Studies programme, had a limited notion of the concept of curriculum. They had a restricted view of teacher professionalism and understood their role as implementers of a received curriculum. The programme broadened teachers' views on curriculum concepts and accompanying theories and models. The exposure to curriculum theory increased teachers' confidence in their ability to bring about change in their classrooms and schools. They expressed feelings of empowerment and recognised the important role they could play in the curriculum process.

What was significant, however, was that despite the fact that the teachers were able to articulate these views within an "educationist context" (Keddie, 1971), they did not realise these within the Educational Studies classroom. While they recognised and embraced the potential of action research, their own actions as learners did not support a fully-developed form of action research because of the power differentials and situational constraints which they experienced. They were acutely aware of the imperative to pass, which appeared to take precedence over democratic participation.

Findings suggested that INSET programmes which expose teachers to curriculum theory and the fundamental notion of themselves as curriculum developers, are useful for changing mindsets and are essential preconditions if teachers are to begin to take ownership of change in classrooms. Whether they are able to do so successfully, is a question for further research.

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that the whole of this work, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

This work has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

C. Grant
Pinetown, January 1998

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
CNE	Christian National Education
COTEP	Committee on Teacher Education Policy
DET	Department of Education and Training
FDE	Further Diploma in Education
HDE	Higher Diploma in Education
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
INSET	In-service Education and Training
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MEDU	Midlands Education Development Unit
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
PREP	Primary Education Project
PRESET	Pre-service Education and Training
PROMAT	Project Matric
PTC	Primary Teacher's Certificate
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations

PREFACE

“Black” in this study will be used to refer to the indigenous black population in South Africa who are also known as Africans. As it is used here, the term “black” does not include those who are otherwise known as Coloured or Asian.

The research was confined to a case study of a group of forty-two black KwaZulu in-service teachers studying at Promat College in 1996. Despite the fact that participation in the research project was voluntary, the entire group was involved. Although anonymity was offered to them, these teachers had no objections to their names being used. This could possibly be attributed to their unfamiliarity with research processes. I have taken the liberty of using only one of their first names when quoting from their journals. The teachers could therefore be recognisable to each other but not to a broader readership.

Hofmeyr and Pavlich discuss the difficulties that accompany black teachers when using English as their second language:

Generally black teachers’ command of English is poor. During the last decade English has replaced the mother tongue as the medium of instruction after Standard 2 in most black schools, but this poses serious problems for the generations of blacks who were schooled under the Bantu education system and whose ability to teach in that language is severely limited (1987: 80).

All the teachers in this study were second language English speakers whose command of English had been affected by an inferior education. When reporting student statements, I did not meddle with the content of the illustrative quotes. The quotes were not corrected with regard to language use so as to allow the authentic teachers’ voices to be heard. The changes I made were solely in terms of spelling corrections.

For the sake of grammatical simplicity, I have chosen to use the pronoun “she” to refer to persons of either gender.

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CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Ever since the turbulence of 1976, observers have claimed that South African education is in a state of crisis. For most of the last decade, black education has been in a state of turmoil and now it faces creeping disintegration (Hofmeyr and Pavlich, 1987: 77). Years of separate and unequal education have resulted in a core of black teachers who are under-qualified and have played no role in curriculum development and decision-making in the country. As Mehl (1986) describes:

Teachers have thus over many years been confined to the role of the simple purveyor of information - read often from a heavensent textbook - and an implementer of instruction. In academic terms teachers have been confined to the role of "hewers of wood and bearers of water". It is no wonder that teachers have frequently adopted an authoritarian stance in the classroom (Mehl, 1987: 40).

Few people would dispute that South African schools need to be changed - and those who do not dispute it are wrong (van den Berg, 1987: 22). Teachers are the key factor in any educational change and the role of teachers in curriculum development and decision-making is crucial to quality education in our country. Yet the task is daunting because:

teachers are not generally seen by schooling authorities as active agents who should be encouraged to innovate and seek to bring about change. Teachers are generally perceived by the authorities as the **recipients** of policies determined by their masters, and as the **agents** of those masters in the docile and loyal implementation of those policies (van den Berg, 1987: 20).

Samuel and Naidoo (1992) recommend that serious attention be given to the question of teacher participation in curriculum development in the construction of a new education system in South Africa (cited in Lotz, 1995: 4). They recommend that alternative roles for teachers need to be explored which enable them to contribute to the process of transformation. It would appear that a new view of teacher work is critical if educational change is to occur in classrooms and communities. Lotz is of the opinion that this new concept will need to “challenge existing stereotypes and the technician metaphor” (1995: 4). Outcomes-based education, the alternative, new approach to education in South Africa, demands that teachers become curriculum developers in their own classrooms and schools.

The central question addressed in this study is the extent to which rural KwaZulu in-service teachers :

- understand the concept of curriculum
- reflect on their past role in the curriculum development process
- view their new role in curriculum development in a changing South Africa.

This first chapter relates the problem of teachers’ perceptions of themselves as “curriculum receivers” to the historical context from which they have emerged in South Africa. The second part of the chapter explores the concept of Promat as an in-service college in KwaZulu-Natal, looking specifically at its history, philosophy, aims and ethos. Chapter Two outlines the research questions and it explores action research as the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter Three considers the research methodology, while Chapter Four traces the teachers’ views on curriculum prior to the onset of the Promat curriculum course. Chapter Five and Chapter Six offer a description of the programme, monitoring both the first and second action research cycles. Finally, in Chapter Seven, some concluding comments are made and action research is considered as a tool for teachers researching their classrooms.

1.2. A BRIEF REVIEW OF HISTORICAL TRENDS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THEIR IMPACT ON EDUCATION

Any discussion about curriculum development in South Africa should be located within the historical context of the country. The history of South Africa has had a profound impact on the education of its people, and the legacy of this history continues to affect every aspect of education today. It is particularly relevant to focus on two main trends evident in this history in order to understand the context of the teachers in this study. It must be noted that this is not a detailed history but serves rather to highlight a few issues pertinent to this study.

Bernstein applies the concept of social control to the management of knowledge:

How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control (1971: 47).

Hartshorne refers to South Africa as a country where “education has been used so blatantly as an instrument of control to protect power and privilege” (1990: 168). Harley suggests that a useful framework for analysing education in South Africa is provided by the concept of social control (1992: 28).

Over three hundred years of **colonialism** followed by forty-five years of a system of **apartheid** are the two main features of South African history. The exercise of social control by a ruling group over subordinate groups was evident during both these periods of history, yet the aims underlying the social control differed radically.

1.2.1. Colonialism, Missionary Education and Bantu Education: the recurring theme of social control

Formal schools made their appearance in Southern Africa as part of the new social relations introduced with colonialism. The first formal school was opened on 17 April 1658, at the Cape, specifically for the Dutch East India Company’s slaves (Molteno, 1984: 45). It was not until the early part of the nineteenth century that a concerted effort

was made by missionaries to educate the African population (Nekhuwevha, 1987 cited in Wedekind, 1995: 22). Conversion of indigenous peoples, rather than education, was the major aim of missionary activity in Africa (Harley, 1992: 29). George (1989) suggests that missionary ideals actually complemented the colonial order:

..... most nineteenth century missionaries working in any part of the world, interpreted their role as the transformation of a local culture into the social as well as the religious pattern of Europe and America (cited in Harley, 1992: 29).

The emphasis of the early mission schools was on:

- basic reading and writing, along with Christian doctrine
- manual work and practical training for jobs
- training of catechists and teachers to spread the Gospel and teach basic education

(Christie, 1985: 72).

Schooling for black people in South Africa started to become of interest to the state from the second half of the nineteenth century. As the Eiselen Commission was to explain:

Bantu education as carried on by the missionary bodies became increasingly the care of the government concerned because the Bantu were increasingly affecting the economic and political life of the country (cited in Molteno, 1984: 57).

Thus the first half of the twentieth century saw a slow but steady increase in black school enrolment and a gradual rise in state expenditure on black schooling. From the earliest days of industrial capitalism in South Africa, there was an attempt to drill into black people an acceptance of themselves as inferior and exploited with the need to be disciplined in order for them to succeed as wage labourers. Expressed quite bluntly by the Native Economic Commission, (1930 -32), “He (the Native) must learn to school his body to hard work” (cited in Molteno, 1984: 62).

With the rise to power of the Nationalist government in 1948, state control of education was formalised and apartheid policies were implemented to perpetuate racial stratification. The notorious Bantu Education Act of 1953 forced the closure of mission schools with far-reaching effects:

Of seven thousand schools, over five thousand had been missionary-run prior to Bantu Education. By 1959, virtually all black schools except the seven hundred Catholic schools had been brought under the central control of the Native Affairs Department (Christie, 1984: 162).

The 1953 Act ensured that all schools for Africans were registered with the government to ensure state control of black education which was separate and inferior. It signified education for subservience and cultural domination (Christie, 1984: 162). To that effect, schooling was centrally controlled. Financial provision was unequal: the per capita expenditure in 1985 on every white child was seven times that on every black child (SAIRR, 1986, cited in de Vries, 1989: 451). Syllabus revision was centralised with syllabi imposing values of obedience, communal loyalty, ethnic and national diversity, acceptance of allocated social roles, piety, and identification with a rural culture (Molteno, 1984: 89).

Teachers worked under authoritarian and bureaucratic conditions and showed strict adherence to prescribed syllabuses and a heavy reliance on textbooks and other forms of “received knowledge” (NEPI, 1992: 25). African schools were characterised by their overcrowded classrooms, unfavourable teacher-pupil ratios and a majority of under qualified teachers (Walker, 1991b: 7). De Vries describes the deprivation of black school children and teachers through their experiences of “inferior school buildings, overcrowded classrooms, lack of books, insufficient staff, imposed cultural values and enforced use of mother tongue and Afrikaans as media of instruction” (1989: 451). The plight of black teachers is described by Hofmeyr and Pavlich in the following way:

Under-trained, inexperienced and under attack as they often are, black teachers resort to **survival teaching** which does not allow for questions, discussions, problem-solving approaches, pupil participation and critical thinking. The lecture method and rote-learning dominate the classroom and the cane often becomes the instrument of control (1987: 81).

Control was clearly the dominant aim of education in South Africa: control of students and control of teachers, both inside and outside the school, in a calculated attempt to circumscribe the economic and political aspirations of Black South Africans, and, in so doing, protect the superordinate class. In Verwoerd’s infamous words:

There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour for that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze (cited in Molteno, 1984: 92 - 93).

1.2.2. Christian National Education (CNE)

The Christian National Education (CNE) movement arose out of political struggle with the central idea that different “peoples” should have their own distinctive “philosophies of education”. The movement originated in South Africa because the Dutch colonists saw some of their most cherished and precious convictions as threatened by a common schooling policy (Morrow, 1989: 37). CNE emerged as a doctrine to emphasise the preservation of Afrikaner cultural and religious identity and, as such, necessitated separate schooling, initially from the English, and most certainly from black South Africans (Wedekind, 1995: 23). CNE continued to develop and, in 1948, CNE ideas were converted into state policies.

J. Chris Coetzee, one of the authors of the 1948 *Beleid*, insists that CNE was intended as a schooling policy only for the children of orthodox Afrikaners: “We as Calvinistic Afrikaners will have our CNE schools: Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Jews, liberalists and atheists will have their own schools” (cited in Morrow, 1989: 37). However, no suggestion was made, either by Coetzee or in the *Beleid*, that black people in South Africa should have their own philosophy of education. This was because CNE reflected a paternalistic element with black people being prepared for unequal participation in economic and social life. Enslin writes:

Black education is the responsibility of “the Boer nation as the senior white trustee of the native”, who is in a state of “cultural infancy”. A “subordinate part of the vocation and task of the Afrikaner” is to “Christianise the non-white races of our fatherland” (1984: 140).

1.2.3. Fundamental Pedagogics

Fundamental Pedagogics, a more recent development than CNE, is a theoretical discourse controlled by the dominant group, the Afrikaner, in South Africa during the Apartheid era. Fundamental Pedagogics viewed educational theory as an objective and value-free science which offered a means of establishing universally valid knowledge. It viewed education as “the deliberate, purposeful, systematic, planned and directional guidance by the mature person with the intention of forming or moulding the immature person” (Cilliers, 1975, cited in Enslin, 1988: 70). It encapsulated an authoritarian concept of education in which the immature child needed to be moulded and guided towards maturity by the teacher as the authority figure (Walker, 1991b: 10 - 11).

Under the guise of scientific objectivity, Fundamental Pedagogics perpetuated racist values, inequality and segregated education, and “the Fundamental Pedagogician’s findings reflect the political status quo in South Africa” (Enslin, 1990: 82). Using Althusserian terms, Enslin points out that in Fundamental Pedagogics we have “ideological practice masquerading as theoretical practice” (1984: 145). In actual fact, Fundamental Pedagogics distorted

the real relations between the “superior” ruling class and the “inferior” black culture in South Africa as represented in CNE, the real relations of exploitation being concealed, where the ideology is effective, from both exploiter and exploited (Enslin, 1984: 145).

Enslin quotes de Vries (1986) to explain how:

the discipline of educational theory as a science is left behind when the pedagogician fills the universal structures of education “with specific content, implying norms and values, from his own personal world - and life-view, with the aim of establishing an educational doctrine for use in specific educational situations” (Enslin, 1990: 84).

The majority of teachers in South Africa, and the vast majority of black teachers, continue to be products of faculties and colleges of education which offer Fundamental Pedagogics as the sole theoretical discourse through which to understand schooling in South Africa (Enslin, 1988: 67). The teachers in the present study have been products of Bantu

Education with its “intellectually sterile curriculum content and processes” (Gwala, 1988 cited in Walker, 1991a: 158). They have been exposed to CNE principles as well as Fundamental Pedagogics in their teacher training which has been dominated by

oppressive education relations - teacher-talk, drill and practice, corporal punishment and rote learning, exacerbated by a medium of instruction which is a second language both for students and teachers (Walker, 1991a: 158).

Not surprisingly then, their professional knowledge was shaped by their own experience of schooling; that of transmission teaching, drill and practice and rote learning, rather than interaction, debate and the critical exchange of ideas. The system of inferior education, with its conservative tradition of white domination and black subordination, was thus perpetuated.

1.3. EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Historically, curriculum decision-making in South Africa has been non-participative and racially exclusivist, reflecting the unequal patterns of race, gender and locality characterising education as a whole (Christie, 1993: 7). Curriculum policy making and development was a centralised process controlled at a national level and determined by the principles of CNE. Christie (1993) notes that teachers in all nineteen separate education departments had no formal role in curriculum development and tended to be viewed as implementers of a received curriculum. Planning of the curriculum was undertaken by outside experts and encapsulated in prescribed textbooks. The teacher’s function was a technical one: to execute the materials as designed by the officially approved experts.

It is widely recognised that teachers in South Africa were disempowered as educational practitioners. Because they were instruments of apartheid, their role was to reproduce state ideology. Some teachers were further disempowered by their undeserved labelling as “under-qualified”. They were denied their right to be professionals. As a teacher in Modiba’s study argues:

Teaching is not treated like a profession because of all the controls We teachers generally agree to occupying a subordinate position from which we cannot influence anything within the system. It's been always like this. I don't really plan things for myself. Subject advisers do the basic planning for every subject. We are not expected to deviate from these plans. Principals and their departmental heads check on us to find out whether lesson preparations and our teaching corresponds with what the work programmes require. It is not fair. As teachers we have to be allowed to think out things ourselves but with us it is the education we offer - Bantu Education. That makes everything to be dictated and imposed on us (1996: 123).

A teacher in Flanagan's study offers a similar criticism of the head of department: "She goes from classes to classes, asking where we are with the book now, and if you're behind she writes it down. She gives a report and puts it in your file" (1991: 37).

Ahmed, a teacher quoted in the book *The struggle to teach*, comments on his own experience of becoming a passive and dependent teacher:

I only realised the degree of control we were subjected to as teachers when I left teaching and started lecturing at university. At first I couldn't handle the independence and complete freedom I was experiencing.

In teaching you become completely mechanical and "routinised" in the system. You run to get permission for every little thing you do. The lack of democracy in schools is profound. Staff meetings are generally one-way shows, with the principal doing most of the talking. Policy is simply decided upon and your function is to implement it (Reeves, 1994: 39).

This view of the role of South African teachers as implementers of curriculum policy is confirmed in the study by Wedekind and his colleagues published in 1996. They explored the perceptions of principals of traditionally African schools, in the Pietermaritzburg region of KwaZulu-Natal, on social change, and on how their schools were responding in terms of curriculum change. The study found that schools were conceptualised as "curriculum receivers" (Marland, 1978, cited in Wedekind, 1996: 426). Principals were concerned with the source of decision-making and not with the top-down mode of curriculum decision-making. In fact, they expected centralised prescription from the new

“legitimate” authority. Wedekind further suggests that African schools in South Africa present very urgent arenas of research interest.

Wedekind is supported in his research by Walker who, when working with the Primary Education Project (PREP) between 1987 and 1989, found that the African teachers in her study lacked models of quality practice. They relied mostly on drill and rote learning, operating as technicians diligently implementing an official syllabus. They were, at first, unwilling to challenge authority and “were not only unfamiliar with any notion of themselves as curriculum shapers, at times they actively resisted such a role” (1994: 67).

Flanagan (1991), while working with PREP, became concerned that many service organisations began developing education materials for teachers based on their perceived notions of teacher needs. These curriculum materials were designed by “experts” in a centralised department **for** teachers, rather than **with** teachers. She is of the opinion that these materials would not actually be informative to teachers because teachers had little say in the identification of their needs nor in the design of the programmes imposed on them.

Not only were South African teachers unfamiliar with the notion of themselves as curriculum shapers, but they had no perception of themselves as autonomous professionals. All power and authority was vested in the central education department. Clearly it was vital that teachers’ perceptions needed to change before any participation in curriculum decision-making could occur. Teachers needed to perceive their own potential to take ownership and responsibility for the education process. As a teacher in Raubenheimer’s study so aptly reminds us: “ in the past, Pretoria drove the bus and the bus could only be driven in one way. But now teachers need to have a say in who drives the bus, and in how the bus is driven” (Raubenheimer, 1992/3: 72). Hartshorne observes that, if this is to occur in our present South African context, the first step is:

to restore the authentic authority of the teacher, an authority based not upon hierarchical position but upon respect, experience, knowledge and accountability to the learners, their parents and the community within which the school is situated (1992: 11).

1.3.1. Professional responsibility and its meaning for teachers

The professional development of teachers in South Africa contradicted the underlying conditions of Bantu Education. Developing the professionalism of a teacher would bring her into conflict with the education authorities. Hartshorne refers to the DET and describes the plight of South African teachers in the following way:

Pressured and criticised from all sides often for inadequacies for which they are not to blame, treated often by departments not as professionals but as instruments of policy, it is not surprising that the morale of many teachers is low (1988: 6).

As Walker comments,

attempts to foster teachers' professionalism through action research and teacher-led curriculum development would be counter-hegemonic to the ethos of Bantu education which neither respected persons - whether teachers, pupils or parents - nor demonstrated any regard for their judgement (1996: 99 - 100).

With the thoughts of both Hartshorne and Walker in mind, it is now my intention to explore two views of teacher professionalism which I regard as relevant to the South African situation. Each of these is based on the national context in which teachers work. The comparison between teacher professionalism in England and France may well serve as a continuum upon which I can later locate teacher professionalism in South Africa.

The implications of curriculum development for teachers have been captured by Hoyle (1974) in the concept of **extended professionalism** as opposed to **restricted professionalism**. The restricted professional is characterised by thought and practice which is classroom-focused, intuitive and based on experience rather than theory. This type of teacher is inventive, skilful, and sensitive to the development of individual pupils. The extended professional locates classroom teaching in the broader educational context and uses theory and current educational developments to research, evaluate and improve teaching. This type of teacher compares work with other teachers and is concerned to further her own professional development through in-service work.

Stenhouse is critical of aspects of Hoyle's work and suggests that the outstanding characteristic of the extended professional is "a capacity for autonomous professional

self-development through systematic self-study, through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures” (1975: 144).

It has been argued by Broadfoot that the national context within which teachers work deeply influences their understanding of professional responsibility. She uses Hoyle’s concept of the restricted and extended professional to highlight the differences between teachers’ views in England and France. She found that French teachers had a narrow classroom-focused view of their role because of the tradition of central control which necessitates their following prescribed guidelines on what to teach and how to teach. English teachers, on the other hand, were equally committed to their pupils but were more aware of their responsibility to parents, colleagues and the community. They saw the need to “improve their knowledge and training and keep abreast of new ideas, uphold the teaching profession and act in a professional capacity” (Broadfoot, 1988: 272).

The findings in the study point to a mode of **product** learning in France and a mode of **process** learning in England. French teachers were found to be concerned with the intellectual and cognitive development of the child, the acquisition of basic skills and a recognised body of academic knowledge. They viewed the child as a future adult, emphasising the importance of preparing the child for adult life. English teachers placed emphasis on the long-term development of the “whole” child, on how children learn, and on the uniqueness of children as different from adults.

A further suggestion that resulted from the study was that teaching could be seen as **problematic** in England and **axiomatic** or self-evident in France. Because of the nature of their role as open-ended, unclear and complex, English teachers faced dilemmas and contradictions, which sometimes resulted in feelings of stress and even “burn out”. Hoyle (1980) suggests that any extension of teachers’ professionalism could lead to job dissatisfaction due to the conflict and confusion of their widely dispersed goals along with tensions in achieving all their commitments. As an English teacher in the sample put it:

This means all the time being willing to work under great pressure compromising the ideal with the realistic, the useful with the expedient. It means also working to improve the working environment and to remove some of the “ever increasing” pressures that are being placed on teachers (1988: 281).

Poppleton talks about English teachers “living with contradiction” while Nias refers to them “living with paradox” . She suggests that to be a successful primary school teacher in England you have to

be prepared to be someone you dislike in order to gain anything. To be fulfilled by the job you have to be depleted by its demands. You need to be both egocentric and selfless - you can't care for children as individuals if you don't value yourself (cited in Broadfoot, 1988: 281 -282).

Alternatively, French teachers knew what was expected of them because it was clearly defined for them by Government directives. Teaching for them was simple and unproblematic, requiring only common sense and intuition. Job satisfaction came from the personal relationship with their pupils and through confidence that they would achieve their goals.

1.4. TEACHING, LEARNING AND CURRICULUM: A PERSONAL VIEW

In my view, curriculum change is not a neutral process (Apple, 1979, Elliot, 1991, Jansen, 1995). It is guided by a group of interconnecting ideas about the nature of knowledge, education, curriculum, teaching and learning. As Apple strongly argues:

education is not a neutral enterprise, that by the very nature of the institution, the educator is involved, whether he or she is conscious of it or not, in a political act. Educators cannot fully separate their educational activity from the unequally responsive institutional arrangements and the forms of consciousness that dominate advanced industrial economies like our own (1979: 1).

Knowledge, in my opinion, is socially constructed and reconstructed to produce meaning. Simply put, the social construction of knowledge involves:

the idea that human knowledge is not something fixed and firm and absolutely true for all time, but is always “filtered” by the mental “framework” of values, language and understanding that all of us use in making sense of the world. These “frameworks” are never purely individual ways of seeing, but are largely shaped

by the society and culture in which we grow up, and are thus shared by many others (Gultig, 1997: 8).

Education and teaching and learning involves a dynamic process in which this meaning is constructed and reconstructed as people try to make sense of their life experiences. Teaching is no longer a prescriptive and controlling activity, but rather a process of learning which is, “directed towards activating, engaging, challenging and stretching the natural powers of the human mind” (Elliot, 1991: 10). It is a reflective process. In reflecting on her students’ own search for meaning, the teacher selects and organises knowledge. Students respond to this knowledge and the teacher, together with the learners, monitor their subjective views and experiences with a view to modifying the process. This evaluation provides the teacher with a sense of direction about where next to go or not to go.

Curriculum is a concept which is highly complex and contested. The curriculum process involves meaning-making and interpretation which, in turn, can lead to conflicting meanings. Grundy suggests that when students and their teachers together claim the right to determine meaning themselves, the process of curriculum construction as meaning-making becomes a “political act” (1987: 116).

Christie is of the opinion that the production and selection of knowledge in the curriculum are social activities which produce a social product:

(The curriculum) embodies social relationships. It is drawn up by particular groups of people; it reflects particular points of view and values; it is anchored in the experiences of particular social groups; and it produces patterns of success and failure. Assumptions about what counts as valuable knowledge, as basic skills and as essential learning experiences for the curriculum are themselves socially influenced and contested. Viewed in this way, the curriculum can never be neutral or stand outside of patterns of power (Christie, 1993: 7).

Developing this view further, Jansen suggests that:

the school curriculum is not simply a technical document outlining intended learning outcomes or specifying content to be covered or teaching strategies and assessment procedures to be used. It is, fundamentally, a political document which reflects the struggles of opposing groups to have their interests, values, histories and politics dominate the school curriculum (1995: 248).

Historically the official view of curriculum in South Africa referred to the stated aims and syllabus documentation of a particular subject at a particular level. This view of the curriculum attempted to depict the education process as neutral and technical and it prescribed what teachers would do. Students and teachers were not afforded the right to determine meaning themselves. In fact they were excluded from any form of curriculum decision-making. The apartheid government used its power to control the curriculum and, in so doing, ensured that its racist and sexist aims permeated the curriculum.

1.4.1. Teacher involvement in curriculum development

It is my view that South African teachers have a role to play in the curriculum development process. There is a need for a combination of centralisation and decentralisation procedures in our education system based on the various curriculum aspects. School-based curriculum development alone will fail in our country at this time, because it represents too much of a radical shift from what has gone before. Teachers are not equipped at present to cope with school-based curriculum development. Yet greater ownership and commitment by teachers, communities and local authorities in decision-making is essential. In order for this process to begin and have a chance of success necessitates some form of teacher support and development. It must be accompanied by some form of INSET provision.

School-based curriculum development is not prevalent in most countries, though it is still strong in Australia (NEPI, 1992: 48). In countries such as France, Singapore and Mozambique, major curriculum development initiatives stem from national authorities. At the same time, some educationists and authors, such as Barber (1995), Goodson (1990), Grundy (1987) and Johnston (1990) recognise the need for teacher involvement in the curriculum development process. There is increasing evidence that curriculum

innovation and relevant curriculum development cannot be successfully disseminated from “experts” in centralised, national departments without attention to how teachers may be involved.

In answer to the question “Where does curriculum change take place?”, Barber (1995) refers to politicians in Britain who, from 1988 onwards, attempted to reorganise the entire known educational universe. They dealt with structure, funding, curriculum, assessment and testing, inspection, the provision of professional development and initial teacher education. The outcome was that “everything has changed, yet oddly everything, it seems has stayed the same” (Barber, 1995: 76). The reforms in Britain seemed to have turned the educational universe on its head, but have somehow missed that part of education which does not obey the laws of physics, that defies all logic, that is intangible and elusive. According to Barber, they have missed the **unknown universe**, the extraordinary ability of teachers to generate sparks of learning. I found an immediate affinity with Barber’s view of the **unknown universe** and it was this that prompted my impetus in this research area. In my view, it is after all within the experiences and voices of teachers that curriculum finds its vitality.

Goodson (1990) argues for a need to move away from decontextualised modes of analysis, away from technical, rational or scientific management models, away from the “objectives game” and away from a singular focus on curriculum as prescription. He suggests that the notion of curriculum as **social construction** is embraced fully, firstly at the level of prescription itself, but then also at the levels of process and practice. He supports the view that if curriculum theory is to be of use, it must begin with studies of schools and teaching. Grundy offers a similar perspective:

..... there is a very real sense in which curriculum development takes place at the level of classroom practice, despite what has been designed elsewhere No matter how sophisticated the plans might be, it is through transactions of the classroom that the real curriculum is developed (1987: 42).

A study by Johnston on secondary school teachers highlights the fact that teachers do not use specific models of curriculum development or curriculum design. Rather than framing their discussions around a process or framework of curriculum decision-making, the teachers in the study focused primarily on their notions of teaching and how these

were to be realised. Johnston refers to these “images” of teaching that determine a teacher’s need to change the curriculum (1990: 464).

It is the view of Hartshorne that:

education takes place not in the offices of the bureaucrats or in the legislature, but in the classrooms of the country, in the everyday interaction of teachers and pupils in a learning situation. The quality of what happens there, given reasonable physical conditions and class size, depends on two major factors - the commitment and competence of the teacher, and the quality of the learning materials that are available to them and their pupils (1992: 6).

It would appear that effective curriculum development can happen in the classroom, despite the real constraints imposed upon this process by the national context, the school culture and the school leadership. With this understanding of the role that teachers can play in curriculum development in schools and classrooms, I was eager to research my own teaching to assess the validity of this newly-formed understanding.

1.5. INSET IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE 1990S

The fundamental assumption that underlies in-service education and training for teachers (INSET) world-wide is that by improving the quality of teaching, the quality of the education that pupils receive is improved (Hofmeyr and Pavlich, 1987: 75). The role of the teacher is fundamental to education and curriculum change. Hofmeyr and Pavlich support this view and argue that “the role of the teacher is critical in the provision of quality education and thus INSET becomes an important strategy for achieving a transformed learning environment” (1987: 82).

Teacher education in apartheid South Africa has characteristically implied pre-service teacher education (PRESET). The notion of teacher education as an ongoing, continuous process of personal and professional growth in a changing society is alien to the majority of South African teachers. Bolam (1986) suggests that in-service teacher education (INSET) “is undertheorised and under-conceptualised” (cited in Hofmeyr, 1992:184). Hartshorne argues that “it is in the interests of South Africa that its teaching force should be nurtured and supported with effective in-service and teacher development programmes” (1992: 6).

Hofmeyr comments that INSET provision in South Africa to date has focused on remedial work due to weak initial teacher training (1992: 185). This can be understood in the light of apartheid education and the largest group of teachers in the country, the African teachers, who were the most severely disadvantaged. The HSRC Report uses the phrase “the target populations approach” when it refers to South Africa as a developing country with its large proportion of unqualified or under-qualified teachers (cited in Hartshorne, 1987: 4). Hofmeyr refers to the *Education Renewal Strategy* of the Department of National Education (1991) to argue that:

the most demoralised group of teachers of all are the young, mostly female, under qualified primary school teachers in homelands such as Lebowa, Kangwane and KwaZulu, working in overcrowded classrooms for low salaries (1992: 178).

Much of INSET in South Africa is based on a deficit approach which sees teachers as defective or lacking:

The model of in-service education for teachers in South Africa revolves around the provision of a learning environment which is essentially compensatory. It is based almost entirely on a deficiency model of the teacher (Mehl, 1987: 30).

Van den Berg uses the term “teacher pathology” to explain how most INSET proceeds from the assumption that there is something wrong with teachers (van den Berg, 1987: 21). As Bagwande and Louw explain, “the defect model is thus characterised by the view of other educators that teachers need staff development because they lack the necessary skills to teach successfully” (1993: 69).

There is an unspoken assumption in South Africa that departments are in the best position to decide what the needs of their teachers are and what is best for them. Hartshorne claims that:

although it is clear that the formal systems are not able to cope with the wide range of INSET needs, especially among black and so-called coloured teachers, there is often covert resistance to non-official programmes unless they can be controlled by the department concerned (1987: 1).

Despite this tension, INSET in South Africa has been provided by government departments, independent non-governmental organisations funded by the private sector, as well as teacher organisations. Hofmeyr suggests that on the whole,

INSET projects supported by the private sector are innovative, school-focused and curriculum-based programmes with a more democratic, co-operative management style than those of the departments. Moreover, they tend to have important relationships with universities and certain teacher associations (1992: 180).

Promat Colleges came into existence as one such private initiative, primarily concerned with offering opportunities to disadvantaged black in-service teachers to improve their professional qualifications and thereby improve their category classification. Initially Promat Colleges focused on a deficit model of INSET provision, a target populations approach. With time, this vision was extended into a more “developmental” INSET model of professional teacher growth, otherwise known as “the career profile approach” (Hartshorne, 1987: 4).

It is to Promat Colleges that the discussion now turns. The history of the organisation, both at a national and local level, will be examined, as will its aims and assumptions. The Educational Studies course will then be explored as it relates to and provides the location for the research project.

1.6. AN INSET COLLEGE IN SOUTH AFRICA : THE SETTING FOR THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

1.6.1. The origin of Promat Colleges

Since 1928, white teachers in South Africa required twelve years of schooling for admission to teacher training institutions while black teachers required only eight years of formal schooling. In 1953 the required qualification for black teachers was raised to the level of Standard 8, in other words, ten years of schooling (de Vries, 1989: 452). It was only as a result of the Soweto Riots of June 1976 that Standard 10 (twelve years of schooling) became the minimum criterion for admission of all teachers, irrespective of their racial classification, to teacher training institutions and, as de Vries comments, “this criterion was applied retrospectively to teachers in-service as well, irrespective of their length of experience or teaching ability” (1989: 452). Thus in 1985 there were:

146,075 teachers in black schools, of whom 51,394 had not passed the Standard 10 school qualification and another 10,436 had no professional teaching qualification; that is 42% of teachers in-service were studying to obtain a qualification to conform to the state’s definition of a qualified teacher (SAIRR, 1986, cited in de Vries, 1989:452).

It was in response to the national responsibility of the provision of INSET in South Africa, and to the plight of the black, under-qualified in-service teacher, that Promat Colleges, an independent, non-government and non-profit organisation, was established in 1983. The college was founded by Larry Robertson, a former teacher at Pretoria Boys’ High School. In January 1983, ninety-seven black teachers enrolled as full-time students at the first matriculation college, housed in a disused furniture store in Mamelodi near Pretoria. It started with modest but significant support from the private sector, and none whatsoever from the state.

The primary aim of Promat Colleges was the academic and professional upgrading of black teachers in-service in South Africa who had been labelled as “under-qualified” by the South African government and were required to obtain a Standard 10 certificate. At the time of their entering the teaching profession, this certificate was not a requirement for entrance into training. Using the words of Hartshorne, one has to ask:

whether the acquisition of the formal qualification necessarily improves the quality of education in the classroom, particularly if its relevance both to the teacher and to classroom realities is problematic (Hartshorne, 1987: 8).

De Vries refers to the:

futility of requiring so-called “under-qualified” in-service teachers to obtain, *post hoc*, a qualification meant for gaining entrance to training college in order to keep their current teaching posts and be paid salaries commensurate with their duties. That the Standard 10 qualification is inappropriate to the practising teachers’ task - and to the remedying of the problems identified by research - is borne out by the nature of the subjects in the curriculum most of which are not directly relevant to the subjects taught in school (de Vries, 1989: 454).

Promat, an acronym for “Project Matric”, offered these black in-service teachers a full-time, intensive, quality matriculation in just one year. In this way, Promat was relevant and fulfilled a necessary, traditional role as an INSET provider. As Hofmeyr and Pavlich explain:

A crucial aspect of the traditional approach to INSET in South Africa is the formal upgrading of black teachers which is limited to the achievement of specific academic or professional qualifications. Senior certificate has gained statutory acceptance as the minimum academic platform for teacher certification and the base for professional upgrading. Consequently the focus of most INSET programmes is on assisting black teachers to obtain their senior certificate (1987: 83).

Hartshorne confirms that “clearly one of the most marked backlogs (disparities) in the black and coloured education systems has to do with the qualifications, education and training of the teaching force” (1987: 2). Thus as an INSET provider, Promat’s goal was one of reducing and ultimately eliminating inequality in education (Hartshorne, 1987: 10) through the upgrading of the academic qualifications of teachers.

The success of the Mamelodi College motivated the establishment of a further four matriculation colleges between 1983 and 1989, three in the Transvaal (now Gauteng and Mpumalanga) and one in KwaZulu-Natal.

A logical extension of the Promat vision for teachers was the development of a teachers' training college. It was a major breakthrough for education in South Africa when registration for the country's first independent teachers' training college, free from government policies and bureaucratic control, was concluded (Brochure, 1992: 5). In January 1991 the Promat College of Education opened near Mamelodi to the first pre-service students and, in 1993, the in-service college was established in Cullinan for teachers in-service. The Promat Diploma in Education (Senior Primary Phase) was awarded to successful students and was accredited by the University of the Witwatersrand.

1.6.2. The origin and development of Promat College in KwaZulu-Natal

1.6.2.1. The matriculation college

The Durban matriculation college opened in January 1989 and was housed in factory premises in Umgeni Road with an enrolment of approximately one hundred and fifty students and a teaching staff of ten. The traditional matriculation curriculum was offered: subjects such as Zulu First Language, English Second Language, Afrikaans Third Language, Biblical Studies, Business Economics, Biology, Geography, Mathematics, History, Physical Science and Accountancy.

The matriculation course for under-qualified teachers proved to be successful with the matriculation pass-rate for the college escalating from 73% in 1989 to the 80% - 90% bracket in 1990 and then into the 90% - 100% bracket from 1991 onwards. In 1992, a refresher course in Teaching Methods was introduced at the Durban college as an enrichment programme for the teachers studying for their Standard 10. Motivation for the introduction of the course came from the Durban staff who felt the need, not only to offer a sound academic education, but to include a professional course for teachers, the curriculum of which evolved from the needs of the students in conjunction with the experiences of the staff. The goal of this aspect of INSET was classroom competence (Rogan and MacDonald, 1985, cited in Hofmeyer, 1992: 185). Promat sought to use the

teachers' need for qualification to provide school-focused INSET and not merely course-based work.

Volmink and Hardman, in their evaluation of Promat, refer to the quality of the teaching methods evidenced in the matriculation programme. Through extensive interviews with staff and students they documented the quality of the programme thus: "the good results achieved at Promat are because of this method" (Volmink, 1994: 19).

1.6.2.2. My attempt to capture the ethos of the matriculation college

I resigned from the Natal Education Department at the end of 1988 when I was notified that my application to Promat College in Durban was successful. I began teaching at the newly-established Promat Matriculation College in Durban in January 1989 where I taught Mathematics and Biblical Studies to the under-qualified teachers.

My commitment to the ideals and goals of Promat College lays my reporting open to the charge of subjectivity. The accounts describing the ethos of Promat and its development into an in-service college are based on my own personal experiences of the organisation and, as such, are subjective perceptions. But in saying this, I would like to quote the view of Stake (1983) who emphasises the value of subjective perceptions. He maintains that "the subjective perceptions of people about the worth of a programme are crucial to the description of what is happening in the programme" (cited in Hofmeyr and Pavlich, 1987: 93).

Teachers and staff at Promat College represented a team of highly motivated and well-qualified people who earned the respect and admiration of their students and set a standard of academic excellence (Brochure, 1990: 6). As a Promat teacher I experienced a liberating and vital approach to my work. As teachers it was my view that we were treated as professionals and had the latitude to be creative, to introduce new ideas and methods, to implement new courses when the need arose and to evaluate the success or failure of any project piloted.

Volmink and Hardman, in their evaluation of Promat, offer a response typical of the teacher group to the question: *What makes teaching at Promat special?*:

- a) Teachers are treated as professionals - they are trusted to get on with the job and to do it properly.
- b) There is a lot more flexibility than in other schools in which I have worked.
- c) Staff are dedicated and responsible - true, committed teachers.
- d) Smaller staff - greater sense of unity.
- e) Staff student relationships are, and could be more, one-on-one.
- f) There is limited time to cover an extensive workload.
- g) Teaching is intensive.

(Volmink, 1994: 20)

It is widely recognised that the ethos of a school or college is substantially influenced by the style and power of the principal. The Durban college principal used an assertive but democratic leadership style. She allowed for staff participation and teamwork in decision-making. Volmink's evaluation found that:

the colleges where this sense of leadership was most in evidence also tended to indicate most clearly a spirit of enterprise and creativity amongst the staff, a pride in the facilities and sense of ownership by all the staff of the programme. The two colleges which are particularly impressive are Durban and Lowveld (1994: 22).

I experienced the principal as a person who did not use her own power position to impose change on the staff. She had a broad vision of education and direction. She encouraged her staff to develop their own change proposals but her sympathies appeared, to me, to be with the views of the innovators.

1.6.2.3. The establishment of an in-service college of education in KZN

The Volmink evaluation of Promat made the following recommendation which was relevant to the expansion of the Durban campus:

INSET is a self-evident area of priority for Promat. The basic infrastructure and expertise exists within the organisation to make this activity possible. INSET should be given the funding priority so that it will be appropriately staffed and resourced, for Promat to play a leading role in the country (Volmink, 1994: 35).

During 1993 and 1994, Durban's Recruitment Officer realised the need for further expansion within Promat Durban. In-service teachers in the KwaZulu districts he visited required further professional development in the form of the Primary Teachers' Certificate and Diploma. The Diploma course was introduced on a part-time basis from July 1994 and on a full-time basis from January 1995. The Durban campus operated as a satellite campus of the Promat College of Education: In-Service in Cullinan, with the University of the Witwatersrand as the accrediting body.

This development was in line with Promat Resolution number three as put forward by the Promat Directors in November 1994:

that In-Service training of teachers be integrated into some of the existing Promat matric colleges, where feasible; and that part-time In-Service training of teachers and the development of additional satellite campuses be expanded as much as is financially and practically viable (Promat Colleges, 1994: 4).

The educational philosophy underpinning the in-service curriculum was

constructivist with a substantial emphasis on personal empowerment. Emphasis is placed on learner-centred techniques aimed at improving the teachers' ability to stimulate pupil interest and provide quality educational experiences in the classroom (Volmink, 1994:13).

Promat lecturers were not only interested in the transmission of subject content to their students, but were also attempting to develop skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, effective communication and study skills. As lecturers, it was our intention that the students learn to appreciate values such as democracy, tolerance, and compassion, with a possible new insight into what it means to be a good teacher.

In June 1995 the college relocated to its present premises in the ex-Gelofte Primary School in Pinetown. This move to a much larger and more inspiring location, resulted in enrolment figures increasing as many more teachers could be accommodated. In 1996 the student body of approximately four hundred teachers was more than double the previous year's figures. At the time of writing, the college was drawing its students from Hlabisa, Mahlabatini and Ubombo in North-East Natal; from Msinga, Nqutu, Pholela, Nkandla and Madadeni in the Natal Midlands; Port Shepstone, Ixopo and Harding on the Natal

South Coast; as well as from Kokstad, Flagstaff, Lusikisiki and Bizana in the Eastern Cape. The average age of these teachers, both male and female, was between thirty and forty years, many of them with more than ten years of teaching experience.

The problem of hostel accommodation was solved when permission was granted by Pinetown's Department of Works to alter one wing of the school into hostel accommodation. The Promat hostel in Umbilo was still in use and filled to capacity. The part-time student body in Pinetown consisted of about three hundred and forty in-service teachers studying for their Diploma in Education for the Senior Primary phase.

Hofmeyr refers to the "growing appreciation of the relative deprivation of rural areas compared with urban areas where both the DET and the private sector have concentrated their efforts in the past" (1992: 180). Promat, through its Recruitment Officer, realised the need to extend its vision into the rural areas of KwaZulu. An open learning centre was therefore established in the deprived rural area of Jozini in January 1996 to accommodate the needs of approximately two hundred and fifty rural teachers in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

Distance education as a mode of INSET delivery in South Africa is advocated by Hartshorne and others because many teachers, especially in the rural areas, are not within the reach of universities or colleges. It is suggested by Hartshorne that:

one of the ways to deal with the particular problems of the rural context, as well as the learning needs of adults, is to institute a sound distance learning system backed up both by local and tutorial groups and the potential of radio, TV and video instruction. Little has been done so far to investigate the possibilities of distance learning (1992: 7).

The Promat-Jozini open learning centre afforded rural teachers the opportunity to study towards their Diploma in Education through distance education. This model of INSET delivery assisted rural students who were both financially and geographically disadvantaged. Promat's distance education programme consists of printed material, correspondence assignments, as well as compulsory holiday contact sessions offered by the full-time college lecturers. Assessment of distance education students occurs continuously throughout the year. Tests, on the previous module studied, are written under controlled conditions at each of the contact sessions.

This increased emphasis on distance education was in line with Promat Resolution number nine of November 1994 which stated that:

Promat will integrate and develop distance education programmes and options in all its educational services and restructure the present distance education college in order to ensure its viability as a distance learning and resource centre (Promat Colleges, 1994: 4).

1.6.2.4. Autonomy for the KZN in-service college

During 1995 and 1996 it was decided to provincialise and decentralise the Pinetown campus, in keeping with national policies. Negotiations went ahead with the Department of Education of the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg, under the guidance of the Professor of Education and Head of Department, Ken Harley. As from January of 1997, the Promat College of Education: In-Service (KwaZulu-Natal) became an autonomous institution with the Department of Education of the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg as its accrediting body. The full-time college accommodates approximately three hundred and fifty teachers, while the part-time college has grown to four hundred and ten students at the Pinetown campus, three hundred and ten at the Jozini campus and sixty at the new Kokstad campus. From 1995 to 1996 the academic staff of the College of Education increased to twenty-four members, all of whom were involved in the teaching at the part-time centres, as well as in the development of course materials for distance education. From the beginning of 1996, the Matriculation College operated in Durban, as a separate institution from the In-Service College.

To summarise, Promat initially offered a deficit INSET approach in its planning but more recently has combined this approach with a developmental approach which affirms teachers' need for growth. This is evident in Promat's strategic planning around the possible introduction of an FDE in 1998.

1.6.2.5. Curriculum development in the Educational Studies course

When the In-Service College opened in Durban I was appointed to the post of lecturer in Educational Studies. During 1994 and 1995 the college implemented the curriculum according to the work programmes as set out by the Cullinan staff. It was during 1995 that major developments in Teacher Education were taking place in South Africa. The new national policy for teacher education in South Africa was published in 1995 with the aim of ensuring the “quality of teacher education within an equitable, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist education system” (COTEP, 1995: 3). It claims that there has been a radical paradigm shift away from a product, in-put model and a move towards a more meaningful process, out-put approach to teacher education. The aim is “to produce transformed teachers who are in turn capable of transforming both learners and context” (COTEP, 1995: 14).

The COTEP document emphasises a competence, learner-centred approach to teacher education with emphasis on knowledge, skills and attitudes that teachers require in their classrooms. It outlines six areas of study for the Diploma in Education for the Senior Primary Phase: Education, Professional Studies, Major Subjects, Communication, Religious Education and Teaching Practice with a total of nine credits to be accumulated in order for the diploma to be recognised. The document highlights areas that are to be covered in each of the different subjects. An interesting addition in the Educational Studies course was the inclusion of Curriculum Studies as an aspect of the course.

I was faced with the challenge of how to develop and teach a curriculum module that would introduce rural, in-service teachers to the notion of curriculum and their role in the curriculum development process. In line with the COTEP guidelines and Outcomes-based Education, I developed a learning programme for the curriculum module to be implemented in January 1996 for the duration of one semester at the third-year level of the Diploma in Education. The primary aim of the course was to encourage teachers to reflect on their classroom practice and, through exposure to curriculum theory, to improve the teaching and learning in their classrooms. Secondly the course aimed at assisting teachers in exploring both the social and political context of their schools and their roles as curriculum developers in bringing about educational change. Thus it can be seen that the goal of this INSET provision had broadened to include the concepts of change (van den Berg, 1987) and empowerment (Walker, 1990).

The learning programme for the Educational Studies (Curriculum) course can be found in Appendix A. The learning outcomes of the course included accessing information from a variety of sources; recording information in oral, written and graphic forms; analysing information to assess its validity and relevance for classroom practice; solving problems; identifying and clarifying values, whether personal, cultural or educational; accomplishing tasks by working in co-operation with other people; making informed judgements and testing them against the views of other people; and finally identifying an educational need in a community and thereafter planning, implementing and evaluating the educational programme developed to meet the need. The course content included the debate on an appropriate choice of curriculum definition, models of curriculum development, theories of curriculum, the notion of the reflective teacher, school effectiveness, as well as the notion of the teacher as change agent in the school.

1.7. CONCLUSION

The introduction of this curriculum module into the Educational Studies course in 1996 motivated my personal research into my own teaching and an exploration of my students' views on curriculum and their perceptions of their role as curriculum developers.

Like Hartshorne, I support the notion that teachers are fundamental to the process of curriculum development and change. Hartshorne argues that “teachers remain the most potentially powerful group of change agents, particularly if they can be freed from present constraints” (1990: 183). My experience shows that teachers, like myself, need to determine what it means to be a professional and, in so doing, we need to negotiate our position and status in society. We need to become more accountable to our learners and the community in which we work. We need to explore notions of curriculum and take responsibility for personal curriculum involvement and decision-making in our own institutions. The words of Julius Nyerere, past president of Tanzania, are wise and aptly apply to South African teachers as we come to terms with our new role in society:

..... people cannot be developed. They can only develop themselves

A man develops himself by what he does; he develops himself by making his own decisions, by increasing his understanding of what he is doing and why; by increasing his own knowledge and ability, and by his own full participation - as an equal - in the life of the community he lives in (cited in Hartshorne, 1987: 14).

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH DESIGN AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with an outline of the specific research questions inherent in this study. An account is then given of the theoretical concepts which are utilised in the study and which are related to the presentation of the findings. The chapter explores the origin and development of action research and its growing dominance in South Africa in order to locate action research within a context as it informed my work at two levels:

- the first level was the use of action research in the design of the research project. It was used by me as lecturer to inform, teach and research the curriculum programme taught.
- the second level was the use of action research as an aspect of the curriculum programme presented to the students. In the design of the curriculum programme students were introduced to action research and it was intended that they should consider adopting the method of action research in their own teaching and learning.

This chapter then explores briefly the tradition of non-realism and critical pedagogy in an attempt to compare the political view of action research for human emancipation with action research as a tool for the personal and professional development of teachers. This is followed with a brief look at symbolic interactionism and its relevance as a framework in the curriculum classroom. The chapter culminates in an assessment of action research as a viable methodology for this research project.

2.2. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

One piece of research can yield no more than a partial insight into the role that teachers can play in curriculum development in South Africa. It was necessary to limit the parameters and confine the research to a case study of a group of rural KwaZulu in-service teachers, studying at Promat College of Education (KZN). The aim of this study was to reflect on the theory and practice of the Promat Educational Studies (Curriculum) course as it introduced curriculum concepts to these rural teachers, studying for the final year of their Primary Teachers' Diploma in 1996. The study was primarily interested in the responses and reactions of the students as they were introduced to the curriculum concepts presented to them and especially to the teacher's role in curriculum development. The reflections were to be noted in order to guide and modify the design of the curriculum course and my practice as lecturer.

It must, at this point, be noted that this study was limited to assessing whether the teachers had undergone a change in professional attitude by the end of the two-term curriculum course. Had students experienced a change in their views of curriculum and their role in the curriculum development process? It must be emphasised that it was beyond the scope of this study to follow up on the classroom practice of these in-service teachers.

Initial questions that guided the reflection process were as follows:

- ✓ • Are rural KwaZulu in-service teachers aware of the change in South African educational policy at a macro level?
- How does this change in educational policy affect teachers' teaching?
- ✓ • What do teachers understand by the term "curriculum"?
- Is curriculum development necessary?
- Do teachers see themselves as change agents of the curriculum?
- Have teachers the skills and competences necessary to become instrumental in the process of curriculum development?
- Is it worthwhile for an in-service education course to offer a module on curriculum?
- ✓ • Has the Promat education course brought about a change in teachers' notions of curriculum?

116 The central question addressed in this study was the extent to which rural KwaZulu in-service teachers:

- understood the concept of curriculum
- reflected on their past role in the curriculum development process
- viewed their new role in curriculum development in a changing South Africa.

In asking this question, I was making two assumptions:

- *if education was to be transformative in South Africa, teachers needed to view themselves as curriculum developers.*
- *the teachers in my study were unlikely to view themselves as curriculum developers.*

The problem that then faced me was two-fold:

- *how should I teach an Educational Studies course that would introduce in-service teachers to the notion of curriculum and their role in the curriculum development process?*
- *what strategies would I use to overcome the resistance to these new notions of curriculum that the teachers might encounter?*

In order to tackle the research question, a suitable research methodology needed to be selected and adopted. Stephen Kemmis (1982) promotes action research as a form of research which is “sensitively attuned to the world of practice and the concerns of practitioners, and capable of building systematic understandings about practice through the critical reflection of practitioners” (cited in Walker, 1991a: 156).

As a Promat lecturer, it seemed logical to scrutinise the action research model and try to ascertain its suitability for my research project. This model emphasises the teacher as the main researcher. In terms of presenting a curriculum course effectively to in-service teachers, which would introduce them to the notion of curriculum and their role in the curriculum development process, and in terms of monitoring, evaluating and finding strategies to overcome problems encountered, the action research model seemed appropriate. As Flanagan comments “action research as a form of social inquiry is eminently suitable for school teachers as it concerns itself with professionalism - a social role which specifically aims at bridging the theory/practice divide” (1991: 33).

2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework was eclectic, the major element being action research complemented by the “symbolic interaction” perspective.

- The action research framework was used to inform, teach and research the curriculum programme
- The “symbolic interaction” perspective was used to account for micro level interaction in the curriculum classroom. It was used within the action research framework to monitor the “observe” and “reflect” moments of the action research cycle.

We now move on to study these two aspects of the theoretical framework in more detail. We first explore the origins and history of action research as it developed into a research methodology for use in education. It is hoped that this exploration will provide a contextual background to action research which will inform the reader about the research methodology used in this project. This account served to inform my own understanding of the theoretical underpinning of the action research process. It also assisted me in applying the model practically in the curriculum classroom. Following the overview of action research, we will look briefly at the “symbolic interaction” perspective.

2.4. ACTION RESEARCH

2.4.1. Towards an operational definition

I have chosen to present three definitions of action research, each of which have informed my personal understanding of action research as a methodology in different ways.

The definition of action research by Carr and Kemmis is most commonly cited:

Action Research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out (1986: 162).

However, Thomson's definition was more useful to me as a practitioner researching my own classroom. He describes action research as:

a way of thinking and systematically assessing what is happening in a classroom or school, implementing action to improve or change a situation or behaviour, monitoring and evaluating the effects of the action with a view to continuing improvement (1988, cited in Marsh, 1992: 116).

The definition by Davidoff and van den Berg was clear and simple to follow, highlighting step-by-step the role of the teacher/researcher in her classroom.

Action research is a way of taking a systematic, close, critical look at the way in which we teach, with a view to changing it so that the classroom experience becomes a more meaningful one for all those involved in it Action research is thus an attempt to link the action (of the teacher) with reflection on (or researching) that action. Put another way, action research is a way of trying out ideas in action, understanding those actions, and then attempting to make some improvements or changes in the classroom or school setting. The link between the action and the research is that they are both done by the same person, that is, the teacher (1990: 28).

With the above three definitions in mind, I developed my own operational definition of action research for the present study:

Action research is a method which can be used by a teacher to improve her classroom practice. It involves systematic monitoring and critical reflection on the teaching and learning process by all participants; namely the teacher, the learners and the "critical friend". The process of learning becomes important where the construction and reconstruction of meaning is fundamental to understanding and further action.

2.4.2. Kurt Lewin and the origins of action research

The notion of action research is attributed to the social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) who, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, first used the term. Lewin's early action research work, conducted in the USA, was concerned with changes in attitudes and conduct in the workplace. His testing of production in factories demonstrated that through democratic participation in the process, there was an increase in productivity and law and order. Lewin's action research "provided the details of how to develop social relationships of groups and between groups to sustain communication and co-operation" (Adelman, 1993: 7). Through communication and co-operation, minority groups were given the opportunity to overcome discrimination and exploitation.

2.4.2.1. Action research as an alternative to Scientific Management

This notion of action research as **inclusive** and **participatory**, developed in stark contrast to Scientific Management, prevalent at that time. Scientific Management developed in the early 1900s out of a concern for efficiency in industry. F. W. Taylor, the founding father of Scientific Management, was an engineer who believed that there was one best way of performing any work task. The job of management was to discover this way by applying scientific principles to the design of work procedures. He believed that this scientific planning of work tasks, as well as a "carrot and stick" system of financial incentives, would maximise productivity. The quest was to minimise input but still obtain maximum output in the achievement of goals. In increasing efficiency, however, scientific management has a dehumanising effect - the worker is controlled and constrained and operates simply as a "cog" in the machinery. It was in reaction to the exploitation of workers that Lewin embarked upon his studies.

Action research, for Lewin, meant the questioning of the contentious social issues experienced by the exploited workers. As a group the workers were required to explore the problems identified, and investigate possible solutions to these problems. Once group decisions were made, monitoring and recording of the consequences followed. Progress was regularly reviewed until the problem was solved. Newly perceived problems were continually brought forward by the group.

2.4.2.2. *Lewin: a scientific pragmatist*

Lewin has been described as a scientific pragmatist because of his concern for action and consequences within an empirical setting (Adelman, 1993: 12). In keeping with the views of Dewey (1929), Lewin criticised the separation of knowledge and action. It was Dewey who articulated a theory of inquiry that was a model for scientific method and for social practice. Through the extension of experimental enquiry to social practice, Dewey hoped that science and practice would be integrated. He based this hope on the observation that “science in becoming experimental has itself become a mode of directed practical doing” (cited in Argyris, 1985: 6). Thus at the centre of the pragmatist epistemology is the view that “experimentation in science is but a special case of human beings testing their conceptions in action” (Argyris, 1985: 6 - 7).

Although Lewin never wrote a systematic statement of his views on action research, several themes are evident in his work and are summarised by Argyris as follows:

- Action research involves change experiments on real problems in social systems. It focuses on a particular problem and seeks to provide assistance to the client system.
- Action research, like social management more generally, involves iterative cycles of identifying a problem, planning, acting, and evaluating.
- The intended change typically involves re-education, a term that refers to changing patterns of thinking and acting that are presently well established in individuals and groups. The intended change is typically at the level of norms and values expressed in action. Effective re-education depends on participation by clients in diagnosis and fact finding and on free choice to engage in new kinds of action.
- Action research challenges the status quo from a perspective of democratic values. This value orientation is congruent with the requirements of effective re-education (participation and free choice).
- Action research is intended to contribute simultaneously to basic knowledge in social science and to social action in everyday life. High standards for developing theory and empirically testing propositions organised by theory are not to be sacrificed, nor is the relation to practice to be lost

(Argyris, 1985: 8 - 9).

Following Lewin's death in 1947, action research as a means of solving social problems went into decline.

.....after World War II, action research was already condemned to a sort of orphan's role in social science - for the separation of science and practice was now institutionalised, and it has been basic to the federal bureaucracies ever since (Sanford, 1970 in Adelman, 1993: 17).

2.4.3. Action research in education

Lewin's ideas on action research were not educationally focused. The resurgence of interest in action research occurred in the 1970s in the field of teacher development. There was a need in Britain to make the contemporary educational research more relevant to teachers, and to involve teachers in their own research, hence promoting the notion of the "extended professional". There was also an increased awareness of action research itself and the need for the views of participants. The emergence of interest in Schwab's study of "the practical" in curriculum added to the revival of interest in action research (1969, 1971, 1973, cited in van Manen, 1977: 205).

According to Stenhouse (1983) "research is systematic enquiry made public. It is made public for criticism and utilisation within a particular research tradition" (cited in Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 188). Effective and quality curriculum development, Stenhouse argues, depends on the capacity of teachers to take a **research stance** with regard to their own teaching. This means that teachers need to be prepared to examine their own practice critically and systematically. The need for teachers to publicise their findings in order to be regarded as teacher-researchers is emphasised by Elliot (1981), while McNiff (1988) states that it is teachers' making public their claims to knowledge that define their classroom enquiries as research.

Stenhouse's work with the Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP) in the United Kingdom, engaged participating teachers in the discussion of issues they identified from classroom practice. His notion of **teacher-researcher** bridged the gap between educational researcher and educational practitioner. Here the teacher took on research tasks as well as educational tasks. In this scenario it was more likely that the knowledge

produced by the teacher-researcher would be more relevant and more usable in every-day practice.

It must be noted that Stenhouse saw distinct roles for the teacher-researcher and the external researcher, with the external researcher the expert who supported and evaluated the teacher's work. "I believe that fruitful development in the field of curriculum and teaching depends upon evolving styles of co-operative research by teachers and using full-time researchers to support the teachers' work." (Stenhouse, 1975: 162).

Of interest is the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire's notion of the **teacher as learner**, where the power relations that exist between the parties involved in the learning process are broken down. Freire explains that:

if the dichotomy between teaching and learning results in the refusal of the one who teaches to learn from the one being taught, it grows out of an ideology of domination. Those who are called to teach must first learn how to continue learning when they begin to teach (1978: 9).

The power and appeal of action research lies in the fact that it challenges the traditional divide between the teacher and the learner, as well as the teacher and the researcher. Thus action research is research aimed at the systematic development of relevant knowledge in a self-critical community of teachers and learners. It is the teacher/learner community who are involved in self-monitoring and self-evaluation of the educational process.

The Ford Teaching Project in the United Kingdom was developed under the leadership of Clem Adelman and John Elliot in 1972/1973. The project worked with teachers and advisers and articulated the following aims:

- To help teachers already attempting to implement inquiry/discovery methods, but aware of the gap between attempt and achievement, to narrow this gap in their situation.
- To help teachers by fostering an action research orientation towards classroom problems.

(cited in Stenhouse, 1975: 163)

A major role of Elliot and Adelman, as outside researchers, was to interview pupils in order to compare the teachers' and the pupils' perceptions of the teaching being researched. This stimulated discussion and dialogue between teachers and pupils, with the result that the task of the researcher was diminished.

Outside of the United Kingdom, action research started to develop into a forceful movement, especially in Australia. Action research projects involving teachers were monitored at Deakin University under the direction of Kemmis and his colleagues.

The German social theorist, Jurgen Habermas suggests that there are "three categories of processes of inquiry for which a specific connection between logical-methodological rules and knowledge-constitutive interests can be demonstrated" (1972: 308). He describes these interests in the following way:

* The approach of the empirical-analytic sciences incorporates a **technical** cognitive interest; that of the historical-hermeneutic sciences incorporates a **practical** one; and the approach of critically oriented sciences incorporates the **emancipatory** cognitive interest (Habermas, 1972: 308).

It was in 1982 that Grundy applied these three knowledge constitutive interests to action research. McKay describes how Habermas sets out "to indicate that all human knowledge is always - consciously or unconsciously - guided by a particular interest or purpose" (1992: 77). The implication is that human knowledge is always an interpretation of reality as it is observed from a particular viewpoint. Three forms of action research were presented: the technical, practical and emancipatory:

- **Technical action research** is pre-determined and externally driven and controlled by an expert who aims to make practice more efficient and effective. It emphasises rule-following, is task and product-centred and views teachers as instruments of change. Grundy argues that technical action research may "superficially lead to improvement in their (the participants') social situation, but which fundamentally makes no change to the power relationships implicit in the social practice" (1987: 148).
- **Practical action research** fosters the development of teachers' personal judgements and understandings in decisions about classroom change in the interests of their pupils. Teachers' research is process-oriented with the focus on informed action to

bring about change in classrooms. However, both the technical and practical modes of action research lack a critical focus on how classroom action is structurally located.

- **Critical or emancipatory action research** requires that one starts from teachers' political understandings of how society is structured and it aims to develop critical consciousness, radical participation and change aimed at freedom and equality. Teachers with an interest in this type of research are committed to educational change in the interests of the exploited and oppressed, with a view to empowering and transforming their teaching and the learning of their pupils (Walker, 1990: 59). Emancipatory action research requires that one starts from teachers' political understanding of how society is structured, how it is changing and how it can be changed. The research process should involve a "constant dialectic between individual teacher-researchers as actors and agents at a classroom level, and the teacher-researchers as part of a wider social formation" (Walker, 1990: 59).

The publication of the text *Becoming Critical* by Carr and Kemmis in 1986 has further opened the debate about action research. On the one hand Carr and Kemmis's work emphasised the **political nature** of embarking on action research because, at its core, lay the concept of human emancipation. On the other hand, a less politicised view of the action research process focused more on the **personal and professional development of teachers**. This view was promoted by Jean McNiff (1988, 1993) and is the view with which I am the most comfortable.

2.4.4. Non-realism, critical pedagogy and action research

The tradition of non-realism, which developed as an alternative to realism, contends that there can never be **true** knowledge if this is defined as the disinterested reflection of reality (McKay, 1992: 79). It advances a type of knowledge which does not claim to correspond with external reality, but which perceives knowledge as an expression of the way in which people have chosen to make sense of their reality.

Critical theorists, using the principles of non-realism, begin with the premise that "men and women are essentially unfree and inhabit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege" (McLaren, 1994: 166). Knowledge is never neutral or objective because it is historically and socially rooted and interest bound. As McLaren

claims, “knowledge (truth) is socially constructed, culturally mediated, and historically situated” (1994: 181). Critical educational theorists ask **how** and **why** knowledge gets constructed and **whose interests** does this knowledge serve? In keeping with the notion that all human knowledge is interested, it has been suggested that:

action research being concerned with the improvement of educational practices, understandings and situations, is necessarily based on a view of truth and action as socially-constructed and historically-embedded (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 182).

Education, according to the critical humanist approach, should become a site for critical and non-doctrinaire thinking. Morrow (1989) suggests that critical thinking involves making oneself the author of the words one speaks. He explains doctrinaire thinking as follows:

Doctrinaire thinking is subservient to something “outside” of itself; the doctrinaire thinker is something like a puppet, or an actor in a movie who, in spite of a brilliant illusion to the contrary, is speaking words of which he is not the author (1989: 164).

Morrow makes a claim about his previous learning which may strike a chord in many South Africans, because doctrinaire thinking was rife during the Apartheid era: “my previous education had never told me that my own thinking was the only site on which my education could proceed” (1989: 161).

2.4.4.1. Emancipatory knowledge and action research

The critical educator is interested in what Habermas calls emancipatory knowledge. Emancipatory knowledge assists in an understanding of how social relationships are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege. It aims to create conditions whereby oppression can be overcome and transformed through deliberative, collective action, thereby creating the foundation for self-determination, social justice, equality, empowerment and freedom (McLaren, 1994: 170). The critical-dialectical approach to curriculum seeks to establish the interpersonal and social conditions necessary for genuine self-understanding, emancipatory learning, and critical consciousness.

Freire describes the duty of the educator to search out appropriate paths for the learner to travel and to best assist the learner during the process of education:

The educator's task is not to use these means and these paths to uncover the object himself and to offer it, paternalistically, to the learner, thus denying him the effort of searching that is so indispensable to the act of knowing. Rather the most important factor is the development of a critical attitude "in relation to" an object and not a discourse by the educator "about" the object (1978: 11).

Emancipatory pedagogy involves a transactional view of teaching and learning. It views both teaching **and** learning as integral to the learning process. This process takes the experiences of both the learner and the teacher and, through dialogue and negotiation, recognises them both as problematic. Through this **problem-posing** education, learners and teachers are encouraged, together, to confront the real problems of their existence and relationships. As co-investigators, both teachers and learners involve themselves in action and critical self-reflection in order to make learning meaningful. Freire maintains that:

for the dialogical, problem-posing teacher-student, the programme content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition but rather the organised, systematised, and developed "representation" to individuals of the things about which they want to know more (1972: 65).

Empowerment is defined by McLaren as "not only helping students to understand and engage the world around them, but also enabling them to exercise the kind of courage needed to change the social order where necessary" (1994: 182). Teachers need to explore distorted understandings of school knowledge and the power relations which exist therein. McLaren suggests that:

Knowledge is relevant only when it begins with the experiences students bring with them from the surrounding culture; it is critical only when these experiences are shown to sometimes be problematic (i.e. racist, sexist); and it is transformative only when students begin to use the knowledge to help empower others, including individuals in the surrounding community (1994: 189 - 190).

Some educators hold the view that action research is able to **transform** the present to produce a different future. This type of action researcher is therefore deliberately activist and espouses its emancipatory potential. Emancipation, according to Grundy (1987), will always be the intention of action research which is informed by an interest in autonomous and responsible practice. She suggests that action research “offers a programme for strategic action which opens the possibility of working systematically in ways which foster freedom, equality and justice in learning environments and interactions” (1987: 159).

However, there are theorists who are sceptical of the emancipatory claims of action research and hold the view that it is unlikely that the emancipatory potential of action research will be fully realised. Walker argues that it is only through the pedagogical interventions of progressive teacher organisations that the emancipatory potential of classroom action research may be realised (1990: 60).

Gibson (1986) is doubtful that action research can be transformed “from a cottage industry into a major vehicle for the criticism and change of social practice”. He notes the powerlessness” and “irrelevance” of action research “in the face of structural inequality and injustice” (cited in Walker, 1990: 58). The political imperative evident in emancipatory action research, Gibson points out, may well surprise and shock those teachers who turn to action research in order to improve their pupils’ learning of number or reading (cited in Walker, 1990: 61).

I feel more comfortable with the view of action research for personal and professional improvement and prefer not to hold the view of action research for emancipation. I agree with McNiff that education is “literally a growth area, for pupils and teachers alike. Once teachers embark on the journey of self-education, then thinking becomes action, and action becomes a never-ending cycle of re-creation” (1988: 51). Adelman is of the opinion that action research or participatory research “may empower by raising the consciousness of teachers about the social context in which they work” (1993: 21).

Action research is proposed by McNiff and others as the method to be used by teachers to develop their own research and knowledge, to test and improve their own classroom practice, and to establish a sound rationale for what they are doing. Walker believes that to dismiss action research would be to:

lose the possibility for teachers as researchers to offer examples, episodes and narratives of how to work with children in educational contexts in ways which might contribute to teachers gaining control of practice and to the shaping of a critical pedagogy. But teachers will accept its emancipatory potential unevenly and whole groups not at all. In some contexts then, action research may well gild gutter education, while in others it might contribute to transforming teaching (1990: 62).

2.4.4.2. Further critical views on action research

Action research, according to Appel (1991), has considerable, yet considerably limited, potential for teaching and learning.

The greatest limitation of action research, Walker argues, is that the process of enquiry itself, while it may develop skills, will not necessarily shift into a critique of the contexts of practice. “Action research divorced from both an understanding of the structural features of one’s society and links with political forces for democratic education must eventually be limited in its effects to improvement without change” (Walker, 1990: 61).

Material factors can act as real constraints on what action research can be expected to achieve within post-apartheid schooling. “A shortage of material factors limits the amount or level of innovation any small group of individuals can achieve” (Appel, 1991: 104).

A further limitation of the action research cycle is that it exhibits a cognitive, rational analysis and often ignores both the unconscious and group dynamics. Appel argues that:

radical pedagogical systems like action research deny that human practices are ideological and that ideology is a “depth psychological” matter. Despite the best intentions of all concerned, however, there are all sorts of defence mechanisms and internal and interpersonal conflicts which can result in discussions skating on the surface of what are deeper, disturbing motives (1991: 104).

Serious **power differentials** may exist between the various participants in the action research cycle. The experiences of both the MEDU programme in Pietermaritzburg and PREP in Cape Town showed that equal participation was not possible because of job description - teachers were defined as teachers and the researcher was defined as researcher (Walker, 1993; Wedekind, 1995).

Action research has as its central concern teachers' interests. This may become problematic if it leads to the **closed nature** of the action research process (Wedekind, 1995). Power should not be exclusive to any one interest group. If this were the case, the research community would be caught in a particular view and the value of its research would diminish. Wedekind argues that,

by centring the research process around the action researcher or the research group, where participants determine the problems, the methods, and the language, the process becomes centrally concerned with teachers' interests (1995: 162).

Wedekind quotes Gibson (1986) to support his argument:

The insistence on no outsiders smacks of a desire for monopoly control which fits ill with any view of democracy (or critical theory). What goes on in schools and classrooms, what those schools and classrooms should be like, is not a matter for insiders only (Wedekind, 1995: 162).

2.4.5. Action research in South Africa

Action research has been promoted by some educators in South Africa as a political solution to the Apartheid struggle. Walker comments that "in the last few years small groups of teachers in South Africa have begun to investigate aspects of their classroom practice through action research" (1991a: 156). The University of the Western Cape is known to be the initiation ground for action research projects in South Africa, especially during the early 1980s. Davidoff and van den Berg are of the opinion that "it is not enough simply to improve the way we teach, but that we must transform our teaching" (1990: 4).

The notion of human emancipation and empowerment as central to the action research process is in keeping with one of the main principles of People's Education. As Davidoff and van den Berg suggest:

action research helps to develop skills which open up an understanding of the situations in which we find ourselves. This critical understanding provides possibilities for creating alternatives, alternatives to the passive acceptance of current circumstances at school and in the broader society Then, as teachers, we can make a meaningful contribution towards the building of a future South Africa that releases its people from the shackles of the past and present (1990: 53).

Action research presupposes a certain culture (Elliot, 1988). Action research should be rooted in teachers' views of themselves as autonomous professionals and in a well-established movement for **curriculum as a process**. Yet such a receptive culture simply did not, according to Walker, exist in Bantu Education primary schools, where the dominant view of educational activity on the part of teachers, even more than pupils, was to replicate what was given (1996: 26). Nonetheless, she is of the opinion that action research can offer the possibility of "sustained and reflective classroom enquiry in the interest of developing a critical pedagogy for a future South Africa" (Walker, 1990: 60). Walker views action research as having "the potential to re-insert teacher agency into the struggle within education for the transformative schools, which aims to transform self and social relations rather than simply reproducing them" (1988, cited in Walker, 1993: 97). While emphasising the value of this political emancipatory view, she warns that emancipatory knowledge cannot be divorced from technical and practical knowledge (1993: 100).

Parker, in his critical review of a local publication on In-Service Education and Training (INSET), refers to a problem-solving model in identifying change strategies. This emphasises the importance of values and an action research methodology, which is committed to the central role of teachers as change agents. He suggests that a discussion on change must include clarification of words like control and active agents in order to come to grips with the everyday reality of classrooms in the townships and in the rural areas. He points out that "in the context of South Africa it is particularly important to be able to distinguish between change as reform and change as a more radical and progressive transformation" (1988/89: 100).

2.4.5.1. A South African example of the action research cycle

The following example illustrates Lewin's action research cycle in a South African context:

Planning: I need to introduce Outcomes-based Education (OBE) into the school to make the teaching and learning more effective.
I wonder what my staff know about OBE already.

Acting: Staff fill in a questionnaire to assist me in determining what they already know about OBE.

Observing: Conversations with the staff and results from the survey indicate that they heard of OBE but do not know how to implement it in their classrooms.

Reflecting: How do I help staff to get answers to their problems of OBE implementation?

This question provides the stimulus for the second cycle of the process: that of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

Planning: Perhaps I should invite a guest facilitator from "Media in Education" to hold a workshop with the staff.

Acting: The facilitator from "Media in Education" accepts the invitation and conducts the workshop.

Observing: The staff are responsive and participate positively and energetically in the workshop.

Reflecting: The workshop was a success because some clarity was reached regarding the conceptualisation of OBE in the classroom. Where do we, as a staff, now go from here?

Again the reflecting stage poses another question, and so the cycle continues.

- Planning:** As a school, we will explore the usefulness of OBE in the classrooms over a two week period.
- Acting:** Staff are issued with booklets and clear imperatives to record their reflections, problems and experiences during the two weeks.
- Observing:** Staff are initially tentative. In the staff room there is evidence of communication and collaboration. The complexity around OBE creates a space for individual interpretation and questioning.
- Reflecting:** I am confronted with the problem of how to evaluate the impact that this experiment with OBE has had on individual staff members.

This problem leads to further planning.

Planning: I will interview individual staff members and a sample of students.

And so the cycle continues.

2.4.5.2. Difficulties with action research and its transfer to South Africa

The development of action research over the last thirty years in Britain, Australia, Europe and America has provided South Africa with a growing body of knowledge on the theory and implementation of action research. Walker cautions that we need to recognise that:

such work has developed in a context of relatively greater teacher autonomy, better educated teachers with access to continuing in-service support, greater financial resources, and a situation altogether less contested and volatile than our own (1991a: 158).

She sees in South Africa an essential need to establish appropriate structural conditions for action research - conditions which enable “democratic dialogue, collaborative work and critical classroom practices” (1991a: 159).

In many South African educational institutions, especially prior to 1996, teachers were classified as “restricted professionals” without the right or expertise to research problems in their own classrooms. The few teachers who used action research to investigate problems and change in their classrooms did so without the support of the Education Department and the local authority. No funding was made available for the projects and no time was allocated to teachers for research work. As Eames says: “time is needed to be made available for teachers to write their reports, as you can’t ask teachers to do it on top of all the work they have to do normally” (1993: 76). It is also interesting to note that Lewin, in the early days of action research, acknowledged that action research was an onerous and risky business, and that sponsorship for action research was difficult to find (Sanford, 1970 cited in Adelman, 1993: 15).

In general, Apartheid Education in South Africa resulted in a relative absence of an educational research community. “Teachers schooled and trained in apartheid education are not well equipped to facilitate creative, critical and dynamic learning” (Walker, 1990: 62). The notion of a classroom culture of teacher as learner in dialogue with other participants was foreign and often threatening. The majority of South African teachers did not see themselves as researchers. Traditional educational researchers were “outside experts who scrutinise what happens in the classroom, analyse, and then (in principle) feed recommendations back **down** to the schools” (Appel, 1991: 103). These traditional researchers were mainly department officials who enjoyed no credible acceptance in the profession, and this resulted in the creation of a stigma around classroom visitation (Volmink, 1994: 32).

* Many teachers have the potential to become action researchers, but becoming an action researcher in the true sense does not automatically happen to a good teacher. True action research must involve systematic and methodical reflecting, monitoring and changing of one’s teaching. Equally important,

it must be supported by the structures and personnel of each institution and of the local authority, and each teacher involved must do it, and talk about it, if he or she is to understand the power of the form and the possibilities for its use (Eames, 1993: 72).

Democracy involves **participation** and, as Urch, (1989) suggests, “teachers who are not themselves committed to participatory ways of working with colleagues, will find it difficult to facilitate similar processes in classrooms” (cited in Walker, 1994: 68).

Professionally, teachers in South Africa appeared to operate as individuals who took pride in, and ownership of, the teaching in their classrooms, but there was little communication or collaboration with other teachers. It was almost unheard of to ask another teacher to be an observer in the classroom as this was tantamount to admitting failure. The expectation tended to be that teachers were experts in their classrooms, in full control at all times and with no vulnerabilities or problems to speak of. As Veronica, a teacher in Walker’s study commented:

I was just a self-centred somebody. I just go to my classroom, I teach, I go out, I go home. Now I’ve discovered that, no! You must go to other people, to other teachers. And you must also give help to other teachers (1994: 68).

This argument is developed further by Stenhouse who explains that,

Classroom research is about bettering classroom experience. The main barrier to pupils’ understanding this is our having taught them that the teacher is always right. This elevates personal wisdom at the expense of professional skill (1975: 156).

He continues that “the close examination of one’s professional performance is personally threatening; and the social climate in which teachers work generally offers little support to those who might be disposed to face that threat” (1975: 159).

This may lead to a further difficulty with the action research process - that of the relationship between the classroom teacher and the participant observer. Tensions may exist between the people in these two roles, as reported by Hargreaves (1966) and Lacey (1970). To overcome this tension the notion of “critical friend” is sometimes used. The critical friend could be a peer teacher who can act as a **sounding board**, and:

- provide a wider perspective
- ask participants to clarify ideas
- give individual support where needed

(Marsh, 1992: 117).

2.5. THE SYMBOLIC INTERACTION PERSPECTIVE

Research in the interpretative tradition has focused on the operations of schools and classrooms themselves. This study used the symbolic interaction perspective to account for interaction in the curriculum classroom. Within the interpretative tradition, interactionism was the process through which the participants in this study constructed and reconstructed their views and actions.

As interpreted by Blumer (1969), interactionism consists of three basic premises:

- human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them
- these meanings are a product of social interaction in human society
- these meanings are modified and handled through an interpretive process that is used by each individual in dealings with the things he/she encounters

(cited in Meltzer, 1975: 1).

Thus symbolic interaction is the interaction that takes place among the various meanings and minds that characterise human societies. The individual and society are viewed as inseparable units in a mutually interdependent relationship. Symbolic interactionists believe that human beings are defined as self-reflective beings. The behaviour of people occurs “not so much by forces within themselves, or by external forces impinging upon them, but what lies in between, a reflective and socially derived interpretation of the internal and external stimuli that are present” (Meltzer, 1975: 2). Delamont (1976) *illustrates this by writing that when two people are interacting “each is constantly interpreting her own and other’s acts, and reacting, and reinterpreting, and reacting, and reinterpreting, and reacting ...” (cited in Harley, 1983: 34).

Interactionism is a **process** through which men and women interpreted one another and constructed their actions. This present study viewed teachers’ reflections on curriculum as a dynamic process. Because the teachers in this study had differing experiences of curriculum in classrooms and schools, their views on curriculum varied. As contact between these teachers and myself increased, views of curriculum of all participants was confirmed, modified or substantially changed.

Knowledge is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the improvement of individuals in society (Hewitt, 1976: 24). This study hopes to expand the teachers' views on curriculum so that they become aware of their place in South African society, of its constraints on them, and of their possible influence on it in their role as curriculum developers. It was felt that it was outside the parameters of this study to explore the actions of these teachers in their classrooms on returning to their schools.

Thus it can be seen that teachers' perceptions of curriculum are critical to any possibility of curriculum change in the classroom. As Hewitt argues, "people act on the basis of meanings, so that one's actions in a particular situation depend on the way that situation is perceived" (1976: 19).

2.6. SOME CONCLUSIONS

The overview of action research and its value for teachers researching their own teaching, as mentioned in this chapter, served to inform my own **theoretical understanding of action research**. Action research is claimed as the most appropriate research method to be used whenever a social practice is the focus of research activity. As my proposed research involved the social practice and the attitudes of rural KwaZulu teachers and their understanding of curriculum issues, it seemed to me to be an ideal methodology. In terms of method, a self-reflective spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting appealed to me as a teacher researching my own classroom.

Despite the limitations of action research mentioned in this chapter, I was of the opinion that the advantages of using action research outweighed its limitations. If carried out systematically, action research can play a role in enabling ordinary people, teachers like myself, to develop a picture of how my teaching could be **improved**. Integral to action research is the experiential learning of all participants. Walker views the greatest strength of action research as its potential to "democratise research and the production of educational knowledge in a context of concrete action to validate the purpose of research" (1990: 61).

Like Eames, I was of the opinion that action research was of immense importance to the professionalism of teachers. “It’s a form of knowledge produced by teachers, and primarily aimed at communicating with teachers, and at being used by teachers” . It is accountable since “ teachers are evaluating and improving their classroom practice in a methodical and rigorous manner” (Eames, 1993: 71). Through action research, Appel believes that teachers can learn crucial and deep lessons about how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits, and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public (1991: 104).

Bearing in mind Walker’s reassurance that there is **no right way** of doing action research, I embarked, tentatively, on my own action research project. The notions of improvement and change, ownership and accountability, participation and collaboration, as well as the critique inherent in action research , inspired me, a Promat lecturer, to use action research as a tool in my classroom. In spite of its shortcomings, I was of the opinion that action research was sufficiently promising to try out in a local context. As Stuart writes:

It is a grassroots, development oriented approach, dialogic rather than didactic, which might encourage the growth of endogenous models rather than uncritical acceptance of imported ones (1991, cited in Walker, 1994: 70).

My position was simple and clear. I hoped to see some real evidence of a paradigm shift in my students’ views of curriculum. My concern was, however, whether my method of research was an appropriate tool to evaluate this. At no stage did I set out to offer a solution to the Apartheid struggle, nor was it ever my intention to engage in a process of transformation of education. Very simply, my hope was to improve the teaching and learning in my classroom through a better understanding of the concept and construction of curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- questionnaire
- journals
- lecturer diaries
- classroom discussion
- semi-structured interviews
- triangulation

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we explored action research as the dominant theoretical framework for this study. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the particular notion of action research as a **methodological premise** for this research project. The concepts of critical subjectivity and triangulation are therefore discussed, and the notion of the "critical friend" is explored.

* This study relied on **qualitative** data which were gathered from classroom discussions as well as from the student journals, and the diaries of both the lecturer and the critical friend. This qualitative data consisted mainly of the dynamic views of the teachers in this study on curriculum issues. Quantitative data was of limited use and served only to assist with the gathering of biographical detail information in the initial questionnaire.

3.2. TWO LEVELS OF ACTION RESEARCH

Two different levels of action research were employed in the project and were referred to briefly in Chapter Two:

- * • the first level was the use of action research in the design of the research project. It was used by me, as lecturer, to inform, teach and research the curriculum programme taught.
- the second level was the use of action research as an aspect of the curriculum programme presented to the students. In the design of the curriculum programme students were introduced to action research and it was intended that they should consider adopting the method of action research in their own teaching and learning.

Two texts were relevant in assisting me to conceptualise the research project.

- The first was chapter seventeen on action research in Marsh, C. (1992) *Key concepts for understanding curriculum*. This text was used mainly to inform the design of the research project.
- The second was the booklet by Davidoff, S. and van den Berg, O. (1990) *Changing your teaching: the challenge of the classroom*. This text is simply written and offers a user-friendly approach to the understanding and application of action research in the classroom. Despite the views of its critics, such as Appel, that it “lacks analysis and vision, and unnecessarily limits its version of action research to technical adjustments” (1991: 104), it served to be valuable as a reference for students in the curriculum programme.

3.3. DESIGN OF THE PROMAT CURRICULUM PROGRAMME

The Promat curriculum programme was conceptualised by myself, as Educational Studies lecturer, along with members of the Education Department, and the principal of the college. The full-time students participating in the programme were rural KwaZulu in-service teachers, both male and female, who were enrolled for the third (final) year of the Diploma in Education for the Senior Primary Phase. The group consisted of forty-two students, with an average age of between thirty-one and forty years.

The curriculum programme was intended to expose students to the notion of curriculum, to curriculum models and theories and to the notion of the role of teachers in the curriculum development process. Skills such as problem-solving, reflecting, critical thinking, evaluating and group co-operation and communication were to be promoted, along with values such as democracy, tolerance and human rights. The curriculum learning programme can be found in Appendix A.

3.4. RESEARCH PROJECT DESIGN

questionnaire
① The programme was designed for a **five month semester cycle**, from February to June 1996. An introductory questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix B part I, was scheduled for the beginning of the programme. It was designed to obtain student biographical details but more specifically to locate students' understanding of curriculum and their experiences of teaching and learning within a particular context. The crucial question was whether students viewed themselves as producers of educational knowledge or whether they saw their role more simply as the implementers of a received curriculum.

② The questionnaire aimed at ascertaining whether students had a traditional or more progressive understanding of education as well as of the teaching and learning in the South African context. It assisted in determining whether students viewed curriculum as simple and linear, or as complex and contested. The role of the teacher in curriculum decision-making and change, as understood by the students, was also explored.

critical friend
② After the completion of the questionnaire, the **first cycle** of the programme was to be implemented, for six weeks, until the end of the first term. The **second cycle** would start at the beginning of term two and run for a further six weeks. During the second cycle a Promat observer or "critical friend" would be introduced into the curriculum classroom to offer another view on the research process, ensuring that triangulation be achieved. Triangulation involves "eliciting interpretative accounts of observational data from the points of view of the teacher, peers and pupils" (Elliot, 1993: 185).

③ The academic course would culminate in a formal test on curriculum on 14 June 1996, the marks of which would be used towards the students' assessment in the Promat Educational Studies course. The research programme would culminate in student interviews with Professor Ken Harley, the supervisor for this research, on 19 June 1996. These interviews would serve as a further dimension of the triangulation process.

3.5. OPERATIONALISING AND IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION RESEARCH MODEL

As previously mentioned, action research is a way of taking a close, systematic and critical look at the way in which we teach, with a view to changing it so that the classroom experience becomes a more meaningful one for all those involved (Davidoff,

1990: 28). Having read the literature on action research as documented in Chapter Two, I proceeded to plan how I would use the action research model practically to research the curriculum classroom. I operationalised and implemented the theoretical models using the four fundamental **processes** or **moments** of the action research cycle in the following way:

1. To develop a **plan** of action to improve what is already happening:

- it must be forward looking.
- it must be strategic in that risks have to be taken.

2. To **act** to **implement** the plan:

- it is deliberate and controlled.
- it takes place in real time and encounters real constraints.
- it may involve some negotiations and compromises.

3. To **observe** the effects of action in the context in which it occurs

- it is planned.
- it provides the basis for critical self-reflection.
- it must be open-minded.

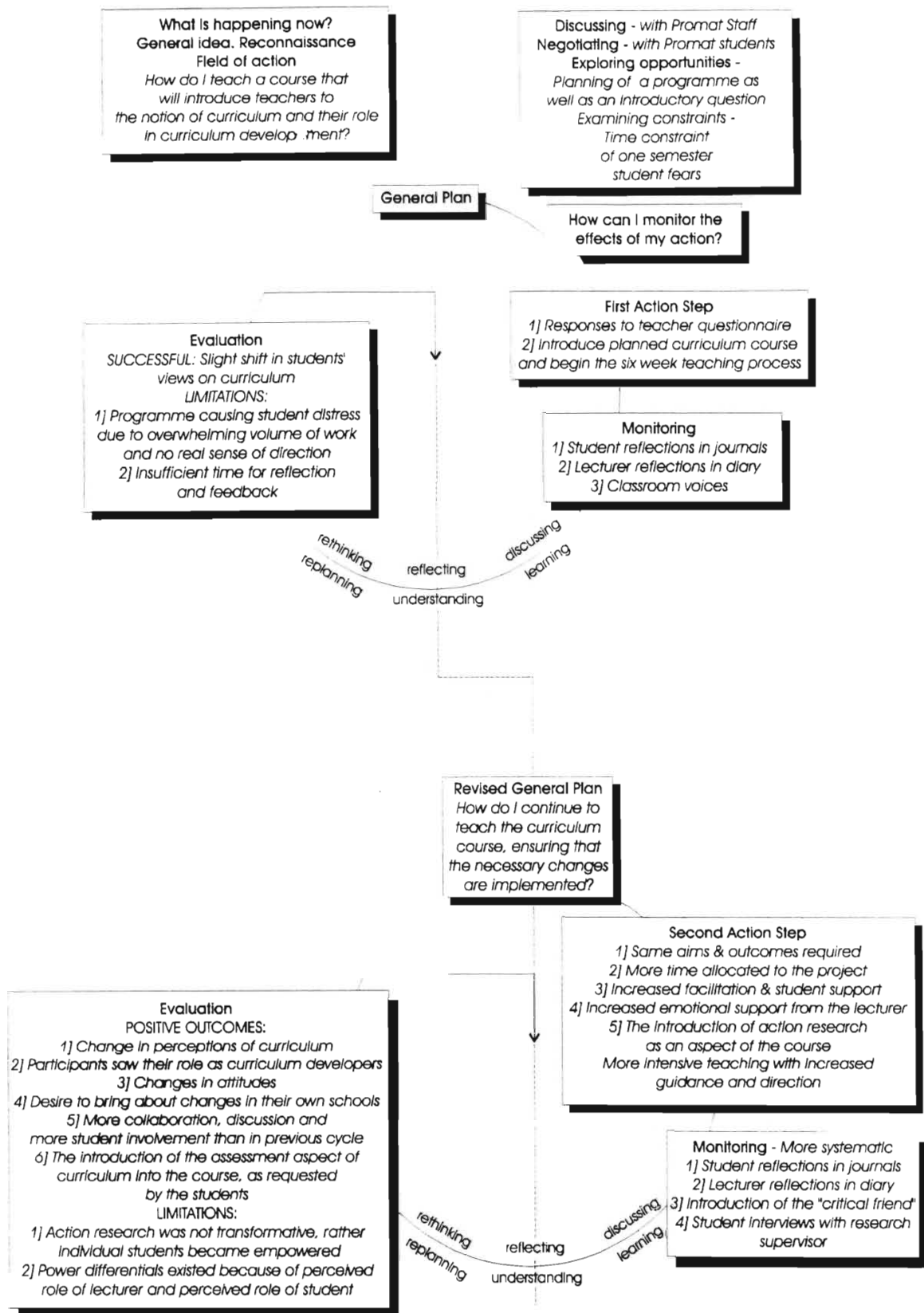
4. To **reflect** on these effects as a basis for further planning and a succession of cycles

- it recalls action.
- it comprehends the issues and circumstances.
- it judges whether the effects were desirable

(Kemmis and McTaggart, 1984, cited in Marsh, 1992: 117 - 118).

3.5.1. Diagrammatic representation of the action research cycles

The diagram below shows the development of the cycles as they were operationalised and implemented in the curriculum research project and it illustrates the processes mentioned above as they were applied at the various stages.



Kemmis, 1982, cited in Marsh, 1992:119. Adapted specifically for this research project

3.5.2. A more detailed representation of the action research cycles

The **first action research stage** involved the process of *exploring and developing a research question around a particular problem* that I experienced in my classroom. The problem that evolved in this study was how to teach an Educational Studies course that would introduce in-service teachers to the notion of curriculum and the different curriculum models, with a view to choosing an operational definition and a model(s) that would best suit their personal needs and school context.

Planning involved the construction of a questionnaire (Appendix B part I) to determine students' views concerning curriculum issues prior to embarking on the course. A major constraint to be considered was the specified time of one semester for this course with two hours contact time with the students per week. The course could not proceed beyond the semester because an independent study module would be introduced after the July holidays, an area beyond the scope of this study. Negotiations regarding the need for this research as well as the impact it would have on both staff and students was discussed at the level of Promat KZN management as well as with two Promat directors at the national level.

The **second action research stage** was the *implementation* of the first action step. It is important to note at this juncture that students were introduced to the prospect of the research project and invited to participate. A clear distinction was made between free, honest and confidential reflections in the students' journals which would be used for the research project, and formal assessment for the Educational Studies course. Reassurance was given that honest and contentious reflections in journals would not affect their marks. Students were then involved in completing the questionnaires individually. This was followed by a six week block of classroom time where the teaching and learning of the knowledge content, skills and attitudes of the curriculum course, as set out in the learning programme, were explored.

Simultaneously with stage two ran **action research stage three**, the *monitoring and observing* of the first action step. Students' reflections, reactions and attitudes to the course as a whole, to the teaching and to the course content, needed to be collected. This was done through the use of individual student journals and their responses to questions posed by me regarding the course. My observations as lecturer were recorded in a

personal diary. Most good teachers monitor and reflect on their teaching during the course of their everyday lives. Yet action research focuses on making these observations *more systematic*. My systematic observations, as well as those of the students and the “critical friend”, made this action research study collaborative and participatory.

Action research stage four formed the final stage of the action research cycle and was concerned with *reflection*. This stage involved sorting out the meaning of all the data gathered in the journals and diary, as well as listening to the voices of students in the classroom. This was followed by a critical evaluation of the consequences of the action, with a view to planning the next action cycle.

3.5.3. Findings

Although it is unusual to refer to research findings in a chapter entitled methodology, I wish to take the liberty to refer briefly to the findings of the first action research cycle, which will be reported more fully in Chapter Five. My purpose in reporting on these research findings at this early stage in the process of documentation, is that it allows me to explain how the second cycle evolved.

A major concern emerged from the data gathered during the first cycle: students were **distressed** and **overwhelmed**, not only by the volume of work to be covered, but by their sense that there was little direction, support and nurturing from me, their lecturer. The reasons for this seemed to have been two-fold. Firstly, as Head of Part-time Inset: KZN, I was absent from class on many occasions, leaving handouts and readings for students to work through. Secondly, because I was committed to educational change with a view to empowering my learners, I gave little class direction and left my lessons unstructured. I stepped back and waited for the students to take ownership of their classroom curriculum. Ironically, instead of empowering students, this actually seemed to **disempower** them. They seemed to want a clear sense of where they were going and a lecturer who would give them the **correct answers**. My experiences accorded well with those of Walker’s:

While the theory of non-directive facilitation sat well with my democratic values, in practice it proved problematic where teachers lacked access to alternative ways of thinking, behaving and perceiving educational practice. Expecting teachers to somehow mysteriously metamorphose from where they were into self-reflective

practitioners was overly optimistic. Moreover, it demanded not just one major innovation - action research - but the learning of new curriculum content and new teaching methods as well (Walker, 1993: 98 - 99).

3.5.4. A revised general plan

The final stage in the first action step was therefore the catalyst for **improvement** in classroom teaching and learning. Through collaboration between participants, suggestions were made for improving classroom practice during the next cycle, which was to begin in the second term. A timetabling arrangement was made whereby lecturing time for the group was increased from two to four hours per week, in order to make up for time lost during the previous term. I made my teaching my first priority and ensured that my other work commitments took second place. Finally, the students were introduced to the notion of the teacher as curriculum developer and, through their exploration and experiences in the curriculum classroom, began to understand the practical value of action research as a research tool for both teacher and students. Thus the second action step was informed by lessons learnt from the first and the cyclical process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting continued.

3.5.5. Monitoring and evaluating the second cycle

3.5.5.1. Critical subjectivity

Traditional research advocates objectivity in the production of valid knowledge. Stenhouse argues that the problem of research objectivity is a false one.

Any research into classrooms must aim to improve teaching. Thus any research must be applied by teachers, so that the most clinically objective research can only feed into practice through an interested actor in the situation. There is no escaping the fact that it is the teacher's subjective perception which is crucial for practice since he is in a position to control the classroom (1975: 157).

Validity and reliability

Qualitative research in the interpretative tradition acknowledges that research is unavoidably **subjective**, because it relies heavily on people. However, by introducing the notion of **participant observation** research findings can be validated through intersubjective criticism or a critical subjectivity (McNiff, 1988). Harley, too, offers his insights on this issue and states that: “techniques such as participant observation have become increasingly regarded as more insightful techniques of comprehending social reality than the earlier techniques based on the collection of neutral statistical data” (Harley, 1983: 55).

In action research the researcher is both teacher **and** researcher. Action research is thus unavoidably subjective and value-laden. It is therefore the task of the researcher to acknowledge her bias which will enable the reader to take this into account when assessing the findings. Elliot and Adelman (1973) are of the opinion that conscious self-monitoring is synonymous with the teacher adopting an objective point of view towards her practice; objective to the extent that subjective obstacles such as rationalisation and bias are overcome. Elliot (1989) maintains that the whole point of action research is reflection on self-in-action and not “to objectify the situation in a form which dissociates the self from its actions” (cited in Walker, 1996: 45). McNiff (1988) suggests that there are three steps to establishing the validity of a claim to knowledge - self-validation, peer validation and learner validation. It is to the similar notion of triangulation that we now turn.

3.5.5.2. Triangulation

One of the usual ways in which action research data can be validated is by the technique of **triangulation**. Triangulation involves eliciting independent accounts of the teaching/learning situation from three or more sources. The first source was my accounts, as lecturer, of my teaching which were recorded in my personal diary. Adelman, in his study, found that “participants’ attempts to write down accounts of their thoughts were of value in the process of reflective participatory research” (1993: 18). As can be seen in Chapter Five, student reflections in journals constituted the second source, and, as in Adelman’s study, offered a valuable and vital dimension to the research project. The introduction of a non-participant observer constituted the third source.

Walker is of the opinion that although there is no right way of doing action research, “experience does suggest that an outside facilitator with experience of action research is needed to assist and support teachers in learning research methods” (1991a: 159). Elliot and Adelman refer to “the capacity of teachers to produce accurate accounts of their teaching which could be independently assessed by fellow practitioners” (1973: 14). They conceive of the “consciously self-monitoring teacher” who formulates to herself and to her colleagues, true descriptions and explanations of her conduct. To this end, I explored avenues available to me in the selection of a Promat colleague who would offer an independent assessment of the teaching and learning in the curriculum classroom.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the process of triangulation in this research project had one further dimension to it. The research project would culminate in student interviews with Ken Harley, which would serve as a further means to counteract subjectivity.

It must be noted at this point that triangulation should not only be seen as a search for congruence. At times triangulation may reveal congruence but also ambiguity and even contradictions (Mathison, 1988, cited in Walker, 1996: 43). Silverman warns that it would be a mistake to use data to “adjudicate between accounts” without taking into account the context in which data have been generated (1985, cited in Walker, 1996: 43). This research assumes that there is no single reality so that data gathered in different settings do not simply lead to the truth. Rather, it **validates** the research process, although research accounts always remain partial and incomplete.

3.5.5.3. The introduction of the critical friend into the curriculum classroom

It is proposed by Stenhouse (1975) that when teachers assume the role of researchers, they work collaboratively with other teachers and develop a sensitive and self-critical subjective perspective. Carr and Kemmis acknowledge the role of the “outsider”, the critical friend in terms of working collaboratively and assisting the “insiders”, the teacher and the students, to act more wisely, prudently and critically in transforming education (1986: 161). They believe that the critical friend can only be successful if she “can help those involved in the educational process to improve their own educational practices, their own understandings, and the situations and institutions in which they work” (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 161).

With these views in mind, I set out to find a colleague who would be willing to act as “critical friend” and embark on the research process with me. I approached Debbie Knight, the Head of Department of Science and Mathematics at Promat, and offered her the role of “critical friend”, which she accepted. Debbie’s experiences of research methods as well as action research during her Adult Education Diploma studies at the University of Natal, Durban, assisted her in offering the necessary support in this research project.

As a result of timetabling constraints, Debbie was only available to attend the curriculum classroom once a week. In a traditional mould, I worked from the premise that it would be more appropriate for Debbie to “evaluate my teaching” rather than “listen to the voices of the students”. I therefore planned that her visits to the classroom would revolve around input lectures rather than tutorials or “messy” group discussions. Elliot draws a distinction between the observer as evaluator and the observer as researcher. He sees the evaluator as ascribing praise and blame and allowing few rights of reply. On the other hand, the observer in the researcher role focuses on practice rather than the practitioner and on non-judgement (1991: 37). My initial understanding of Debbie’s role was that of an “evaluator”.

Debbie comments in her report that “we did not at any stage define a particular role for the critical friend” (Appendix F). This was true. I invited her into the curriculum classroom with little direction or discussion regarding the “critical friend” role. This was due to my inexperience as a researcher and my reserve about the presence of another person watching me teach. It was fortunate that Debbie had the common sense to refer to a reading I gave her to develop some understanding of the task ahead of her (Appendix F).

3.6. CONCLUSION

We now turn to a detailed description of the actual course of the Promat curriculum programme from its beginnings in February 1996 to its culmination in June of the same year. Chapter Four takes an in-depth look at the initial teacher questionnaire which assisted in ascertaining teachers’ notions of curriculum prior to the onset of the curriculum programme. Chapters Five and Six describe the first and second action research cycles of the programme respectively.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE: ESTABLISHING STUDENTS' VIEWS OF CURRICULUM

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides student responses to the **questionnaire** which was given to them prior to the onset of the curriculum course (Appendix B). It begins with a look at the major aims of the questionnaire and then offers a brief description of how the questionnaire was tested so as to assess its validity. What follows is an analysis of the data with a summary of the dominant responses of the students. Finally the chapter culminates in the formulation of some conclusions about the student group and their views on curriculum. The implications of these conclusions for the action research cycle are then explored.

Please refer to Appendix B and use it as a reference as you read through this chapter.

4.2. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

4.2.1. Main aims of the questionnaire

The main aims of the questionnaire were:

- to inform me, as lecturer, about the personal details of the group of students in the study
- to assess the views of these students on teaching and learning and, specifically, curriculum. The major question to be answered was whether the students saw themselves as developers of the curriculum who were able to bring about educational change in their schools.

4.2.2. The questionnaire: a pilot study

To test the quality and validity of the questionnaire I approached a group of approximately forty second-year students in February 1996. I offered them a brief explanation of my research in which I highlighted the intended aims and identified the intended participants (the diploma students in their third year of study). This was followed by a request for ten volunteers to do a pilot study of the questionnaire. This trial study served to assess the format, language and user-friendliness of the questionnaire. Ten students, both men and women, volunteered. They were given fifteen minutes to work through the questionnaire, with a view to evaluating whether they had understood each question. This was followed by a discussion on the content and presentation of the questionnaire.

In general this pilot group of students commented that they found section A, **Biographical details**, easy to answer. The only potentially problematic question in this section was number twelve, where one student, in answer to the question “*For what type of qualification do you intend to study?*”, “answered a masters degree”. It was suggested that examples of the possible qualifications (e.g. HDE or FDE) be listed verbally by the lecturer prior to the answering of the questionnaire, in order to offer clarification.

With reference to section B, **Personal views about teaching**, I pre-empted queries to question three by offering possible phrases for answering this question. These alternatives seemed to assist students as there were no further queries regarding this question. With reference to question nine, students requested verbal clarification regarding the term **resources and physical resources**. Reference to concrete examples, such as desks, chalk and buildings were used.

The general opinion of the students was that they had felt relaxed when answering the questionnaire. They found it simple to follow and could answer the questions using their previous teaching experience. They were of the opinion that the third-year students would cope even better with the questionnaire, because of an extra year’s exposure to educational theory and terminology (Lecturer’s diary, 15 February 1996).

In the light of this pilot study no written alterations were made to the questionnaire. As researcher, I made a decision to offer more verbal clarification of certain questions before the diploma students embarked on the process of answering the questionnaire. I also made a note to monitor the students carefully and be available to support them at any time, should they need my assistance.

4.2.3. Implementation of the questionnaire with the research group of students

The questionnaire was presented to the third-year group of diploma students the following day. The research topic was introduced and the aims of the research project discussed. It was emphasised that participation in the research project was entirely voluntary. Also mentioned was the need for honest and open reflection on the research questions. Reassurance was given that the research aspect of the Educational Studies course would in no way influence students' assessment marks for the course. I explained to students that all journal writing was for the exclusive use of the research project.

A lengthy debate then followed which explored how students' understanding of the curriculum course itself would be assessed. The group agreed on a formal test at the end of the first term, two assignments during the second term and then one question on curriculum in the June Educational Studies examination paper. All other work would consist of student reflections and, as such, would become part of the research project. No marks would be awarded for this aspect of the course (Lecturer's diary, 16 February 1996).

Of the class, 90% (thirty-eight out of a total of forty-two students) were present to answer the questionnaire and all were willing to be involved in the research project. (The four absent students, on returning to college, were invited to and joined the research group). Before the students answered the questionnaire, the potentially problematic questions, as identified by the pilot study, were articulated. Thereafter the thirty-eight students completed the questionnaire, taking between twenty and thirty-five minutes to do so. They were apparently at ease during this period and were free to ask questions. Similar questions to those in the pilot study arose regarding **section B** numbers three and nine, and these were successfully explained using different terminology.

4.3. STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was divided into **two sections**. The first section was concerned with the biographical details of the students and consisted of twelve questions, requiring only a **mark** in the relevant block. Section two consisted of thirteen questions requiring more in-depth, personal views about the teaching experiences of the students.

A systematic account of the students' responses to the questionnaire would be too cumbersome for inclusion in this chapter. This account can be found in Appendix B part II. What will be presented instead, is an account of the major themes apparent in students' responses.

4.3.1. Biographical details

Of the third year group, almost 80% of the class were women, with the majority of the group married and between thirty-one and forty years of age. It is interesting to note that 75% of the group were teaching in rural areas in South Africa. Within the group, 60% had between eleven and twenty years of full-time teaching experience, either in the lower primary or senior primary levels. An overwhelming 80% of the group taught classes of more than forty pupils in a class. Most of the group held the post of teacher, while it is interesting to note that nine of the students held the post of principal. The majority of the group had obtained their Primary Teachers' Certificate from Madadeni College of Education and their M+2 qualification from Promat College of Education: In-Service (KZN). The entire group was intending to study further, with many hoping to study for a Higher **Diploma** in Education.

The following twelve pie graphs reflect the composition of the group of students in this study:

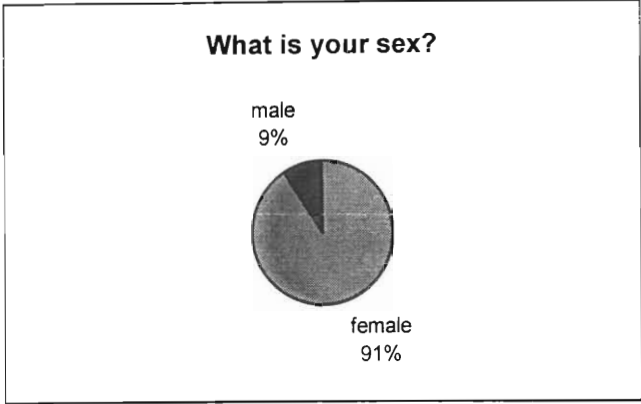


Figure A1

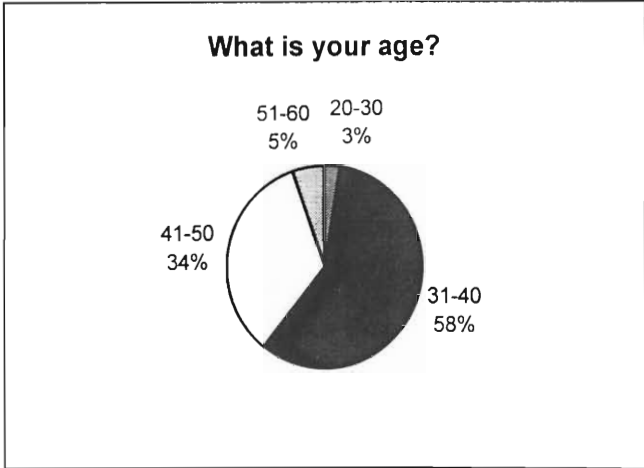


Figure A2

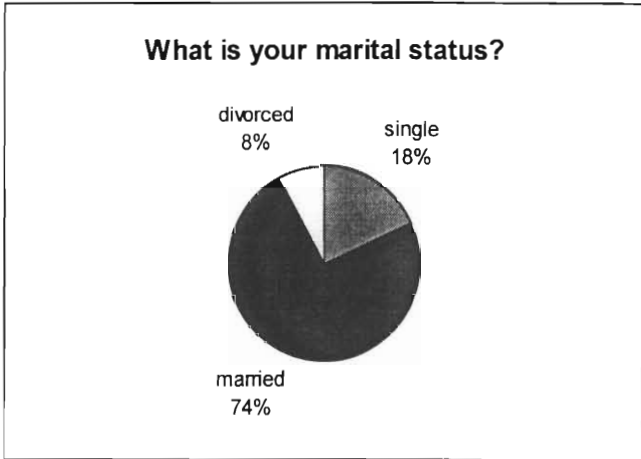


Figure A3

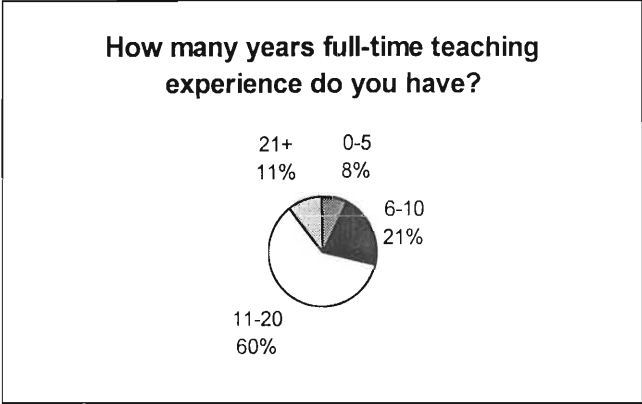


Figure A4

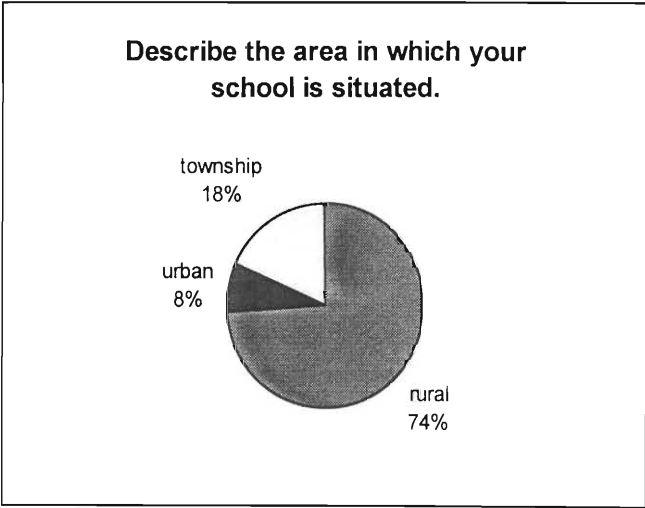


Figure A5

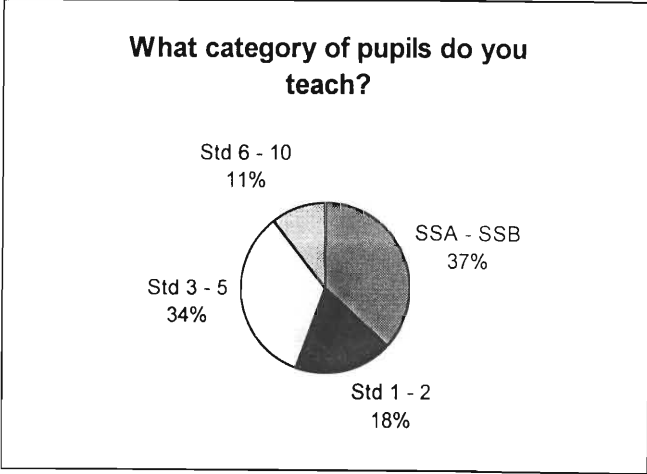


Figure A6

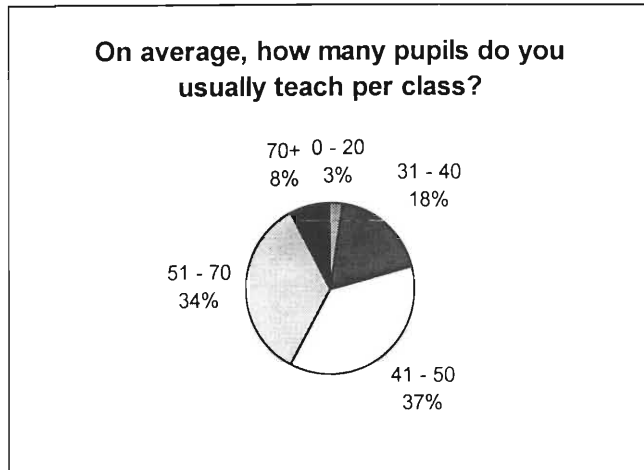


Figure A7

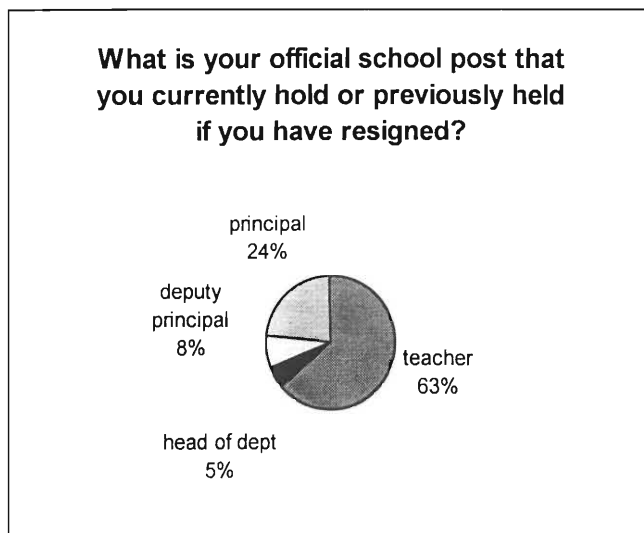


Figure A8

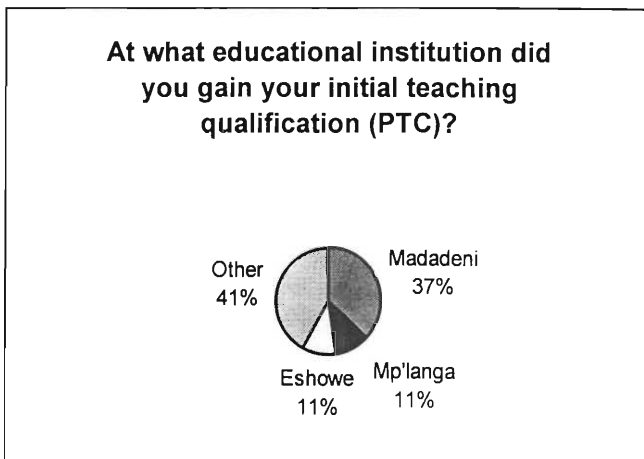


Figure A9

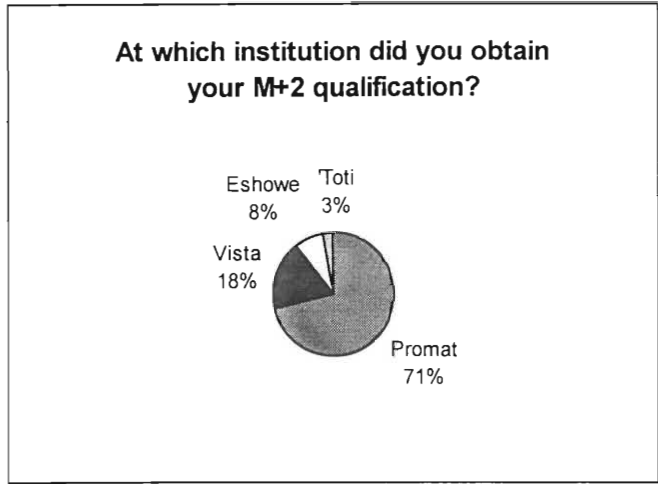


Figure A10

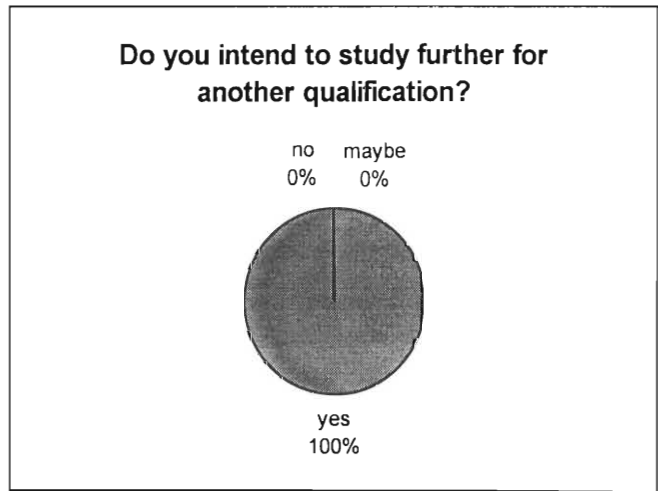


Figure A11

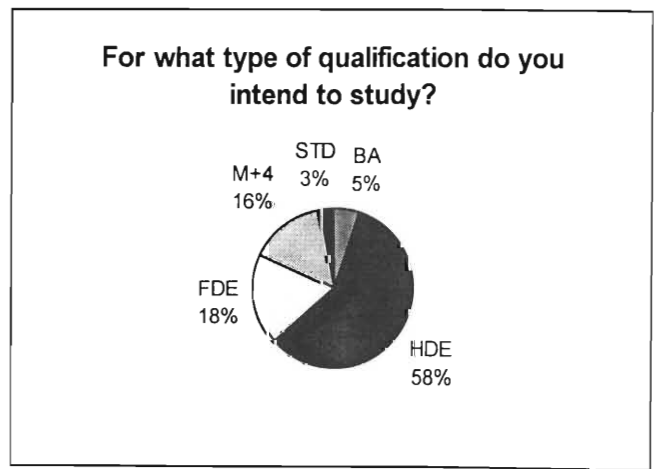


Figure A12

In his report on the interviews of the 19 June 1996, Ken Harley comments on the uniformity of student opinion. He suggests that one of the reasons for this may have been the common social experiences of the group: they were of similar age, and married. He comments: “The group certainly appeared to be a tightly-knit and cohesive social unit” (Appendix G).

4.3.2. Personal views about teaching

A number of themes emerged from an analysis of the student questionnaires.

4.3.2.1. The dominant notion of curriculum

Student responses to the meaning of the word “curriculum” were noticeably similar and are extremely pertinent to this study. Of the students, 68% were of the opinion that curriculum is all work set to be done in a particular year. It is planned and organised. It refers to the syllabus, subjects, programme, course, or timetable and it generally occurs in a classroom.

The following quotations from the questionnaires are used to illustrate this limited understanding of curriculum:

- “It means the list of subjects which is planned for a school”
- “It is the syllabus we are going to study and apply when we go back to our schools”
- “It refers to all work set to be done in a particular year”
- “It is the planning of all the teaching programmes”
- “It means the courses or studies done in colleges, schools or universities”
- “I think curriculum means things like timetables”
- “It is an organised, fully planned structure for a particular project to progress”.

4.3.2.2. The aims of education

Questions regarding “aims of education” and “reasons for becoming a teacher” elicited four broad responses:

- concern for the African community and the education of the black nation
- interest in and love for young children and their development
- to facilitate learning in order that pupils could face the future successfully and have a better standard of living
- for pupils to get more knowledge.

4.3.2.3. The teacher as a professional

Students had a limited view of teachers as professionals. Their view of teacher professionalism focused on the classroom and the school. This restricted view did not extend into the realms of curriculum decision-making and the possible involvement of teachers in the process. The notion of the professional teacher was related to:

- the relationship with the learners
- the use of different and improved teaching methods
- the co-operation and communication with colleagues
- good behaviour and role modelling along with leadership qualities
- teacher qualifications and certification.

Students were of the opinion that “pupils should learn positive attitudes and good values from me as a teacher”. The values and attitudes deemed important were honesty, respect, responsibility, loyalty, dedication, service, self-discipline, self-confidence, obedience, humour, punctuality, co-operation, willingness, independence, helpfulness, equality, empathy, courage, trust, kindness, perseverance and cleanliness. The following quotations support this notion:

- “Loyalty and dedication in my service as a teacher”
- “To respect myself, my pupils, my colleagues and the community, and to do my work thoroughly”

- “To have good manners, to have discipline, to obey rules and regulations, and also to have a sense of humour”
- “To obey and learn to take other people’s views”
- “To work hard at all times”
- “I want my pupils to copy what is good, and I want to be an example”.

4.3.2.4. The most important signs of a good school

Of the students, 74% believed that physical resources and facilities were the most important signs of a good school:

- “Without them (physical resources and facilities) formal teaching cannot occur”
- “A lack of resources leads to rote learning and memorisation”
- “The children will learn better because the classroom will be looking good”
- “Teaching will be effective because all the material needed for teaching will be available”
- “Without them (physical resources and facilities) there can’t be progress”.

The concept of the teacher as **human resource** did not feature in any of the student responses, although a few students did see the teacher as the most important sign of the good school. The following two responses highlight this alternative, yet uncommon view:

- “The most important sign is the quality of the teacher and his dedication to his work”
- “A good quality education can be produced under the trees, depending on the teacher”.

4.3.2.5. Schools and change in the new South Africa

In response to the question “*how should schools change in the new South Africa*”?, most students suggested change at the macro level. Dominant points that emerged were the need for:

- one education system
- democracy and equality of opportunity
- mixing of races in multi-racial schools
- improved facilities.

In other words, students were waiting for change to occur at a national level. Change was in the hands of department officials and politicians in offices far removed from schools. No mention was made of change being in the hands of teachers, although a minority of students did refer to a need for “*the introduction of new progressive methods in order to improve teaching*”. However, the general response to this question was in direct contrast to the question “*who is responsible for bringing about changes in the school*”? To this question the most popular answer was **the teacher**. It would appear that students, when responding to the latter question, were offering an answer which they knew to be professionally respectable. The former question was answered from the **actual** experience of the students; from their **real world** of how things actually occurred. A possible explanation of this contradiction in views will be offered later in this chapter.

4.3.2.6. Teaching and learning

The best methods of teaching primary school children were listed as:

- group work
- the progressive method (a learner-centred approach with the teacher as facilitator)
- the use of teaching aids.

To the question of improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools, without the use of additional resources, the following ideas were dominant:

- progressive methods
- creation of teaching aids out of waste materials
- the use of action research.

It would appear that students were aware of certain educational theories and philosophies that had been taught at the college and which were considered valuable and professionally

acceptable by the lecturing staff. References to these “respectable” views seemed to dominate student responses. The following student comment bears this out:

“Before I came here (to Promat), I thought I was the only person responsible for talking and doing things, not the child”.

In all probability, responses such as the two listed below, are closer to the actual views of what really happens in the classroom:

- “Question and answer method is used because children are familiar with it”
- “Story-telling is used because there are no books in our schools”.

The majority of students viewed discipline as essential in schools. Punishment was acceptable as long as it was viewed in a “good way”. This was explained in terms of the use of reinforcement techniques. Corporal punishment was viewed by many as unacceptable: *“Punishment must be done but not with a stick”*. Again when assessing these student sentiments in the light of the college standpoint on this issue, much similarity was evident and the accepted rhetoric was used. It is interesting to note that only **one** student suggested that children should be disciplined *“according to the culture of that particular community or society. As black African people, discipline and punishment play an important role”*.

The majority of students felt that the community should be involved in the life of the school. Two major areas were targeted as being important. Parents were to:

- communicate with and help teachers by discussing pupil problems, needs and progress
- be responsible for school buildings, furniture, equipment and books.

4.3.2.7. Student expectations of the curriculum course

The majority of students hoped to gain skills in order to become better teachers and bring about change in their schools. Other students were expecting to increase their teaching knowledge.

4.4. SOME CONCLUSIONS

4.4.1. Students' understanding of curriculum

From the questionnaire it became evident that the students had a **narrow view** of the concept of curriculum. Their view accorded closely with the definition of curriculum of the Department of Education in Ireland:

Curriculum will be taken to mean simply the range of subjects, with their individual syllabi, that are approved for study at a particular level (1980).

Their classroom experiences revolved around chalk and talk along with didactic teaching, passive learning and autocratic management styles. Teaching involved a heavy reliance on **received knowledge** while following prescribed syllabi, "detailed in terms of content to be covered, and overfull, leaving little room for teacher contribution and initiative" (Christie, 1993: 8). They faced large classes with poor resources. All aspects of their working lives were controlled by the apartheid education authorities who used them as instruments of policy rather than treating them as professionals.

In the interviews on the 19 June 1996, Ken Harley's summary of students' views concerning their understanding of curriculum prior to the curriculum course, supports the above conclusion. He writes that:

The curriculum had previously been viewed in terms of syllabuses, subjects and books, all of which **came from Pretoria**. Some respondents reported having never thought about it, as it was not their responsibility. Curriculum was also seen as something imposed, but there was also an element of the **hiddenness** about curriculum issues (Appendix G).

I have taken the liberty of illustrating this summary by quoting only one of the three written responses to the interviewer's question. The other two may be found on page one and two in Appendix G.

RESP. I knew nothing about curriculum, nothing at all. Because it was there just - I didn't know where it was coming from, I didn't know anything about curriculum.

INTER. What did you base your own teaching on?

RESP. I was just given material, and books, and a scheme book, just to teach. I knew nothing what was their planning, what was the common goal. That was all. (Appendix G).

4.4.2. Teacher professionalism: a restricted view

In the light of student comments regarding the teacher as professional, it is clear that theirs was a restricted view of teacher professionalism as opposed to Hoyle's alternative view of extended professionalism. Their responses were classroom based and they assumed accountability for their pupils and their methods of teaching. They viewed the good behaviour of the teacher as important, along with values of dedication, diligence and perseverance. This implies compliance and acceptance of their subordinate role in the broader educational context.

Their **restricted** professionalism was again evident in their view of the main aim of education, which was stated in terms of pupil success and advancement through the acquisition of knowledge. This emphasis on a recognised body of academic knowledge suggests a strong emphasis on **product** learning as highlighted in Broadfoot's (1988) study. The teachers in this study were more like the French teachers, emphasising intellectual and cognitive development and mastery of a narrow range of school subjects.

4.4.3. Emergent contradictions

Macro educational changes dominated student responses, when asked how schools should change in the new South Africa. It appeared that students were waiting for one education system, equality of opportunity, multi-racial schools, improved conditions and

support. Yet, in all these instances it was not the responsibility of the teacher to bring about these changes, but that of the educational authorities. Although the majority of the students mentioned teachers as being responsible for bringing about change, the change they were waiting for was not in their hands. This contradiction is similar to the contradictions of the principals in Wedekind's study,

The principals all indicated that resources and management were the primary concerns in their schools. While principals wished to move away from a "top-down" form of decision-making in respect of school management and curriculum, they expected change to be initiated from the upper echelons of the educational hierarchy (1996: 425).

These contradictions can be explained using Nell Keddie's (1971) useful distinction between the educationist context and the teacher context. The **educationist context** is informed by educational policy and research, and it exists at the level of dominant beliefs which are professionally respectable. It emphasises how things **ought** to be in the school. Keddie suggests that it may be called into being by the presence of an outsider or, in the case of this study, the lecturer, to whom explanations of school and educational policy need to be given.

By contrast, the **teacher context** refers to teachers' actual practice. It is the world of how things **are**, the world of the classroom in which teachers move most of the time. Keddie is of the opinion that teachers will advance the educationist view, the **expert** view of education, when articulating what they believe, which may contradict their **common-sense** views and their discourse used in the situation in which they must act as teachers. These contradictory contexts may not be apparent to teachers.

Students, when answering the questionnaires may have been speaking as educationists. As educationists they were aware of the importance of the teacher in educational change and curriculum development, and yet their common-sense knowledge was of disempowered teachers implementing a received curriculum from a centralised department.

Stuart Hall (1977) argues that one cannot understand society, and therefore education, by focusing on the intentions of individuals involved. In his view, unconscious motives shape education. Explanations people give of what they are doing are unimportant to the

direction and course of their actions. Hall asserts that there is a gap between the general value commitment people declare and their actual behaviour, which deepens when what they think is different from what they actually do (cited in Modiba, 1996: 120 -121).

4.4.4. Teachers as technicians in the curriculum development process

Students at this initial stage of the study may be understood in terms of Grundy's **technical category** of curriculum development, where teachers were instruments of a larger educational system, mechanically operating as good teachers to make teaching more efficient. Suffice to say that in line with this view, students had not been exposed to the notion of critical reflection and neither did they suggest that they theorised their classroom experiences. Yet they aspired to becoming educationists and seemed to find educational theories meaningful.

The central problem of curriculum studies, Stenhouse asserts, is “the gap between our ideas and aspirations and our attempts to operationalise them” (1975: 3). Attempts to expose students to relevant educational theory, where teachers can operate as researchers, and use this theory in reflecting on and improving their practice, may lead to a narrowing of the gap to which Stenhouse refers. Penny warns that “theory is perceived largely as untenable in the **real** world of the classroom” (1995: 172), and it follows then, that if theory is to be relevant to teachers, it must be pragmatic and based on classroom experience.

4.5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

The assumption that teachers in this study would **not** see themselves as curriculum developers had been tested and found to be supported. The problem was how I, as a lecturer, should teach a course that would introduce these teachers to the notion of curriculum and the different curriculum models, with a view to choosing an operational definition and a model(s) that would best suit their personal needs and school context. This challenge became the starting point in my action research project. Initial planning of the course implementation occurred in response to this problem, and the programme was formally set in motion three days after the questionnaires were answered.

The **aim** of this study was then, through the curriculum course, to expose the third year students to a variety of curriculum definitions, concepts and theories in order for them to broaden their understanding of curriculum issues and develop a personalised view of how to approach curriculum in their classrooms and schools. This study was primarily concerned with a change in professional attitudes of the students. If there was a shift in their thinking, it would refer to the educationist context alone.

Yet it must be mentioned that changes in the educationist context are surely a precondition for change in the teacher context. Curriculum theory is therefore a necessary, but not sufficient, prerequisite for classroom change. It can be argued that a course in curriculum theory might raise awareness of the need for classroom change, but pressures from the environment or the authoritarian control of the school principal, might prevent the educationist context from being transferred into the teacher context. It is beyond the scope of this present study to assess whether a shift occurred in the teacher context.

The responses of the students to the questionnaire constituted the first stage of the research process. With the collection of this data behind us, we could move on to explore the notion of curriculum and the various curriculum models in detail. Our journey into what Carr and Kemmis call “self-reflective enquiry” (1986: 162) had begun.

CHAPTER FIVE

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME: MONITORING THE FIRST ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed description of the first cycle of the curriculum course for the period 19 February 1996 to 19 April 1996. Based on notes in my personal diary, students' reflections in journals, as well as informal discussions in the curriculum classroom, the chapter is intended to give the reader a clear sense of the course of the programme as it unfolded over the first two months.

5.2. INITIAL LECTURE AND PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

As has already been mentioned, formal lectures for this curriculum course were started on Monday 19 February 1996. Lectures for the course were timetabled for an hour on a Monday and an hour on a Friday. During the **introductory lecture** students were given two handouts. The first was the learning programme for the curriculum course which has already been referred to and which can be found in Appendix A. The second, entitled "*What is curriculum*"? was a three page list of a variety of curriculum definitions, borrowed from the Education Department of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. This reading can be found in Appendix C.

Initially the dimension of complexity and contest, integral to the notion of curriculum, was to be explored by the students. This view of curriculum is underpinned by the view of knowledge as social construction and reconstruction. After the collective making sense of issues, an individual perspective on curriculum was required from students. They were to embark on a process of the construction of their own personal understanding of curriculum. I repeat the following quotation of Bernstein in order to emphasise the perspective I presented to students:

how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principle of social control (1971: 47).

Students had their **own** understanding of curriculum which had been acquired through their experiences, first as pupils and later as teachers. In order to undergo any **paradigm shift** in their view of curriculum, they needed to be exposed to new ideas which would challenge their old assumptions. Through discussion, debate and a collective making sense of concepts, I hoped that students would **unlearn** their old perceptions and formulate a fresh understanding of the notion of curriculum. The course was presented with the primary aim of equipping students to make choices following reflection on their past practice, and to substantiate these choices with relevant theory. A brief overview of the learning outcomes and content of the curriculum course was also given.

Over the next two weeks I was unable to attend curriculum classes due to INSET management meetings in Pretoria with the Promat Directors. During my absence, students were requested to divide into groups, elect a group leader, and to discuss and explore each of the twenty-three curriculum definitions without my assistance. On my return, I distributed copies of **Handout One** to students and asked them to answer the six questions listed, in the light of their reflections on the curriculum definitions. Their reflections were to be noted in their journals.

Handouts One, Two, Three and Four can all be found in Appendix D.

5.3. HANDOUT ONE

At this point I would like to remind the reader of the findings of the questionnaire in Chapter Four. We found in Chapter Four that the teachers in the present study had a narrow view of curriculum and had a “limited” notion of themselves as curriculum developers. The dominant understanding of the group was a **restricted** view of the teacher as professional.

Over a two-week period following the answering of the questionnaire, students appeared to undergo a shift in their thinking. It would appear that exposure to the variety of

curriculum definitions listed in the reading entitled “*What is curriculum*”? (Appendix C), as well as informal group discussions and the collective making sense of the definitions with colleagues, were responsible for this early shift in students’ thinking.

5.3.1. Which definition did you like the most?

Half of the students, after being exposed to the twenty-three different curriculum definitions listed in the reading, selected the ANC definition as the one of their choice. This definition is quoted here for the benefit of the reader.

The curriculum is understood to be more than syllabus documentation. It refers to all of the teaching and learning activities that take place in learning institutions. It includes:

- the aims and objectives of the education system as well as the specific goals of learning institutions
- what is taught: the underlying values, the selection of content, how it is arranged into subjects, programmes and syllabuses, and what skills and processes are included
- the strategies of teaching and learning and the relationships between teachers and learners
- the forms of assessment and evaluation which are used
- how the curriculum is serviced and resourced, including the organisation of learners, and of time and space, and the materials and resources that are made available
- how the curriculum reflects the needs and interests of those it serves including learners, teachers, the community, the nation, the employers and the economy
(ANC: A policy framework for education and training, South Africa, 1994).

This definition was selected mainly because it offered an extended view of curriculum which was new and exciting to students. The introductory sentence **more than syllabus documentation**, offered an appealing alternative to the limited understanding of curriculum to which they were accustomed. The inclusion of phrases such as needs of learners, relationships between teachers and learners as well as aims and objectives emphasised the expansive nature of the definition and served to broaden the scope of

curriculum for the students. The fact that the definition was presented as a list of concepts in a clear and logical order assisted students in their understanding of the broad nature of this definition.

The following definition was chosen by 35% of the group:

A school's curriculum consists of all those activities designed or encouraged within its organisational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its pupils. It includes not only the formal programme of lessons, but also the informal programme of so-called extracurricular activities as well as those features which produce the school's ethos, such as the quality of relationships, the concern for equality of opportunity, the values exemplified in the way the school sets about its task and the way in which it is organised and managed (Department of Education and Science, United Kingdom, 1995).

Students again selected this definition because of its broad nature. It offered to students a curriculum definition which included an aspect of **whole** child development as opposed to their previous experience which emphasised cognitive development alone. The inclusion of the extramural aspect of the curriculum appealed to students. Other reasons cited for the choice of this definition included the inclusion of concepts such as relationships, ethos and values.

5.3.2. Which definition did you like the least?

The curriculum definition by Lawton was the one that students liked the least and this was due to the fact that it was not understood by the majority of the group. Students found this definition vague and confusing, but second language problems may have accounted for this. The definition reads as follows: : [The curriculum is] "a selection from culture" (Lawton, 1983). I have selected some journal responses of students to this definition:

Sizakele explains that "this definition does not explain anything to me and I do not agree that culture has anything to do with curriculum". This extremely narrow view of curriculum accords with the view of the majority of students in this study who viewed

curriculum in a technical and objective light, defining curriculum as a list of subjects on a timetable. Some students felt that other aspects, and not only culture should be considered in developing a curriculum. George writes that “a curriculum is not only a selection from culture because it must also develop the child mentally, spiritually, physically, intellectually and culturally”.

In acknowledging that they did not understand this definition, some students asked the question: “**Whose culture**”?, pointing out that cultures, other than the dominant culture, are neglected. A pertinent point is raised by Albertina: “I do not understand whose culture is to be followed because different races have different cultures”. Sylvia too, asks the question “Whose culture?, because if it is based on one culture other cultures are neglected and it means there is apartheid in the curriculum”.

In grappling with this definition, this question indicated the first signs of **critical questioning** of curriculum issues in South Africa by students in this study. This view was a strong political response to the unfair distribution of power inherent in the apartheid curriculum. This question was the first to show a shift from the students’ initial position of passive acceptance of a received curriculum. It was also a move away from a restricted classroom view of curriculum and professionalism and a small step towards an extended view of both of these concepts. Again, the exposure of students to a broad range of curriculum definitions may have triggered this thought process and accounted for the shift in thinking.

5.3.3. The value of the teaching methodology in understanding curriculum concepts

In keeping with the “symbolic interaction” perspective, described in Chapter Two, I believed that students would learn best through social interaction and through the use of language to express their views. In this way I viewed the role of my students as being that of **social** problem-solvers rather than **solo** problem-solvers (Morphet, 1992: 90). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the teaching methodology used involved students in debate, discussion, and a collective making sense of issues.

On reflection, 92% of the students reported that this method of teaching helped them to form a better understanding of the curriculum concepts. Through group work they were

able to share ideas, make comparisons, as well as analyse and explain words. Sometimes dictionaries were used to assist with the clarification of the meanings of words. It would appear that this **collective making sense of issues** contributed towards the extension of their original understanding of the definitions.

The following two journal comments are examples of student views regarding their group discussions:

- “..... everybody was busy talking and asking questions such as why did you say this one (definition) is better than that one” (Felicia).
- “I used to think that a curriculum is always drawn up by the Department of Education concerning syllabus. Therefore I’ve perceived from my group that whatsoever the teachers plan ahead for the school, it’s also curriculum” (Sibongile).

5.3.4. Do you think there is one right definition of curriculum?

It would appear that exposure to more than one curriculum definition in the reading “*What is curriculum?*”, as well as the fact that this reading indicated that there is no one right definition of curriculum, accounted for the opinion of 89% of the students that there was **no one right definition of curriculum**. Justification for this view is evident in the journal writing of students:

- “One can make his or her definition according to his understanding. A definition can be guided by the community and its influence” (Jerome).
- “No, because the curriculum should suit the rural and urban areas” (Glory).
- “I don’t think there is one definition of curriculum because education changes with time. The curriculum designed long ago would not meet the needs of present students. It depends on how it is accepted in educational circles” (George).
- “I have only one definition I like most, which does not mean that others are wrong” (Nonhlanhla).

5.3.5. Students' personal definitions of curriculum

The final question in **Handout One** asked students for their own personal definition of curriculum. Bearing in mind that it was early in the year, students struggled with this question, but certain trends emerged from their answers:

- arrangement of school subjects, the programme, and what must be taught at different levels
- activities that promote intellectual, physical and emotional development of a child
- planning on a long-term basis with the aim to achieve adulthood
- the inclusion of both the formal and informal aspects
- all learning activities, experiences and aspects inside and outside the school
- inclusion of teacher, pupil, parent and community needs
- the involvement of teachers to make subjects more meaningful in rural areas.

5.3.6. Handout One: reflections and further planning

5.3.6.1. Reflections

An analysis of **Handout One** points to a slight shift in students' thinking since the answering of the questionnaire. It seems logical that this would be the result of exposure to new ideas, discussions with other students and reflection on readings provided.

In general, the majority of students at this stage in the study still viewed teachers as curriculum receivers. They referred to the "department" developing the curriculum after which it was passed on to inspectors who, in turn, passed it on to principals. Principals then guided teachers in implementing it using new methods such as the progressive method, group work and discovery learning. Thus if teachers were to be change agents, it was only in terms of methods of teaching in their classrooms.

The use of terminology such as "educator", "educand", and "leading a child to adulthood" was also used in journals and served as evidence to show these students how they had been exposed in their teaching careers to the language and ideology of Fundamental Pedagogics. This use of language was discussed with the students, during the week that

followed, in the light of its philosophical underpinnings and Fundamental Pedagogics connotations.

At this stage in the process, only one student identified the need for **teacher** involvement in curriculum development:

During the past years we received the curriculum from someone or a number of people from the department. They drew up the curriculum having never or not for a long period of time been exposed to the school situation. According to the present Government, each province is going to have a committee from different regions who are going to draw up the curriculum. These committee members will be people who are exposed to the school atmosphere and who know what is needed in the society. The curriculum must be flexible (Agnes, journal writing).

5.3.6.2. Further planning

What emerged from the student journals was a need for a more in depth discussion of some of the curriculum concepts, with myself more visibly present in the classroom as facilitator to guide the discussions. Insights gained from the journal writing helped in the planning of the lectures for the following week.

In terms of the learning process, a discussion of terms such as a neutral curriculum and distribution of power was necessary in order to broaden students' understanding of curriculum. The issue of values, flexibility and the need for transparency were also essential to any curriculum discussion.

I decided to use the following two definitions as the two **poles** on an imaginary curriculum continuum. Students would then be able to compare the two definitions, analyse the differences and then choose the one most appropriate for their context.

The definition by Stenhouse represented curriculum as changing, flexible and open to critical scrutiny:

A curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice (Stenhouse, 1975).

At the other end of the continuum, was Pratt's definition of curriculum as unchanging - a blueprint for instruction:

..... a plan for teaching and instruction Curriculum is analogous to the set of blueprints from which a house is constructed. A curriculum can be viewed as a blueprint for instruction (Pratt, 1994).

A further urgent need emerged from the journals. Students did not understand Lawton's definition of curriculum. A discussion around **curriculum and culture** was a priority for the following week, and this question of culture would immediately link with the issue of a South African culture. It therefore seemed an appropriate time to introduce Christie's definition of curriculum (and culture) in the South African context:

(The curriculum) embodies social relationships. It is drawn up by particular groups of people; it reflects particular points of view and values; it is anchored in the experiences of particular social groups; and it produces patterns of success and failure. Assumptions about what counts as valuable knowledge, as basic skills and as essential learning experiences for the curriculum are themselves socially influenced and contested. Viewed in this way, the curriculum can never be neutral or stand outside of patterns of power (Christie, 1993: 7).

5.4 HANDOUT TWO

Handout One was followed by a week of lectures and classroom discussions on the issues raised in the journals. New curriculum aspects were introduced to students and further exploration of the list of curriculum definitions occurred. Students interacted around the issues and posed questions when they did not understand. At the end of the week **Handout Two**, which can also be found in Appendix D, was given to students to answer in their journals. The questions in **Handout Two** were intentionally similar to **Handout One** so that I could measure whether the further exposure to new curriculum definitions and concepts had resulted in a shift in the students' thinking.

5.4.1 Student responses

I found it surprising that the same two definitions of curriculum were still the preference of students, despite the further exploration of the concept of curriculum. (I had presumed otherwise). In this second survey, the Department of Education and Science definition was selected by 46% of the group while 38% chose the ANC definition. However, it is interesting to note that for 46% of the group the choice of definition **changed** from **Handout One** to **Handout Two**. Lawton's definition was still the least popular, despite class discussion around it. It seemed that because students could relate this definition to their experiences of apartheid education, it was to be resisted. It is possible that they may have been resisting it because of its validity.

Students were then asked what **new thoughts** they had regarding the concept of curriculum. Aspects of the following five broad categories were evident in student journals:

- formal and informal aspects
- learner needs and experiences as well as the development of the whole learner
- planning (through aims) but there must be flexibility because the curriculum is a proposal
- involvement of teachers, parents, pupils and the community
- values and ethos.

The reflections of the following three students provide an illustration of these broad categories:

- “I have discovered that I often left out the unofficial part of the curriculum. I also obtained an idea that a planned structure is not flexible” (Sibongiseni).
- “..... the community, society, learners, and facilitators are included to guide the child and make education effective” (Fikile).
- “It (the curriculum) must include the formal and informal programmes. It must provide for the ethos of the school. It must be balanced, i.e. It must develop the children intellectually, socially, physically and spiritually. It must make the student competitive in economic, educational and cultural activities after leaving the school so as to build a nation” (George).

Of the group of students, 69% maintained that their own personal definitions of curriculum had **changed** or evolved following the class discussions. I was a little disappointed that the following thought-provoking views hardly featured in the journals of students at this point in time:

- Can each school have its own curriculum according to its own needs?
- Can a curriculum ever be neutral?
- Can a curriculum include unplanned and unintended learning outcomes?
- Who selects school knowledge and who decides how it should be taught?

Because few students mentioned these views and because I considered them relevant, I felt the need for a revision of these concepts the following week.

The final question on **Handout Two** required students to group the twenty-three curriculum definitions into categories. They found this exercise extremely difficult and a large majority left the question unanswered. A small group of students were able to categorise certain of the definitions according to whether they were written in terms of the learner or whether they were teacher-centred. The fact that students could not think of broad bands in which to categorise these definitions pointed to their lack of skills of analysis and synthesis.

5.4.2. Handout Two: reflections and further planning

I raised a concern at this juncture to which I had no answer. I questioned whether there existed a **teacher culture** in rural KwaZulu schools which was receptive to innovation and notions of reflective practice. I had a vague idea that teachers were not sufficiently skilled to offer a critical view of educational practice and I had a strong suspicion that a **research culture did not exist** in rural schools. I was determined to find the answers to these questions and planned to raise them with the students when they were introduced to the action research model. I planned to introduce the students to the notion of teachers as curriculum developers later in the programme, although this aim was not overtly reflected in the learning programme in Appendix A.

As negotiated at the beginning of the programme, students were required to write a formal open-book assessment test which would count towards their first term Educational Studies mark. I emphasised again that this formal test was not for the research project but for their Educational Studies mark. The formal test was written on 18 March 1996.

During the next two weeks students were introduced to Tyler's 1949 curriculum model and Walker's 1972 curriculum model. Students were required to read the relevant chapters from "*Key concepts for understanding curriculum*". This was followed by a class discussion on the mechanics of the models as well as an analysis of their advantages and disadvantages.

My intention with this section on curriculum planning was to expose students to three models from which they could **choose** the one that best suited their needs. Alternatively, they could take elements from all three models and develop their own personal model of how to plan a curriculum in their classroom or school. Initially I presented students with two models (Tyler and Walker) which were linear in nature, deterministic and controlled from the top-down. Later on in the term, I presented the action research model as an alternative which emphasised the role of the teacher in curriculum planning and the circular nature of curriculum planning.

5.5. HANDOUT THREE

5.5.1. Tyler's model of curriculum planning

The first question on this handout asked students whether they believed Tyler's model of curriculum planning was a **good** model. Of the group, 85% were of the opinion that it was. Some reasons that emerged from the journals can be summarised as follows:

- it is widely used
- it is clear and makes sense
- it is rational and logical
- it involves objectives and organisation
- it includes teaching activities
- it includes content and evaluation

- it can apply to any subject at any level
- it suggests aims and purposes which are based on:
 - learner needs and experiences
 - subject specialists
 - the values of society
 - philosophical principles.

These views are clearly stated in the reading and, at this stage, it appeared that students were not able to assess the model critically and were merely writing from the readings, without internalising their meaning. This was perhaps because they had no **alternative model** with which to compare it. The following criticisms of Tyler’s model were ignored at this stage of the process:

- it does not state why some objectives are chosen and others are left out
- it does not emphasise the inter-relationships which occur during curriculum planning
- it ignores unintended learning outcomes
- it ignores the informal and extramural curriculum.

It is interesting that the students, by ignoring aspects such as the informal and extramural curriculum in Tyler’s model, were actually overlooking the merits of what they had already identified as “good” definitions earlier on in the course.

5.5.2. Walker’s model of curriculum planning

In question two, students were asked to write down their thoughts regarding Walker’s “deliberative approach” to curriculum planning. Half of the group said that the model was **good** because it involves:

- lots of planning
- many people
- discussion and debate about which values should be included in the platform
- many alternatives from which choices can be made
- three logical stages of platform, deliberation and design
- curriculum planning in practice.

The balance of the group were not persuaded by this model. The following negative responses and questions were mentioned in the journals:

- it is time-consuming
- it is not useful for simple, routine issues or for school-based curriculum development
- many people may just keep quiet
- who are the planners?
- are all planners enthusiastic and willing to participate?
- what should be included in the curriculum and why?

5.5.3. Handout Three: reflections and further planning

In reflecting on the student responses to **Handout Three** it was evident that the majority of the students did not have a critical understanding of these two models. It seemed that they were offering content, textbook-based answers to the questions in order to get by and fulfil the instructions of the handout. I therefore had to analyse both the mode of delivery of the lectures involved as well as the structure of the handout. It became evident that I needed to intervene more during group discussions, offer more support and, through posing more directed questions, offer the group more guidance in the learning process.

Reflecting on the student handouts, I realised that my questions required only content-based responses. I realised the need to spend more time preparing questions requiring analysis, comparison, problem-solving and critical thinking. It was therefore my intention to plan **Handout Four** more carefully to include a comparative analysis of the different models that students had studied to date.

The last week in March was spent in a class discussion on Walker's curriculum model and **Handout Four** was given to students. This handout required students to visit the Promat library in order to obtain three readings on short loan. Along with the necessary readings that students needed to do, they were also expected to study the action research model and make comparisons and certain analyses between the three models studied during the term. This handout constituted their **holiday assignment**.

5.5.4. Student concerns

Students became extremely distressed by their workload and were overwhelmed by the concept of self-study and the diversity of curriculum options available to them. They articulated a feeling of insecurity around both educational debate and the need to make personal choices about curriculum issues. A few of the students, notably those who were new to Promat in 1996, were visibly angry with me for **not doing my job properly**. They expected a lecturer who would tell them **what the correct answer was** so that they would feel secure in the knowledge that they would pass the curriculum course. They perceived the lack of clarity and direction in the class as an inability on my part to teach properly and wanted to know what would be done about this problem.

It emerged that there appeared to be a **contradiction** between my **expectations** and those of the students. I expected the students at this level to cope with contradiction, choice, change and a different methodology in the classroom. The students, on the other hand, expected to depend on me to provide them with a neatly bundled, prepacked body of knowledge which was simple to follow and which could not be contested. As one student commented in her journal:

Our favourite teacher is struggling hard to give us better knowledge as she can. I do appreciate all the source of knowledge she is giving us, it shows that she is the quarry of knowledge herself (Nokuthula).

In her action research study, Walker writes of a similar experience. She found that the teachers in her study were not comfortable with her democratic role in trying to work alongside them. A teacher in her study said:

At first I couldn't understand what you were trying to do because when you called us you asked ideas from us. And I said No! I thought you were going to give us ideas..... (Veronica in Walker, 1993: 98).

5.5.5. Reflection and a renewed understanding

It appeared then that the teachers at this stage of the first cycle of the study did not see themselves as producers of educational knowledge. They were still **disempowered** and felt secure in the need to replicate what was given to them. This assumption was confirmed in the student interviews of the 19 June 1996 where Ken Harley reported the views of one student as follows: “When I talk of curriculum it is because of Callie, otherwise I didn’t know anything” (Appendix G).

It became evident that the students perceived their role as **passive receivers of knowledge** as a consequence of their own school experience and their experience of apartheid authoritarian rule. They expected to remain in this same passive role in the new learning situation at Promat College. This perception was not conducive to critical thinking and the ability to reason, hypothesise, discriminate and judge. Christie (1986) believes that:

education can and should help people to think critically. It should help them to develop a better understanding of the world around them. Education is a way in which people may come to analyse, and assess, and act on the situation they are in (cited in Mehl, 1987: 39).

Critical thinking can be defined in the following way:

Critical thinking, divergent thinking or lateral thinking involves calling into question the assumptions underlying our customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being ready to think and act differently on the basis of critical questioning (Cornielje, 1994: 37).

It was clear to me that the curriculum classroom was **not democratic**. Serious **power differentials** existed as a result of the perceived roles of lecturer and learners. I had naively assumed that inequalities would not exist in my classroom; that I would be a part of the group and not viewed as different and separate. This was clearly not the perception of the students.

With this understanding I came to realise the necessity for an even more structured, nurturing and supportive classroom environment in which students could feel more confident to explore their own thoughts, views and experiences in order to construct their own knowledge of curriculum. My intentions were discussed in detail with the group and, because I needed more time, lessons were borrowed from other subjects as well. This extra time was invaluable and served to straighten out the misunderstandings that had surfaced between myself and the students. Expectations were put on the table, and, for the first time, real communication occurred regarding needs, future plans and possible solutions to the problems experienced.

It was at this point that I introduced the action research model to students, in order for them to understand my own research aims and expectations of the course. Together we went through the stages of the first cycle of the research project in some detail. What was actually happening in the curriculum class became clearer to students when using the action research cycle to understand the process. I realised then that I should have done this exercise much earlier in the term as its benefits were immediately evident. Students understood what I was trying to achieve and indicated a willingness to continue with the research aspect of the curriculum course.

What then unintentionally followed was a discussion of the difficulties and disadvantages of using action research. This turned out to be an extremely useful exercise because students could speak with confidence from their experience about the difficulties of using action research. **This was the turning point in the research project.** Somehow, probably because students for the first time had viewed themselves as an integral part of the process and were interacting on a real and reflective level in the classroom, they felt empowered as individuals. At this stage in the study, none of the benefits of the action research model were articulated by participants.

After these lengthy but valuable discussions the dynamics of the group improved. It must be emphasised here that, for the first time in the project, I was included as part of the group. The power differential between the students and myself had started to decrease. As a group we renewed our commitment to participate in the research project the following term. **Handout Four** was completed by the students during their Easter holiday and the journals were analysed by me during the two weeks following the holiday while the students were involved in Practice Teaching.

5.6. HANDOUT FOUR

5.6.1. Action research for teachers in the classroom

In response to thoughts about action research for teachers in the classroom, 79% of the students suggested that it was a **good** method for teachers to use. The reasons most often cited were that action research:

- was useful for monitoring teaching in order to make changes for effective teaching and ongoing learning
- was learner-centred, participative, collaborative and democratic
- involved positive critical comment from a facilitator which would assist with the understanding of one's teaching
- renewed enthusiasm and enjoyment of the teaching/learning situation.

It became evident from the journals that the students' initial understanding of action research was restricted to the realm of **methodology**. The value of action research lay in assisting teachers to think about changing from their traditional methods of teaching to more learner-centred methods. The following journal comments bear this out:

- “By using action research, a teacher is able to plan how to move from the old to the new method of teaching” (Sibongile).
- “A teacher can be a transmitter (of knowledge) for many years spoon-feeding the pupils, but if action research can be introduced, that teacher may get some methods which can make the pupils think, discuss and find solutions for themselves” (Benedictor).
- “By doing action research teachers change their methods of teaching; their new approach soon becomes known by other teachers and students. Much interest is expressed and, in this way, new ideas begin to spread. The classroom improvement can develop into school improvement and transformation” (Glory).

An inventive **analogy** was used by Doreen to explain action research. She suggests that action research is:

like a mirror because a mirror is a wonderful object which can let one see his whole body. You cannot see parts of your head and the back parts of your body, but with the help of a mirror you can Action research is also a way of looking at yourself; not your body, but teaching and learning (Journal writing).

George uses an interesting term when discussing the value of action research. He suggests that “action research empowers teachers to become **architects** of their classrooms” (Journal writing). I made a note to introduce this idea of teacher as architect later on in the programme when the notion of teacher as curriculum developer versus teacher as curriculum implementer was discussed. Martin-Kniep and Uhrmacher’s **music analogy** would also be introduced at this stage in the project. Chapter Six refers to this in more detail.

5.6.2. Students’ views on the advantages and disadvantages of action research

The three most popular **advantages** of action research suggested by the students were that it:

- improved teachers’ classroom practice
- improved teachers’ self-confidence
- contributed to good staff relationships, team spirit and staff collaboration.

The three **disadvantages** most cited were that:

- it was a time-consuming research method
- teachers were not free to make changes, especially in the rural schools where principals were traditional and autocratic
- it had a limited impact on staff not involved in the process.

5.6.3. Would you use action research in your classroom when you return to your school next year?

To the question of whether the students would **use action research** on returning to their classrooms the following year, an overwhelming 95% answered in the affirmative.

Reasons given were because it would:

- improve teaching
- assist with professional development because the teacher would learn to accept positive criticism
- be better for the learners
- help teachers to cope with change which would extend to the whole school
- be easy to follow.

The following journal comment is convincing evidence of the **value** that the students afforded action research. Through the knowledge and skills of action research, students felt **empowered** to bring about classroom and school change:

I will firstly introduce action research in my class so it will become easy for me to realise mistakes. After that we will rotate. All classes will deal with action research and then we come together and discuss whether it was successful or not. I hope the circuit inspector will help me to organise a meeting so that we spread action research in many schools (Nonkululeko).

Gremmah was convinced that action research could **free teachers** from the centralised and authoritarian control to which they were accustomed. She writes:

as soon as I return to my school I will introduce action research in my classroom and in-service courses for teachers. The department used to give us schemes of work planned for teachers to follow. They didn't allow us to change the planning even if you want to change for improvement. Their planning of the curriculum was not flexible. Inspectors visit schools just for criticism. They discourage teachers instead of encouraging and motivating them. I like action research because it improves teaching practices. It allows room for a good relationship between teachers and pupils because they have to talk and discuss (Journal writing).

Sibongile commented that she had **unsystematically** used action research in her classroom without knowing what it was called. “Action research sounds to be similar to what most of the teachers used to do without knowledge. I was also familiar with the method although some steps used to be abandoned” (Journal writing).

Only one student in the entire group commented that she could **not** use action research in her classroom. She gives her reasons as follows:

I can't use action research because the inspectors, teachers and principals at schools do not know about action research. It will (therefore) be difficult to apply at school. The situation will be better if they know about action research (Fikile).

5.6.4. Three curriculum models: comparisons and choices

Students struggled to articulate the similarities and differences between the three curriculum models. The following student comment reflects the views of the majority of the students: “I follow this course but I am a bit confused as far as differences between Tyler, Walker and action research are concerned” (Florence, journal writing). In terms of preference of models, 64% of the class selected action research, 10% selected Walker's model, while 5% preferred Tyler's model. The remaining 21% were students who, because of their confusion, did not make a choice.

A similarity noted by some students was that models involved steps or stages. An example from a student journal confirms this view: “When comparing Tyler's model and Walker's model of planning this is what I discovered. Tyler's model has four steps while Walker's model has got three steps” (Pius). Beyond this, few students were able to point out the linear and means/end nature of both Tyler's and Walker's models as opposed to the cyclical, ongoing nature of action research. I realised the need for further emphasis of this comparison. Another area that needed emphasis was the planned and inflexible nature of the first two models as opposed to the more flexible action research model which incorporated unintended learning outcomes. Perhaps the following two students are trying to make this point:

- “Both Tyler’s model and Walker’s model are more of a prediction because they mention things that need to be done. Action research is more practical because it is planned around the situation of a certain classroom where it is then being implemented” (Fikile).
- “Tyler’s model and Walker’s model insist on selecting objectives and they undertake curriculum development activities, whereas action research aims at solving learning problems inside and outside the classroom” (Sizakele).

Finally from the journals it became apparent that, when comparing the three models, a fundamental aspect had not been understood by many of the students. They had not responded to the question relating to who was responsible for the planning of the curriculum in each of the three models. The following three comments do show some understanding of this point:

- “Both Tyler’s and Walker’s models are controlled by the government whilst in action research, the teacher is planning what he wants to teach” (Nonhlanhla).
- “Tyler and Walker plan what is going to be taught by others while in action research the teacher plans what he is going to do in his class” (Francisca).
- “Action research does not look for philosophers, subject specialists or designers for making solutions like Tyler and Walker does. It includes pupils, teachers and the community to bring flexibility into education” (Francisca).

5.6.5. Centrally-based versus school-based curriculum development

Again, at this point in the programme, students were required to analyse readings in order to make a **choice**. The choice was again presented as a continuum with centrally-based curriculum development at one pole and school-based curriculum development at the other pole.

The group showed an understanding of the notions of centrally-based and school-based curriculum development, with 98% of the group able, from the readings and from their own experience, to conclude that curriculum decision-making during the South African

apartheid era was centrally-based. The following passage is taken from a holiday assignment in support of this view:

The past South African Government used centrally-based curriculum. There are several reasons for this. The National party wanted to implement its ideology of apartheid. Blacks were the target of this. The decision-making were responsibilities of the head office. Since the personnel was totally made up of members of the National party, it was therefore easy to propagate its ideology in schools. The teachers were merely tools. There was no parent involvement in decision-making. Thus all activities at schools were channelled. This means that teachers were told what to teach and how to teach it. It was an offence to change it (Glory).

In addition, another holiday assignment explains it is as follows:

Pretoria as the head office has been using top down strategies which were not accepted by the majority in South Africa. Everything was dictated by Pretoria to regions, from regions to areas etc. These top-down strategies made society, parents, teachers and pupils not involved in curriculum planning. Textbooks were prescribed by head office. Teachers were the receivers of information from the head office (Jerome).

In answer to the question of whether curriculum development should be centralised or school-based in the newly formed democratic South Africa, the majority of the students were of the opinion that it should be school-based. The dichotomy that the old centralised apartheid education system was bad and that the new system must therefore be school-based and good, was a concern that needed further attention. Debbie voiced a similar concern later on in the programme regarding the good/bad dichotomy: “We discussed the either/or dialectic so commonly found in the literature. Students would often present the technicist tradition as bad and the emancipatory tradition as good” (Appendix F).

At this stage, only 12% of the students suggested a **combination** of centralised and school-based curriculum development. The following comment illustrates this more realistic view:

In the newly formed democratic South Africa, I think the two (centrally-based and school-based curriculum development) should come together and be equally involved in the development of the curriculum. This I say because people involved in the centrally-based and school-based curriculum development are people from high social levels and those from lower social levels. Therefore this will mean that people from *all* social levels are represented in the development of the curriculum (Fikile).

5.6.6. Personal impressions of this curriculum course

The final question on **Handout Four** asked students for their personal impressions of the curriculum course. Students offered very honest and valid criticisms of the course and they also included aspects which were positive.

Positive aspects included the course itself which was found to be relevant, challenging and interesting. Kind comments were made about my enthusiasm and dedication as lecturer, along with my good use of teaching methods. Some students noted that their views about curriculum had changed and some were confident that they could make curriculum changes in their schools. Others appreciated the value of action research for bringing about school change. The following comments from the journals of students offer a summary of these main views:

- “I found the course very interesting, the teacher is trying her best to clarify everything” (Sibongile)”.
- “My lecturer is an enthusiastic person. Although she is always occupied, she does find the time to teach us. I have learnt a lot from her. She encourages her students and she is always willing to help. There is a good relationship between her and the students” (Constance).
- “In her teaching style, I like the way she introduces, she first asks questions and if she realises that we are failing (to understand), she helps us. She likes to hear students’ ideas and she shares ideas with them” (Nonkululeko).

- “This course is a very good course. The way you are introducing different lessons seems very good for me because you become clear of something that you searched for yourself” (Irene).
- “It is good to learn about curriculum because teachers then feel free to give their own curricula” (Khumbuzile).
- “I think the use of action research in schools should be introduced to all the principals of schools so that they can be made aware of what is taking place in their schools. In turn, the principal should inform his staff and encourage them to try this method. This can bring a complete new change in a school. I also feel that the inspectors should organise workshops where action research could be introduced and explained in detail” (Sibongiseni).

The main **criticism** offered was that the students often missed my presence in the classroom while I was trying to fulfil my other commitments around the part-time INSET programme. Other criticisms included the heavy workload and insufficient time to complete all work set.

- “The only problem is that you do not have enough time to teach us as you happen to miss some of the periods” (Francisca).
- “Callie, you do your work very well. You are clear enough but you have not enough time for us, since you are busy with the Jozini project” (Doreen).
- “The time was too short for me to reflect on my understanding, on the way I wanted to go” (Benedictor).
- “I didn’t get enough time of reading other models to support my writing because we have been given more work in a short time” (Suzan).

An **interesting criticism** was posed by a few students regarding the lack of a curriculum textbook. They were expecting an Education textbook and were not comfortable with the many readings and handouts they were given or had to borrow on short loan from the library. This view needed to be debated in class looking at the advantages and disadvantages of using one textbook.

- “It will be better if we use one book in curriculum or one pamphlet rather than having pieces of different pamphlets” (Vusumuzi).
- “I think it will be better if teachers use only one book in curriculum in order to understand it clearly” (Khumbuzile).

5.7. END OF THE FIRST ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE: EVALUATION AND SOME CONCLUSIONS

5.7.1. A shift in students’ views of curriculum

Using the data gathered in the initial questionnaires, as well as in the student journals, it became evident that there was a **definite shift in students’ views of curriculum** from the beginning of the course to the end of the first action research cycle. As has already been discussed in Chapter Four, this shift could only be measured in terms of the **educationist context**.

Students explain this shift in their thinking in different ways:

- “When I go back to my school I’ll never be the same teacher that they knew. Action research has helped me. I will use it in my class and in school helping other teachers” (Benedictor).
- “(Initially) it was just simple to know the word curriculum as a range of subjects. I did not know the way in which you may consider when planning curriculum. I can now see that every teacher can draw his own curriculum” (Nonhlanhla).
- Before I came to Promat College I knew nothing about a curriculum. Gradually I found myself understanding which curriculum (definition) is the best for me. Now I think I can draw my own curriculum without hesitation” (Irene).

The exposure to curriculum theory had **broadened students' understanding of curriculum** and assisted in increasing their self-confidence as teachers. They began to reflect on their past practice and on their subordinate position in the broader educational context. They wrote of their new role in bringing about educational change in their schools. This conclusion was confirmed by Ken following his interviews with students. He too concluded that the course had broadened students' understanding of the curriculum.

I would like to quote from the transcription of one of the student's responses at the interview with Ken. This student writes:

..... the syllabus was followed as it was, and even if you want to change something, you may not - you have to tell people, the pupils that their syllabus says like this, I cannot change

..... as it was during the past, in the traditional way, because the teacher was taken as somebody who knows everything. But only to find that now it's clear to me that no-one is an expert in teaching, because day by day we learn new things, and we learn new methods of teaching, so it means that this curriculum will help us if we, if we try and bend it according to the needs (Appendix G).

Ken, on the basis of his student interviews, summarises this new understanding of curriculum in the following way:

The role of teachers, and the people the curriculum serves, featured strongly in responses. Parents' views and wishes were highlighted; and there was a belief that the curriculum should be sensitive to pupils (Appendix G).

Later on in his report, Ken explains the change again:

The change was from a view of the curriculum as **given**, external to teachers, and indeed hidden from them. Clearly they had come to embrace the notion of the teacher as a curriculum developer and its attendant implications (Appendix G).

5.7.1.1. Contradictions

As already mentioned in Chapter Four, contradictions existed in student responses to the initial questionnaire. These contradictions were still evident in students' journals. It was also argued earlier that these contradictions could be explained using Keddie's (1971) concepts of the **educationist context** and the **teacher context**. Vusumuzi's journal writing shows evidence of this contradiction: "it is a good thing to learn about curriculum because teachers have the freedom to devise their own curricula". Elsewhere in his journal he identifies a problem with action research: "teachers are not free to make changes that they might feel are educationally worthwhile".

Initial feelings of insecurity and struggle around curriculum concepts seemed, from the journal writing, to be dissipating. As Glory writes: "At the beginning I was puzzled what was going on. After explaining the lesson was very interesting". She continues and a contradiction emerges: "I wish that the Government of National Unity will consider action research in school".

The question was asked: "Do we as teachers have to wait for the government or the education department to allow us to use action research in our classrooms"? Some of the teachers in this study still saw themselves as unequal role players in the education game. Despite their use of accepted educational rhetoric to support their view of teacher empowerment and teacher involvement in curriculum issues, they still viewed themselves as disempowered and were willing to wait patiently for change to be legitimated from the government or the educational authorities. As referred to in Chapter Four, Wedekind, in his interviews with Pietermaritzburg Principals, had a similar experience when "bureaucratic prescription was implicitly invoked" (1996: 425).

Ken, following his interviews with the students, came to a similar conclusion. He found that:

More specifically, there was a suggestion that students' thinking had not undergone a paradigm shift that was entirely neat and clear-cut. They demonstrated a lingering view of a teacher as someone who has the **right information** to convey in such a way that notions of transmission type teaching do not appear to have been entirely jettisoned (Appendix G).

5.7.2. The relationship between lecturer and students

5.7.2.1. *The nature of the relationship*

It was clear from journal writings that the students and I had developed a close and trusting relationship. I had grown fond of the group and come to know them a little better, both as people and as teachers. I appreciated their commitment to studying and the sacrifices they were making in order to become better qualified. Their input in the classroom and their eagerness to become better teachers served as an inspiration to me. I think it was my vulnerability around the new course I was teaching, my honesty regarding the problems I was experiencing and my commitment to my teaching that students most appreciated. In his report Ken writes that “respondents expressed great appreciation for the course, and affection for their lecturer” (Appendix G).

5.7.2.2. *The perceived role of the lecturer in relation to the student role*

The teachers in this study were paying fees to Promat Colleges in order to study towards their Diploma in Education. They were paying to be students, and they expected to receive some sort of product from their lecturers. From myself, in my expert role as Educational Studies lecturer, they were expecting to receive knowledge in the form of new educational theories and an understanding of these theories, so that they could be awarded their COTEP credit for Educational Studies.

This expectation had serious implications for the action research project which, according to action research theory, espoused a democratic classroom. I realised that it was probably not possible for my Promat classroom to be democratic if students were paying a fee in order to obtain a qualification. If I had the power to pass or fail them, then my role as lecturer would always be viewed as **unequal** to their student role. Their priority was to pass the course and, in order to do this, my selection of curriculum theories along with my views on curriculum issues were considered more important than their own personal views on curriculum.

The following comments are evidence of the expectations of the students:

- “We really want to have Callie explaining just as she is doing. It is difficult to carry on with this course on our own, we need her explanation. I have confidence in my lecturer. I am sure I am going to make it in the end” (Pius).
- “I wish I will cope with it (curriculum) with your help” (Fikile).
- “I am hoping to pass this course at the end of the year” (Elizabeth).
- “I hope we will master her course at the end of the year” (Fortunate).
- “We should have time with our lecturer to spend on curriculum so that by the end of the year we would be having enough knowledge on this subject” (Sizakele).
- “I think definition number twenty-three, but I’m not sure, because the people of higher position say number one has the correct meaning of curriculum. But I think Callie Grant knows the best one” (Lungile).
- “..... She motivates us and encourages us and we feel more confident” (Nonkululeko).
- “I feel that the work in reaction books (journals) should be marked so to correct mistakes. Time should be given to sort out the **correct** answers” (Sonangani).

I concluded that there would always be an **unequal power relationship** in the Promat curriculum classroom because of the accrediting nature of the Diploma programme. One of the fundamental principles of action research, that of a democratic classroom, was therefore not feasible and would probably not be achieved.

Despite this limitation, I felt that the project had proved worthwhile enough to continue into its second cycle, provided that the problems experienced in the first cycle were attended to and alternative measures taken.

5.8. A REVISED PLAN

The following issues and proposals emerged from the evaluation and served to inform the revised plan for the second action research cycle.

Firstly, there was a need to increase the number of lecturing hours per week for the curriculum course. This was due to the loss of time accumulated during the first cycle, along with the need expressed by the students to have more reflection time during the week. Lecturing time was therefore increased from two to four hours per week for the remainder of the research project.

Secondly, in response to the overwhelming growth of the Promat student body, in both the full-time and part-time colleges in 1996, the Promat Directors appointed more staff and put in place management and administrative structures. This released me, as lecturer, from some of my commitments and enabled me to concentrate more on my teaching. I hoped to be able to offer my students a more supportive learning environment in which to explore the notion of themselves as curriculum developers.

Thirdly, there was a need to make students aware of the perceived theory/practice disjunction in their journal writings through the use of Keddie's (1971) concepts of the educationist context and teacher context. Also necessary was a discussion around the use of a broad range of educational readings, as opposed to a single textbook-centred approach to teaching, which could prove limiting to one's understanding of curriculum.

Fourthly, it was decided that the time was right to introduce the external facilitator or "critical friend" into the curriculum classroom. The critical friend would observe the teaching/learning process and offer a third dimension to the research process. This would ensure that the research findings were valid and objective.

Finally, being an action research study, it was difficult to speculate whether the problems experienced by the participants in the project were specific to the college or whether they might occur in similar projects elsewhere.

Following the evaluation, all participants concluded that the project should continue into its second cycle. Despite the problems and disruptions experienced, the students and I confirmed that we had benefited sufficiently from our experiences of the research project and were willing to proceed forward to the next **moment** in the cycle.

CHAPTER SIX

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME: MONITORING THE SECOND ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed description of the second cycle of the curriculum course for the period 6 May 1996 to 19 June 1996. It is based on notes in my personal diary, students' reflections in journals, discussions with the "critical friend", as well as informal discussions in the curriculum classroom. The chapter is intended to give the reader a clear sense of the course of the programme as it unfolded over the second term.

Conceptually the programme was to continue as originally designed, with the following significant **modifications**:

- increased lecturing time: a six-week cycle with four hours of lecturing time per week
- more regular intervention by myself in a supportive role in group discussion and debate
- increased support, acceptance and valuing of students' own ideas and actions
- the introduction of Debbie Knight as "critical friend" into the curriculum classroom
- culmination of the research project: ten student interviews with Ken Harley on 19 June 1996.

The **aims** of the curriculum programme remained unchanged:

- to expose students to the notion of curriculum, curriculum models and theories and to expose students to the notion of the role of teachers in the curriculum development process
- to assist with the process of "unlearning" of old assumptions about curriculum and the "learning" of new ideas
- to develop certain skills and values necessary for participation in the curriculum development process.

The intention of the research project was, through action research, to reflect on, develop and evaluate the curriculum course, in order to establish whether students' views on curriculum issues had changed over the five month period.

The material that guided students' discussions and journal thoughts is reported in this chapter and can be found in Appendix E. This includes a **worksheet** as well as **Handout Five** and **Handout Six**. Appendix F contains the report by Debbie, as "critical friend". Appendix G contains Ken's report on the student interviews.

6.2. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CRITICAL FRIEND INTO THE CURRICULUM CLASSROOM

The students in this study had been exposed to the notion of the "critical friend" during the first term, when they studied action research as one of the three curriculum models. In theory they were comfortable with the idea of a critical friend. The use of the word "friend" contributed to the students' acceptance of the concept. To the students, a friend meant that the observer would be on good terms with me and well disposed towards the research project. As one of the students writes "..... not only that she feels empowered, she also has to develop **friendships** with school staff, because sometimes they call each other to assess their work, or their teaching" (Irene).

The actual introduction of Debbie as critical friend into the curriculum classroom, exceeded my expectation. The students knew Debbie well. She taught them Primary Science and her teaching style was similar to mine. Her classroom was an "open" classroom with much room for open negotiation, experimentation, debate and problem-solving. Her philosophy was one of constructivism and she very naturally presented herself as a learner in the teaching/learning situation.

To the students, action research was symbolised by the role of the critical friend. I have selected some comments from **Handout Four** of the journals to depict student views of the role of critical friend:

- “(Action research) might encourage co-operation in our work as teachers, because one teacher will be her colleague’s observer” (Fikile).
- “Working with an observer or sharing ideas with your colleagues means that you are involving more people, you open your research to critical comment” (George).
- “Action research creates self-confidence for teachers because she feels brave to teach in front of the others. If others are critical, the teacher who is responsible for action research perceives new ideas and skills from them. By asking somebody else to observe my actions, I will be challenging different ideas and skills through criticisms and corrections” (Sibongile).
- “When the other teachers are invited to observe your teaching this makes the observed teacher to feel great and have a desire to put more effort on what she is doing” (Sonangani).

Ken, in his interviews with the students in this study on the 19 June 1996, came to a similar conclusion, that action research was symbolised by the role of the critical friend. He summarises their views in the following way:

All five respondents recognised the process of action research. This was signalled most clearly by the use of a critical friend. An interesting dimension of the critical friend was the implication of greater openness of classrooms. This was a novel idea that students appeared to find attractive: the critical friend was a way of breaking down the privacy of classroom practice and exposing it to professional critique (Appendix G).

Ken illustrates this view by quoting the response of one of the students to his question:

INTER. Very interesting. I think Callie dealt with action research in the course?

RESP. Yes, she did.

INTER. Apart from reading about action research, do you think you saw Callie doing action research?

RESP. She practised it.

RESP. She practised it?

INTER. Yes, yes, we've got a critical friend here, Debbie. Debbie, usually she calls her to come to the classroom and listen, and observe the way she teaches, and if there is something she usually tells us where we are going wrong. And I think this action research is useful. Because it reflects your actions. Sometimes even if they are not good, you have gone wrong, you can easily see that I have gone wrong here, and try to make it better. This action research I think I need even myself, I will try to apply it in my school. Because in the past we are afraid to call someone to be in the classroom and listen to you whilst teaching

(Appendix G).

Hamilton (1973) raises some important issues about the **role** of the observer in the classroom:

..... a researcher is unable to define himself in the eyes of the children except in relationship to the teaching figures they are accustomed to. (In short, there is no such thing as an "objective" observer role). The observer's relationship with children is strongly influenced by his relationship with the teacher. Before he can effectively establish his own role, an adult observer must first recognise and understand the teacher's role. Thus, while it is possible and relatively easy for an

observer to have an open relationship with children in an open classroom, it is not so easy, as Hargreaves found in a problem secondary modern school, to establish a similar research relationship in a closed setting (1973, cited in Stenhouse, 1975: 155).

Debbie understood my role as lecturer in the curriculum classroom and she was also aware of my relationship with this group of diploma students. Rather than contradict my role, her presence served to reinforce my approach and my goals. She was aware of the aims of the curriculum course and was able to offer a sensitive, yet critical perspective to the programme. She describes how she was in no way an expert but “rather a fellow participant grappling with the same issues as the rest of the group. I thought of myself as an observer and participant in the process at this stage” (Appendix F).

Through her “critical friend” role, the classroom became open to critical scrutiny. Improved teaching and learning, as well as curriculum development of the programme, became a possible consequence. Debbie suggests that her presence in the curriculum classroom “helped students to see that teaching and learning can be a collaborative endeavour and that Callie opening herself to criticism was an important part of the process” (Appendix F).

6.3. THE FIRST WEEK OF THE SECOND CYCLE

My aim during this week was to equip students with an understanding of the process of **research methods** to be used in the curriculum classroom. A subsidiary aim was the hope that, through the teaching and learning, students would develop the skills necessary to become researchers in their own right, in their own classrooms. The outcomes I hoped to achieve during this week were as follows:

- accessing information about research methods from the available written sources
- analysing the information to assess its validity for classroom research
- working with their colleagues, to find solutions to the questions and problems I was posing, in order that all participants (myself included) come to a better understanding of the process of research.

It was for the above reasons, that the first week of the second cycle began by introducing students to the scientific and interpretive approaches to science, reality and educational theory. This was followed by a brief mention of Habermas' view that all knowledge is **interested**; and all knowledge is produced (and taught and learnt) on the basis of certain values and assumptions (cited in Lockett, 1993: 12). Students were then introduced to the three paradigms in curriculum theory which coincide with Habermas' categorisation of all human rationality into three "knowledge constitutive interests" - the technical interest, the practical interest and the emancipatory interest. A lecturing mode was used to present these concepts to students. This was followed by class discussion and debate. To assist with the process of understanding of these concepts, readings were also distributed.

From the daily classroom discussions it became evident that students were unfamiliar with any form of research methods. With the assistance of a handout they were able to derive the meaning of the terms **qualitative** and **quantitative** and were able to make a distinction between the two approaches. In presenting students with a newspaper article reporting a piece of "research", they concluded that the data collected presented quantitative research. Through questioning and prompting, we then explored the possibility that this scientific data was not, in fact, reliable. Students found it extremely difficult to determine the difference between **fact** and **opinion**, especially where opinion was presented as masquerading as fact, cloaked in scientific terminology and supported by statistical figures as well as pie graphs.

A discussion then followed on **unfair** testing, along with author/researcher bias and manipulated sampling. We explored the likelihood that the sample group in the article represented only one portion of the South African population, while the research findings were generalised as representing the opinion of all South Africans. Students really grappled with this exercise and it became clear that more time was needed on fair testing.

It was **unfortunate** that I was not able to follow up on this aspect of the teaching/learning process with these students. This was because of my own perceived time constraints and planned Promat work programme. At that time, at a subconscious level, I assumed that failure on my part to complete my own programme would imply a failure in my research project. Although I had impressed upon my students the importance of teachers not being bound by syllabus constraints but by the needs of their learners, I did not follow this advice in my own classroom. I had not unlearned my own learning, although I was under the impression that I had.

6.4. THE SECOND WEEK OF THE SECOND CYCLE

During the second week students were given a **worksheet**, which can be found in Appendix E, to guide their group discussions. Questions were posed requiring debate, selective reading, understanding of terminology, and categorisation of the curriculum models into the curriculum paradigms. **Group discussions** proved useful in generating solutions to the questions posed and the availability of reference materials ensured that students felt confident and competent. One of the students, in his journal writing, had asked for some clarification of the terms autocratic, authoritarian and laissez-faire (George). With the help of a reading on leadership, these terms were discussed in groups and students were able to formulate their own understandings of these concepts and incorporate them into their understanding of curriculum. This was the first time in which there was a **deviation** from the original planned work programme because of a specific student need.

Towards the end of the second week the question was formally posed to students: “Can teachers become curriculum developers”? Martin-Kniep and Uhrmacher’s **music analogy** (1992) points out that teachers are like conductors and curriculum developers are like composers. This analogy was used to introduce the concept. I also referred to Raubenheimer’s analogy (1992/3) of the **driver of the bus**: and asked whether the education bus was driven by Pretoria or by teachers in the schools? A fierce group discussion followed with different students supporting different views. Most of the group were in agreement that, from their experience, South African teachers were like conductors relying on materials created by other sources, which they would adopt and implement in their classrooms. They unanimously agreed that, in the past, they “had not driven the curriculum bus”. There was some indecision about whether teachers could become curriculum developers but the majority of the class were of the opinion that it seemed to be a good idea. A student writes in her journal that:

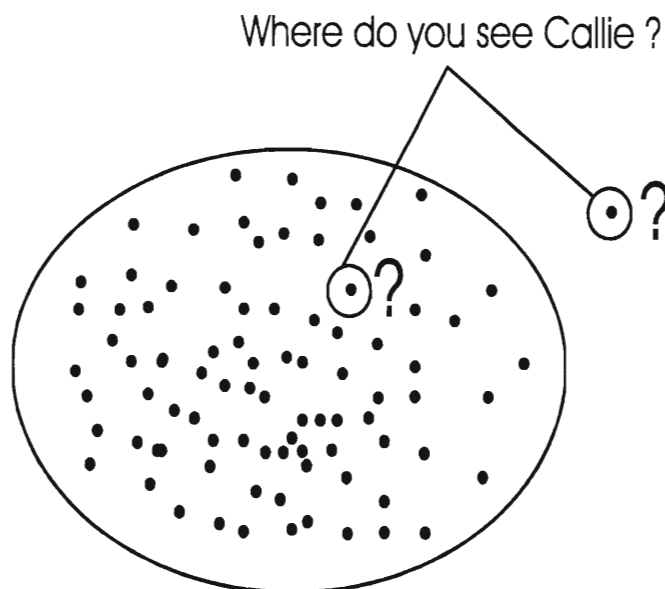
although I was the conductor and the curriculum designers being composers, I felt I should be also included in the composition so that I can be able to conduct the class with something I know, something that I favour, something that I have more meaning about (Sonangani).

As already mentioned in Chapter Five, George, in his journal writing uses the analogy of the teacher as “architect” in the classroom. It was at this point in the programme that I introduced this **building analogy** to students: South African teachers in the past were like builders, following a prescribed building plan. I asked the class whether they thought teachers could become like architects creating their own, unique building plan which they could then implement?

The use of analogies was of benefit to the students in their understanding of the curriculum development role(s). Students tended to favour the music analogy and the bus analogy over the builder analogy. This may have been because I tended to refer to these two more often in the classroom situation.

6.4.1. A critical question is posed

It was at this stage in the programme that Debbie, in her role as critical friend, asked the diploma group a question. Using the blackboard she drew a sketch to illustrate her question. She asked students to reflect on my place in the curriculum class: was I a part of the class or on the periphery? In other words, was I the leader or a participant in the research process? The question was referring to my role in determining and controlling the curriculum in the classroom. Was I taking responsibility for the research or was it a group responsibility? The following sketch is similar to the sketch she drew on the board:



The response of the students to this question was interesting. They were adamant that I was a part of the group. In justifying their answer, they referred to the **relationship** that existed between the students and myself. The fact that I was approachable, that I wished to know their opinions on issues and that I cared about them, were given as reasons for my being a part of the group. Debbie reflects on the students' response in the following way:

They were unanimous that she was part of rather than separate from the group. "She is one of us" was the response from Pius. I suggested that this sense of community was admirable but asked them to consider whether they were allowing Callie to take responsibility for researching/leading the process or not. This discussion was not carried any further (Appendix F).

Debbie and I discussed this question further later on in the day in the staff room. She referred to Adult Education classes at the University of Natal Durban where the post-graduate students one year, determined their own curriculum and directed the lecture sessions themselves. They also determined the way in which they wanted the course to be assessed, which was significantly different from the way it had originally been planned by the university lecturers involved.

I knew immediately that the students in my classroom were **not** actually involved in determining the content and aims of their course. I was the one to determine that. Neither did students view themselves as researchers in the classroom. This role remained exclusively mine. Given that the students, during the first term, had been extremely vulnerable to the relatively unstructured and open-ended nature of the course, along with my backstage role as facilitator, it was obvious that the approach of the Adult Education university class was inappropriate in this context.

Yet it was comforting to know that, despite the problems experienced during the first term, the students had accepted me as a part of the group, even if we were not partners in the research process. The original wide gap separating the roles of lecturer and students was beginning to decrease.

The week terminated with **Handout Five** being given to students to guide their personal reflections in their journals. **Handout Five** can be found in Appendix E.

6.4.2. Handout Five

6.4.2.1. Teacher views on curriculum: is curriculum simple, clear and rational or complex and contested?

This first question asked the students how they viewed curriculum. Of the class 90% wrote that they viewed curriculum as complex and contested. Reasons given were that:

- there is no single definition of curriculum
- there is always human involvement, different groups of people have different needs and different cultures
- different values underpin different curricula
- there will always be a struggle for power when developing a curriculum.

The following quotes from student journals serve as evidence of these reasons:

- “I view curriculum as complex and contested. I say this because there is not a single curriculum definition. We are able to argue about the present mentioned curriculum (definitions) we have already learned” (Constance).
- “To me curriculum is complicated and difficult since it should involve different values, norms, cultures, aims, relationships, experiences etcetera. It has been proved that there are many problems and difficulties involved in drawing the curriculum. The curriculum can never be neutral or outside of the patterns of power” (Jerome).
- “Here in South Africa the curriculum is complex and contested because of various racial groups. When developing a curriculum it is important to look at the needs, interests, values and culture of the country. Here in South Africa, because of different racial groups, we have many factors which affect the development of the curriculum. political needs, languages, religious needs” (Benedictor).
- “It is not clear and settled. It need not to be drawn up only by a certain group of people. It should include community, teachers and pupils” (Francisca).

- “The fact that curriculum definitions vary according to different peoples’ opinions, shows that curriculum is not simple. With so many things to consider, one can conclude that a curriculum is very wide and complex. At the present moment, we are looking at the changes and introduction of new subjects to suit and meet the needs of a changing South Africa” (Sibongiseni).
- “I think curriculum is complex and contested because it is not meant for input and output but is an ongoing activity that is shaped by various contextual influences within and beyond the classroom. It is based on the continuous reflection and responsible judgement of the teacher” (Albertina).

6.4.2.2. Curriculum models and teacher classification

The second question asked students at which stage of the action research model they would **classify** themselves (this was before they came to Promat). Of the group 67% believed they were in the technical stages of curriculum development. George offers a clear and concise response: “ When I came into education and started to teach, I was a very good technician. I could do the things I had been taught to do very well. I was very traditional in my approach” (Journal writing).

Sibongiseni, in his answer, gives the reasons why he was forced to operate in the technical paradigm:

I would not allow my pupils to discuss in a classroom because my superior would regard that as chaotic and unprofessional. During the course of the year, a panel of inspectorate would unexpectedly storm the school demanding scheme books and syllabi from the teachers. They would want to see a clearly written record of how far have you covered the syllabus and whether you are following the curriculum that was prescribed to you to follow as it is. If all that is not clear, you were then departmentally charged (Journal writing).

Other reasons given by students for locating themselves in the technical stage were as follows:

- the teacher as transmitter of knowledge
- the denial of human relationships in the classroom
- the use of a teacher-centred and product approach
- the use of a means/end approach to teaching with emphasis on inputs and outputs
- the teacher implementing a received curriculum.

Nonkululeko classified herself as a traditional teacher in the technical stage of curriculum development before coming to Promat. She differentiated between the technical and practical stages in this way: "The teacher is inside the curriculum in the practical paradigm. But in the technical, the teacher is outside the curriculum. As I'm going back to my school, I will use the practical paradigm" (Journal writing).

Only 28% of the group suggested that they were in the practical stage of curriculum development, while 5% believed themselves to have been in the emancipatory stage. Nonhlanhla explains how, out of desperation, she introduced a different teaching method in her classroom, despite all constraints of an imposed syllabus and an external examination. She writes:

As a teacher, I had used the practical paradigm. I had been a pragmatic teacher because I had been using both the traditional and the progressive methods when teaching. I used to tell the pupils all the facts and did not give them the chance to ask questions. The pupils were expected to memorise the facts and they were tested on knowledge only. No thought provoking questions were asked. I had to cover the whole syllabus because my pupils were going to write the external exam. There were times when I would feel so depressed and did not feel like working or talking. During these days I would leave pupils to do the work on their own by using group discussions. Later they would give me their answers and explain how they get to their answers especially in Maths. I did not know I was using the correct method at that time until I came to Promat (Journal writing).

6.4.2.3. *Teachers as curriculum developers*

The final question asked students whether they thought teachers could be **empowered** to develop their own curriculum. It was an overwhelming 97% of the group who were of the opinion that teachers could be empowered to develop their own curriculum. They believed that this could be achieved because:

- action research would be the tool to help teachers
- teachers know the needs of the learners, the school and the province; they are key actors
- the critical friend would be a support to the teacher.

George recognises the reality of the situation: “ Many people expect the government to make changes a reality, but it is the duty of teachers to have a tremendous stake in the outcomes of new policies” (Journal writing).

In her answer, Lungile offers her understanding of empowerment which:

does not mean unrestrained and unstructured actions but in fact aims to increase the learning outcomes and other experiences which flow from it and to make a contribution towards developing the pupils’ potential The empowered teacher will not regard the syllabus as a recipe from which one may not deviate, but rather as an opportunity to experiment and still to make it relevant and meaningful (Journal writing).

Although 97% of the group supported the view that teachers could become curriculum developers, the question needed to be raised whether this was a realistic view to hold. Could one assume that all teachers were natural curriculum developers? Martin-Kniep and Uhrmacher’s experiences revealed that

one cannot assume that teachers are natural curriculum developers. Teaching and curriculum development require different kinds of skills, working styles, and background knowledge. Similarly, we would argue that one should not assume that curriculum developers are natural teachers (1992: 268).

This issue needed to be debated further and was planned for **Week Three**.

6.5. THE THIRD WEEK OF THE SECOND CYCLE.

The third week began with my report back to the group on their journal writing. This was followed by an assignment which would be **formally assessed** and incorporated into the final mark of the Educational Studies course. The assignment was to cover knowledge aspects in the curriculum course and was to be presented on the computer using skills learnt during the computer literacy classes. It was to be submitted as a group effort of four to six members.

6.5.1. A deviation from the planned work programme

A deviation from the work programme occurred at this point in the course. At the beginning of 1996, the college had piloted a policy of continuous assessment for the first time. Students were unclear about the nature of a continuous assessment policy and the philosophy underpinning it. Students requested that this aspect of the Promat curriculum be studied, with a view to its transferability to the rural schools the following year.

I realised the potential value of this exercise for the group of diploma students, who would be returning to their schools the following year and altered the course of the programme. Copies of Promat's assessment policy document for the Durban campus, May 1996, were given to students to work through in my absence. Unfortunately I had to attend a meeting in Kokstad regarding the establishment of another Promat open learning centre.

I arranged that the two group leaders lead a discussion on the topic of continuous assessment after students had read the Promat policy document. I assumed that the students would cope with the understanding of the concepts and terminology in this college document, an assumption that was proved to be wrong later on in the programme. Together with the document, **Handout Six** was given to students to assist them in their journal reflections. Unfortunately **Handout Six**, having been very badly structured, served only to confuse rather than assist.

6.5.2. Handout Six

The first question, asked students to **categorise** the different types of assessment into the three curriculum models. Of the group 64% felt that summative assessment was best suited to the technical level of curriculum development while formative assessment fitted comfortably into the emancipatory level. Another category of practical assessment was mentioned which was placed in the practical curriculum level.

To the type of assessment procedures to be used on returning to schools, students responded as follows:

- 41% would use formative assessment
- 38% would adopt a continuous assessment policy and use projects, open-book tests and classroom debates
- 13% would use a combination of formative and summative assessment
- 8% were confused or did not comment.

6.6. THE FOURTH WEEK OF THE SECOND CYCLE

This week was spent reviewing and discussing the Promat **assessment** policy document with a view to understanding concepts such as formative and summative assessment, criterion-referencing and norm-referencing, as well as the various types of assessment that could be used by teachers. The philosophies underpinning the different assessment techniques were discussed and these assisted in locating the different assessment techniques within the three curriculum paradigms. While the theories behind assessment were debated in the curriculum class, the Professional Studies department involved these same students in the creation of pieces of work, aimed at assessing certain learning outcomes in the primary school classroom.

6.7. THE FIFTH WEEK OF THE SECOND CYCLE

In preparation for this week students, in groups, were given a list of **topics** and were required to choose one and prepare to deliver it to the class in a **seminar** format. Topics included the following:

- curriculum definitions and the choices involved
- curriculum models (Tyler, Walker and Action research) and the choices involved
- central versus school-based curriculum development and the choice involved
- curriculum paradigms (technical, practical and emancipatory) and the choices involved
- the choice of assessment procedures for the rural primary school
- teachers as curriculum developers and the broader issues to be dealt with as a consequence.

Presentations were a success and many of the learning outcomes of the curriculum course were achieved. These included accessing, recording and analysing information; working in co-operation with other people; making choices and justifying these choices; as well as articulating personal and group points of view and testing these views against the views of others.

The seminar presentations evoked much audience response and, in some cases, emotional debate, particularly where group choices were not the choice of the majority of the audience. It was evident from the reactions that most students had been through the process of making personal curriculum choices based on the educational theory available to them through the curriculum course. They had internalised these choices and had actively participated in the process of appropriating ideas. It appeared that students were beginning to think **more critically** about curriculum issues than they had done at the beginning of the curriculum course. Morrow suggests that active participation in the process of appropriating ideas is evidence of critical thinking. He notes that he himself came to realise that:

texts provided not the key to the right thoughts, to what to think, a script for what to say, but, rather, were contributions to a conversation in which I could be a participant, not a mere spectator I was forced to realise that respect for what someone else has said does not entail reverence and the blind acceptance of their words (1989: 160 - 161).

The efforts of one of the groups needs mention here. They presented their topic in the form of a three-part **play**, with each part organised around a make-believe staff meeting. Each of the three parts varied in the different behaviours and levels of participation of the staff members and the principal in the meeting. The group was attempting to depict the

teachers and the principal in various stages of curriculum involvement; technical , practical and emancipatory. The play left most of the class confused about the differences between the practical and emancipatory paradigms.

A heated **debate** followed which was led by one of the students who, until this moment, had remained relatively quiet in class. The debate was an attempt by the students to clarify what the differences were between the three paradigms. Part one of the play was understood by all as the technical stage of curriculum involvement and was relatively simple to depict. It was parts two and three which were causing confusion. Although a few students did ask for the answer (which was not given!), the rest of the group continued to struggle to formulate their own understanding of how parts two and three of the play should have differed. This curriculum session constituted a **major shift** in the majority of the group taking ownership of their own thinking and their understanding of their role as teachers in curriculum development. They finally reached consensus after lengthy dialogue and much frustration on how parts two and three should have been portrayed.

6.8. THE SIXTH WEEK OF THE SECOND CYCLE

The week began with my report back on themes that were evident through the curriculum journals. The shift in students' thinking from the beginning of the course (where students were implementers of a received school curriculum) to the present (where students felt the need to be involved in curriculum decision-making) was also discussed and confirmed.

I then introduced students to Keddie's (1971) concepts of the educationist context and the teacher context. I made reference to some journal comments of the students as examples of this distinction in contexts. Some of these comments have already been referred to in Chapter Four and Five. Students were intrigued by the notion that what they claimed to have believed about teaching, could be different from their actual classroom behaviour. After this discussion students were asked to reflect on whether there might be a disjunction between their theoretical beliefs as recorded in their journals and their actual classroom practice the following year. Students were of the opinion that, despite any difficulties encountered, what they recorded in their journals **would reflect their classroom practice** the following year. It was beyond the parameters of this study to

assess the validity of this statement but, nevertheless, I felt that this aspect would be extremely valuable as a follow-up activity, once the present study had been concluded.

This view is supported by Ken in his report. He comments that:

Without exception respondents believed they would **teach differently**. They pointed out that their practice would be informed by their broader understanding of curriculum, particularly with respect to recognition of their own professional responsibilities. Action research, in which a critical friend played a role, was prominent in the views, and there were suggestions of a changed methodology that involved pupils more actively in the learning process. The major obstacle to change was regarded as the school principal. An exception, unsurprisingly, was the student who was the principal himself! Students were confident that pupils would not resist change if teachers explained what they were attempting to do (Appendix G).

On the Friday of **Week Six** students wrote their Educational Studies examination which included one question on curriculum in the broadest sense. The curriculum question had been given to students three weeks beforehand. It had been discussed and students had ample time to prepare for this question of one hour duration.

6.9. SOME REFLECTIONS

6.9.1. Self-monitoring

I soon became aware that self-monitoring on the part of a teacher is an emotionally draining task. I found that it served to make me acutely aware of the “shortcomings” in my classroom and the gaps that existed between my intended aims and the actual teaching/learning process that occurred. This awareness contributed to feelings of insecurity and, at times, a lowering of my own self-esteem. The view of Morrow accords well with the way I was feeling:

We have a tendency to think of criticism, even self-criticism, as potentially fragmenting, a weakening of our strength. We have to learn that critical disagreement is not a suburb of disharmony, but that, on the contrary, it is the lifeblood of a critical community. We have come to understand that critical discussion is a way of thinking together, rather than a competition in which there are winners and losers, or a form of negotiation or mediation. We must realise that disagreement presupposes harmony at a deeper level, and in this way, paradoxically, serves to reveal and reinforce the shared convictions which bind us together (1993: 2).

I came to realise that true mastery of my teaching was unattainable. I would always be striving to achieve better because each classroom situation would offer a different set of problems which in themselves would require a different set of guidelines to find a solution. Elliot quotes the view of a teacher in his Ford project which aptly expresses the elusiveness of mastership:

Nothing is ever in a state of stasis, nothing is ever finalised, always there is reappraisal in the light of new experience. Like children we hanker after the finiteness of things, and like children, we are disturbed when there is frequent reassessment and modification (Elliot, 1991: 36).

6.9.2. Monitoring by the critical friend

On reflection, it became evident that, as researcher, I did not **discuss** the critical friend role in sufficient detail with Debbie at the beginning or during the research project. This was probably due to the fact that I had not explored the concept fully and consequently had only a superficial understanding of this role. Only practical arrangements, such as time and venue were discussed, prior to Debbie's participation in the curriculum class. We planned that she would visit the curriculum class once a week in her free period. Debbie confirms this point: "Perhaps my role could have been more effective especially with the students had we explored it more thoroughly and clearly at the outset?" (Appendix F).

I experienced feelings of **vulnerability** at the thought of a colleague being introduced into my classroom. Despite my understanding that the critical friend would only be assisting me to reflect on and improve my classroom practice, and despite the friendship that existed between Debbie and me, I still felt stressed about the visits of the critical friend. This may have been because this was the first time that an action research project was undertaken at the college. Although a liberal atmosphere prevailed, where lecturers exercised professional independence in thought and action, little team-teaching and no collaborative classroom research had occurred to date. Debbie, in her report, writes that: “this (critical friend role) seemed rather intimidating to me as I was in no way an expert”. Later she describes how she initially felt extremely uncomfortable to be “evaluating the group despite having a good relationship with them. Clearly my own learned attitudes were coming through. This feeling of discomfort did disappear with time” (Appendix F).

It would appear that a **contradiction** existed between my understanding of the role of critical friend in theory and my experience of the same role in practice. Despite my theoretical understanding of the non-judgemental and supportive role of the critical friend, in practice I labelled and consequently experienced, the critical friend as an evaluator rather than a participant researcher. This contradiction might be understood in terms of my experience of actual classroom visits in my past which had been in the form of an inspection, in order to determine a pass or failure on my part. The past tensions I experienced around these visits were a reality that still existed, despite any theoretical rhetoric I had learnt about the notion of a critical friend.

As a result, during the second action research cycle, Debbie was more of an **observer** than a **participant** in the research process. Because of this, I lost a valuable perspective on my own teaching. Were I to do the research project over again, I would handle the critical friend aspect very differently. Debbie evaluates similarly:

On reflection I think my role in the classroom may have been more effective if I had participated more fully (e.g. by taking some classes) and for the whole period of the study. I would have liked to explore the collaborative action research further - especially in view of a more integrated curriculum at Promat in the future (Appendix F).

It was only in the documentation of the research project in 1997, that I allowed Debbie to participate more fully in the analysis and understanding of the process and the benefits of this relationship were invaluable. This view is confirmed by Debbie: “I think that my role as *sounding board* and later reader of her documentation was more useful to Callie than my observations or participation in the classroom” (Appendix F).

6.9.3. Confirmation of findings: responses of the project supervisor after interviews with a sample of research students

Semi-structured individual interviews were a final source of data for this study. These took place at Promat College (KZN) on Wednesday 19 June 1996. It was originally planned that ten students should be interviewed but, due to time constraints, and after discussion between Ken and myself, it was decided that he need to interview only six students. The report, summarising some of the findings in these interviews, can be found in Appendix G.

We would do well to heed the caution of Walker at this juncture: “Interviews are not the raw material of any study but themselves interpretations where different interview conditions, with a different emphasis, could have produced a different account” (Walker, 1996: 40). Relationships are always asymmetrical in the interview process with the researcher controlling the process and translating interviews (spoken words) into written ones. In short, interviews do not reveal the “facts”, and data collection is a process of creation, rather than a matter of fact finding.

6.10. CONCLUSION

Four decades of Bantu Education had effectively silenced the voices of teachers in South Africa. Consequently the teachers in this study did not initially see themselves as participants in the shaping of the curriculum in their classrooms and schools. We read in Chapter Five that these teachers positioned me as the primary producer of knowledge about curriculum. They perceived my role as “expert” who knew all there was to know about curriculum and who would transmit this “truth” to them as the learners.

On the contrary, I presented curriculum as an interpretation of reality and attempted to work in ways which would allow teachers to reflect on and contextualise their own experiences of curriculum. My aim was for them to explore new perspectives which would lead to their taking ownership of their own knowledge production. In order for students to achieve this, they had to go through a process of the “unlearning” of some of their initial curriculum assumptions.

6.10.1. The process of learning and unlearning

Learning may be defined as “the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action” (Mezirow, 1990: 1). It was the Russian psychologist Vygotsky who showed that:

through the processes of social interaction throughout childhood, every person reached adulthood with an internalised set of rules which made it possible for their cognitive capacities to be put to work in particular ways, for particular ends (cited in Morphet, 1992: 92).

The significance of this is that when adults set out to learn something new, they have to overcome the fact that they have already internalised some form of learned behaviour which is connected to the new learning process at hand. This prior learning can act as a barrier to changing perceptions and may require unlearning.

The students in this study were in-service teachers who had been working in schools for many years. Their personal history and experience of teaching guided each teacher in developing and internalising an understanding of curriculum, prevalent at the time. This view of curriculum as “product” was learned and incorporated into the set of rules which became their “frame of reference”.

Throughout the course, students were required to reflect on this frame of reference. With the assistance of critical thinking skills they became aware of the limitations and bias inherent in their beliefs about curriculum. A new framework of understanding was then explored and a new construction of curriculum emerged. Mezirow describes how we reflect on this frame of reference in order to learn:

We engage in reflective learning through the kind of discourse in which we bracket our prior judgements, attempt to hold our biases in abeyance, and, through a critical review of the evidence and arguments, make a determination about the justifiability of the expressed idea whose meaning is contested (1990: 10).

To this end I would like to highlight a very real shift in the journal writing and thinking of one of the more reserved students. An extremely insecure Lungile, in the first term, writes:

The subject teacher teaches us well or more than the word good. But the problem is I don't understand curriculum and it has many definitions but I don't know which one is important because it says no-one has the correct meaning of curriculum. On my own I think number twenty-three, but the people of higher position say number one has the correct meaning of curriculum. But I think Callie Grant knows the best one (Journal writing).

Later on in her journal writing of the second term, she introduces her reflections with the following confident statement:

Before answering the question I would like to define the word curriculum in my own understanding: Curriculum means the interrelated totality of aims, learning, content, evaluation procedures, teaching-learning activities, opportunities and experiences (Lungile).

6.10.2. Teacher empowerment through content and process

What emerged from this curriculum course was the importance of finding a **balance** between content and process. A criticism that could be levelled against the curriculum course was that the emphasis was on content at the expense of process and skills. Debbie and I discussed the issue of process versus content at length. While I have a tendency to value content, I would argue that although the course did cover much content, it was **not** at the expense of the process. I would like to quote Debbie's perspective on this debate:

Students received a large amount of material to study and absorb. I felt that this may have been somewhat overwhelming for students. Callie and I had numerous debates about process versus content and the relative importance of each. This was also discussed with students in the primary science course (Appendix F).

I did use the expository method in my teaching. Expository teaching is in essence teacher-centred, as it involves the presentation of content, facts and concepts to learners in a one-way direction. However, it cannot be said that my teaching was exclusively expository. On the contrary, I used an **eclectic** approach, which depended upon the nature of the concepts to be taught and on the needs of the students.

The initial questionnaire was used to ascertain what views with regard to curriculum, teaching and learning were held by students at the beginning of the project. It emerged that they had had little or no exposure to curriculum theory, prior to their registration with Promat College. A fundamental aspect of the action research process is that **theory** is a necessary element for reflection on practice. In order for **reflection** to occur in the present study, exposure to curriculum theories was essential, in order for the process to be initiated. I could not, therefore, discredit the expository method completely. As Callahan and Clark (1982) argue, “in the hands of the experienced or skilful teacher, the lecture method can be used to arouse pupils’ interest, set pupils thinking and wondering, open new vistas, tie together loose facts or ideas, summarise or synthesise and review” (cited in Mahaye, 1996: 233).

Once the students had been exposed to various curriculum theories, a more democratic teaching style was adopted. Participative methods which required that the students play a central role in the teaching/learning activities were used. At no stage was one curriculum view prescribed. On the contrary, alternative views were made available to students, to assist them in developing their own **personal** views on curriculum issues. Making alternative views of knowledge available helped students to embark on a dynamic process of **constructing** their own educational knowledge. Curriculum choices were left open for students to make, according to their personal needs and the context in which they lived. Yet as Debbie cautions, “although presenting students with a variety of definitions or options were we not directing them to our view and our agenda” (Appendix F)? I would have to answer this question in the affirmative, because I could not and, consequently, did not present a value-free curriculum.

For the most part my research was guided by the practical phase of action research. According to Grundy, “the guiding ethic for practical action research is respect for the autonomy and responsibility of individual persons” (1987: 155).

The following student comment indicates this autonomous and democratic choice: “But what I like is that after struggling with ideas, I come to the conclusion within myself” (Sibongile, Journal writing).

I support the view of Cornielje that “it is the content - and learning process - which truly empowers the learner” (1994: 40). Mehl describes this stance in the following way: “our position on whether the primary purpose of education should be to impart knowledge or to develop thinking skills is that education should address both objectives” (1987: 34). The accumulation of curriculum knowledge was essential in forming part of the developing framework, which allowed both the teachers in this study and myself, to begin the **process** of thinking critically.

6.10.3. The teacher as curriculum developer

The teachers in this study experienced a **shift** in their views concerning curriculum issues during the five month duration of the Promat Curriculum course. Their initial view of themselves as curriculum receivers was replaced with an understanding of the role that teachers need to play in the process of curriculum development in schools. As one student explains in the interview with Ken:

So now when Callie taught about the curriculum, I thought, it's not for me - I'm not fit for planning the curriculum, me myself. But in the end I see we are - I am responsible for the planning of the curriculum, because if we look back even the principals and inspectors were not prepared to listen to us as teachers. So now seeing this curriculum, I see that we are empowered now to change it if we want to change it (Appendix G).

Ken summarises his conclusion in the following way:

What is clear is that students had acquired a new perspective on curriculum, on teaching, and on their professional responsibility. In current jargon, they felt empowered to generate understandings and to act on the basis of these (Appendix G).

Teaching and curriculum development are different professional endeavours. However, I argue that South African teachers should have greater opportunities to develop curricula. Martin-Kniep and Uhrmacher argue that: “Engaging in curriculum development presents teachers with numerous advantages that can result in increased professionalism, self-understanding, and knowledge” (1992: 270).

The benefits of being involved in curriculum development are described by Felicia, a student in this study. She writes that:

..... it allows teachers to draw up curriculum which will suit for them. By so doing, teachers will improve teaching practices. They will also understand the importance of research processes. They will include norms and values. Teachers will increase self-confidence (Journal writing).

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND A CRITIQUE OF ACTION RESEARCH

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter reflects critically on the research project described in Chapters Four, Five and Six. The issues raised in these chapters relate to the planning, aims and implementation of the project, as well as to the participants involved in the process. The chapter begins with a look at the organisational constraints that hindered the effective implementation of the project. Thereafter, it explores the tensions that existed between the aims of the Educational Studies learning programme and the action research assumption of a democratic classroom. Furthermore, the role of the participants as researchers and their engagement with the research project, as well as their views on change, will then be analysed. The chapter then endeavours to explain the contradictions in students' writings using the concept of "hegemony". Finally the chapter evaluates the appropriateness of action research as a methodology for teachers researching their own classrooms.

7.2. ORGANISATIONAL CONSTRAINTS THAT HINDERED EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

Disruptions to the daily timetable at Promat had a definite impact on my ability to implement the curriculum course and the research project in the way that I had originally intended.

As can be seen from Chapter Four, the project only started on 15 February 1996 with the piloting of the initial teacher questionnaire. Given the discussion in Chapter One on student enrolment at the Promat In-Service College (KZN), it is clear that student numbers more than doubled from 1995 to 1996, mainly due to the fact that additional students could be accommodated in the more spacious Pinetown premises. The unexpected increase in student enrolment meant that the first two weeks of the first semester were lost as teaching time.

As mentioned in Chapter Five, I was unable to attend many of the curriculum classes during the first term due to various INSET management meetings in Pretoria as well as visits to the new part-time open learning centre in Jozini. My absence from the curriculum class distressed the students and increased their insecurities about passing the curriculum course. The students were anxious about passing their diplomas which made it difficult for me to give priority to the research project. Meeting the needs of the students was a necessity but it did nevertheless undermine the aims of the research project as these were originally conceptualised.

7.3. EMERGENT TENSIONS

Tensions existed between the aims of the research project, as discussed in Chapter Two, and the principle of democracy underpinning action research, which was also referred to in Chapter Two. Introducing students to curriculum concepts and notions of teacher involvement in curriculum development implies expository teaching which, as has been discussed in Chapter Six, is not necessarily democratic.

The **initial planning** of the curriculum learning programme and the selection of its aims and content, was not explored in a democratic manner. The students were not involved in this stage of the process at all. As discussed in Chapter One, I was responsible for this selection in consultation with one or two Promat lecturers. This was based on untested assumptions regarding what I thought the needs of the students would be. In general the learning programme was adhered to and it was only on one or two occasions that we deviated from the original programme at the request of the students. Students were, however, democratically involved in the planning of the **assessment** of the curriculum course.

Likewise, the research project itself was planned by me, with the assistance of my supervisor and the permission of my principal. Again students did not participate in this **initial stage** of the process. The research project was discussed in detail with the students, and as has already been mentioned in Chapter Four, although participation was voluntary, the entire group chose to participate.

It can be concluded that, in both the design of the curriculum learning programme and the research project, the process was neither participatory nor democratic. It may be said that this aspect of the programme constituted **technical** action research. As Grundy explains: “In technical action research the guiding idea need not either be generated by or engage the commitment of the group. It requires only consent for its implementation” (1987: 154 - 155).

7.4. REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDENTS AS RESEARCHERS IN THE CURRICULUM CLASSROOM

As has already been mentioned, it was I who was the primary researcher. It was my responsibility for setting the agenda for the research action and for directing the educational practice of the students. I was attempting to convince the students of the merits of a course in Curriculum Studies and the need for them to become curriculum developers. In this way, my findings were similar to those of Lotz’s work with teachers in environmental education activities and the “*We Care Primary materials*” used (Lotz, 1995: 7). When commenting on the RDDA (research, develop, disseminate, adopt) model of materials development for Environment Education, Lotz found that educational change remained to a large extent a **centre-periphery** strategy. Although it was guided by an action research orientation, she found that the materials development process retained many rationalist and technicist assumptions (Lotz, 1995: 7).

Similarly, my research, which was also guided by an action research orientation, remained to a large extent a centre-periphery strategy. The students in my study were not full participants in the research process because the project was guided mainly by me, in search of rational answers to my research questions. Debbie, in her report, confirms this view:

I was certain that students were not seeing themselves as curriculum developers/action researchers. Despite some excellent group and class discussions it seemed to me that students did not see themselves as partners in the process (Appendix F).

As has already been discussed in Chapter Five, my role as lecturer was perceived as being different from the role of the students and this resulted in a power differential in the curriculum classroom. This power differential accounted for the fact that the action research process was at times expert-centred and technical in nature, despite “Callie’s attempts to introduce a non or at least less hierarchical relationship between herself and the rest of the group” (Appendix F).

Nevertheless, the role the students played in the research project cannot be underestimated. Mehl describes how the teacher becomes a researcher “with the classroom as the laboratory, the content areas taught as the research material and the pupils as co-workers” (1987: 38). Although the student research evolved as a result of my direction, it was an extremely valuable perspective to have and it informed both my teaching and the documenting of the research. The students involved themselves fully in the research process. They participated in class, were involved in discussions and did the many prescribed and recommended readings. Despite the fact that the journal work did not affect their Educational Studies results in any way, students were committed to my research and took pride in their reflection journals. They were extremely responsible in recording their reflections on both the content as well as the process of the course.

The presentation of the journals was particularly impressive. A few students had photographs of themselves at the front of their journals, some had decorated their journals with pictures from magazines while others had drawn their own pictures and decorations. All journals were beautifully covered with brightly coloured paper and plastic. It would appear that the **culture of teaching and learning** upheld by the students in this study was suited to the research project’s aims. The students participated in the curriculum class and in the research project in an exemplary manner. I could not have wished for a better group of students with whom to work.

7.5. STUDENTS’ VIEWS ON CHANGE

Students in this study identified the need to change and their writings illustrate their desire to bring about significant change in their schools. I am of the opinion that they had undergone a change in what Parker calls “teacher consciousness” (1988/89: 100). Of some concern, however, was their naïve view that change is simple and straightforward. Few students reflected on the difficulties involved in bringing about change, except to refer to a principal or circuit inspector who might need to be convinced of the benefits of change. No mention was made of the stress involved in

initiating change and neither was there any reference to the need to take responsibility for the risks involved. Neither was any mention made of the possibility of conflict between the views of learners, the community and the school.

Parker suggests that change is manifested in a school in three different ways: in different teaching methods, in materials development, or in relationships (1988/89: 100). From journal writings in the present study, it became clear that the students envisaged change mainly in the area of different **teaching methods**. Examples suggesting this view were recorded in Chapter Five. A further example confirms this point: “It (action research) can be done by the teacher in and outside the classroom to improve his teaching methods” (Nonkululeko, Journal writing). This same point is also noted by Wedekind of teachers in his study: “While there was a reluctance to embark on a fully fledged action research programme, teachers were acutely aware of the need to change their teaching style” (1995: 155). Yet one must not forget the view of Webb and Ashton (1987) who argue that “teachers’ instructional strategies are highly resistant to change” (cited in Broadfoot, 1988: 285).

Change for South African teachers who have been steeped in the philosophy of Fundamental Pedagogics will not be easy. Change, in this context, according to Wedekind, is not simply a modification or improvement. It necessitates a **paradigm shift** which requires an abandonment of everything that has gone before. He found in his study that the consequences of this paradigm shift were extremely unsettling for participants, who either resisted or ignored his programme or transformed it in order to make it less threatening (1995: 151). It is beyond the scope of the present study to explore this difficult process of classroom change.

7.6. EXPLAINING CONTRADICTIONS IN STUDENTS’ WRITINGS

The present study, as we have already read, involved a group of rural South African in-service teachers in 1996 and explored their notions of curriculum. Contradictions emerged in the writings of students. They embraced certain ideas in theory and yet, in the real teaching world of practice, different ideas were held. Examples of these contradictions can be found in Chapters Three, Four and Five. The work of Antonio Gramsci (1971), and particularly his concepts of hegemony, commonsense and contradictory consciousness, can help to explain how these contradictions can co-exist in the lives of the teachers.

Gramsci maintains that civil society and political society constitute the state. **Political society** is the *first level* of state apparatuses that “can coerce, via its institutions of law, police, army and prisons the various strata of society into consenting to the status quo” Holub, 1992, cited in Wedekind, 1996: 431). **Civil society** is the *second level* which consists of those institutions normally thought of as private, particularly the church, trade unions, the mass media and political parties. The institutions of civil society, ranging from

education, religion, and the family to the microstructures of the practices of everyday life, contribute to the production of meaning and values which in turn produce, direct and maintain the ‘spontaneous’ consent of the various strata of society to that same status quo (Holub, 1992, cited in Wedekind, 1996: 431).

State power is maintained by a combination of consent and coercion. Most people are not forced to support the existing social arrangements; they consent to them voluntarily (Christie, 1990: 3). For any social group to win and preserve power, it needs to win the consent of other social groups to its authority, in order to exercise, in Gramsci’s words, “moral and intellectual leadership”.

Hegemony means supremacy obtained by **consent** rather than by **coercion**. It is not achieved through the use of force, but “primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family” (McLaren, 1994: 173). Hegemony must be dynamic, and it must change as circumstances change.

Gramsci distinguishes between **philosophy and commonsense** to explain how hegemony is maintained. Philosophy, according to Gramsci, is logical and coherent while commonsense is a pattern of common thinking in a particular time and place. Commonsense is ambiguous and unclear; it constantly changes and is not necessarily true. It usually contains contradictions and fragments of views (Christie, 1990: 4). This internal contradiction inherent in commonsense, can help to explain how contradictory views can co-exist in teachers’ lives. As McLaren suggests, “within the hegemonic process, established meanings are often laundered of contradiction, contestation, and ambiguity” (1994: 175).

Hegemony acts to:

“saturate” our very consciousness, so that the educational, economic and social world we see and interact with, and the commonsense interpretations we put on it, becomes the world “tout court”, the only world (Apple, 1979: 5).

Teachers in apartheid South Africa were part of the institution of education in civil society. In this capacity they were instruments of **consensual** hegemony. Most teachers had a view of teaching which was **saturated** in the ruling class discourse of apartheid education and its accompanying philosophy of Fundamental Pedagogics. They defined themselves in terms of everyday concrete values, which were promoted in their circumstances by the nationalist government, representing its interests in such a way that they appeared to represent the interests of all South Africans. The inequalities of race and class that existed within South African society were thus reproduced.

An example of hegemonic thinking in schools in South Africa was that teachers had **no authority** to develop their own curriculum and make their own curriculum decisions. This form of thinking was maintained by a whole range of everyday practices; from the centralised control by the “experts” in the Head Office in Pretoria over prescriptive syllabi, to the lack of control by teachers of their local examinations in schools. Some teachers who did not actively support the notion that they could not be involved in curriculum development, nevertheless could not envisage alternatives. To other teachers the existing educational scenario seemed to be the only possible one. Sibongiseni, a student in this study, unconsciously accepted his subordinate teaching role and did not question the ruling class beliefs and values. “I have been using a technical paradigm to teach my pupils for the past fifteen years. To be honest, I saw **nothing** wrong in it. The fact is, I was also taught through it” (Journal writing). Hegemony is thus the struggle in which “the powerful win the consent of those who are oppressed, with the oppressed unknowingly participating in their oppression” (McLaren, 1994: 173).

Gramsci argues that when people meet with circumstances which run contrary to existing hegemony, their consciousness does not necessarily change. Rather, this situation is more likely to produce a **contradictory consciousness**. The contradiction which people experience “does not permit of any action, any decision, or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity”. To go beyond the limits of commonsense requires a further stage: a process of struggle with contradictions to reach a critical understanding of the world (Gramsci, 1971, cited in Christie, 1990: 4).

Applying this to the present research, it cannot be assumed that simply being exposed to alternative views of curriculum and teachers' roles in the process of curriculum development, shifted teachers' views on curriculum. Instead, it may have resulted in contradictory consciousness. One can only hope that the exposure to curriculum theory and curriculum choices might assist teachers, when they return to their schools, to go beyond the limits of commonsense. It is hoped that the teachers in their classrooms, might struggle with these contradictions and that they might reach a more critical understanding of teaching and learning.

7.7. ACTION RESEARCH: A WHOLE-STAFF ACTIVITY?

The present action research project, I believe, benefited **all participants** involved in various different ways. The students in the study were exposed to a new model for bringing about change in their classrooms and they were free to make the choice whether to use this model in their classrooms the following year or not. Debbie and I became more aware of the difficulties of using action research in the classroom. Through our experiences of the project we were able to critique action research as a methodology for change and become aware of its shortcomings. Yet the process of theorising practice did not come to an end at the end of the research project in June 1996. On the contrary, our participation in this educational research had stimulated further reflection, discussion and exploration. We continue still, to theorise our practice on a daily basis. Debbie describes our many informal talks as follows: "these discussions were (are) ongoing and frequent given our mutual passion for teaching and learning" (Appendix F).

However, a distinct disadvantage was that the project did not benefit Promat College (KZN) as a whole. What transpired in my curriculum classroom was my responsibility and, as such, did **not** impact on the institution or on the balance of the Promat staff. Few opportunities were created for whole staff discussion regarding the research project which was probably due to the fact that a research culture did not exist at Promat College in 1996.

It was interesting to note that during 1997, five lecturing staff were involved in research projects in different areas of curriculum study. It would appear then that the culture of **teacher research** is on the incline at Promat College (KZN).

7.8. ACTION RESEARCH: A THEORETICAL CRITIQUE

Wedekind (1995), in his research, offers a challenging theoretical critique of action research, and it is not my intention to replicate a task exceptionally well done. For the purposes of this study, I propose to summarise Wedekind's critique and relate the relevant points to my unique research situation.

Wedekind questions the assumptions that underpin the action research methodology and argues that these theoretical flaws stem from a **misreading** of Habermas' concept of an Ideal Speech Situation (1995: 156). He claims that it is the **idealistic** reading of Habermas and a corresponding belief in the emancipatory potential of action research as concretely achievable, which underlies much of the literature and which is problematic. Habermas, however, is quite categorical in his rejection of this utopian form of thinking, stressing the historical situatedness of any social interaction (1981, cited in Wedekind, 1995: 157). In Chapter Two I noted that I was sceptical of the broad emancipatory claims of action research and preferred to focus more on action research for personal and professional development. I was not drawn by an idealistic interpretation to action research. Rather, as Elliot suggests, I understood the pragmatic value of action research as a way to improve my own teaching (1991: 44).

My research was not truly democratic. As mentioned in Chapter Five, **power differentials** existed between my status, as college lecturer, and the perceived lesser status of my under-qualified students. My paid role as lecturer in the curriculum classroom, dictated that I would always have more power than my students who were reliant on me to pass their diplomas. It was towards the end of the first action research cycle that I acknowledged the existence of this power relation and came to the realisation that a democratic classroom was indeed not possible. My only option was to begin the gradual process of reducing this power differential. Morrow's view confirms my findings:

educative relationships are participatory relationships, that is, they are relationships between persons, but they are not relationships between equals. If it is insisted that democratic relationships are relationships between equals then educative relationships cannot be democratic (1989: 147 - 148).

In Chapter Two we mentioned that a further limitation of the action research cycle is that it exhibits a cognitive, rational analysis and often ignores both the unconscious and group dynamics. Wedekind argues that:

even if teachers are genuinely committed to a transformation they still have to overcome a range of repressed thoughts which will impact on their capacity to change. The interference of the unconscious will always severely limit the ability for genuine communication unless this is centrally addressed in the cycle (1995: 158 - 159).

A further limitation of the action research process is its “closed” nature as mentioned in Chapter Two. Wedekind points out that the process is centrally concerned with **teachers’ interests**. Later on he highlights the fact that “teachers are not the only parties with an interest in schooling and it is not self-evident that power should primarily be located with the teacher” (1995: 162). Thus, to prevent teacher bias and to ensure that the research process was inclusive, the curriculum programme specifically stressed the need for the students to become independent and critical in their thinking. The separate roles of the critical friend and the research supervisor/interviewer were also essential to open the research to outside scrutiny and to offer further perspectives on the process.

The process of **documentation** further opened the research process to public scrutiny. Debbie and I shared research articles as we explored the research process together (Appendix F). It was my intention, as a teacher, to produce material on my research which other teachers, with an interest in researching their own classrooms, could read.

Action research is not inherently emancipatory or empowering. It is also not a theory. Rather, as Elliot argues, it is useful as a methodology which is hermeneutic in nature (1991). Epistemologically, action research holds that knowledge is socially constructed. Educationally, it leans strongly towards alternative teaching methods. I support Appel who maintains that action research is about technique which may or may not bring to light many innovative and even liberating educational practices (Appel, 1991: 105). The process of evaluating the Promat curriculum programme served to empower me as the lecturer. Critical reflection, along with participant collaboration, served to improve my teaching. x NB

The students, too, through the shifts in their views of curriculum, were empowered. This personal empowering process affected each student differently and no generalisation could be made. Neither could claims be made about practice. However, as a point of interest on the notion of individual empowerment, I would like to summarise a telephone conversation I had with one of the students twelve months later. This previously reserved student spoke with confidence and a quiet authority. She explained proudly that she had been elected to the Governing Body of her rural school. She explained that the theories of curriculum, as well as the curriculum process, which she had experienced at Promat, served to assist her in making decisions on the Governing Body. Furthermore, it also guided her teaching (Irene, 7 June 1997).

I am of the opinion that action research is **one useful tool** that teachers can use to improve classroom practice, as long as the following caution is heeded:

Action research which is reconceptualised in a way that avoids obscuring power relations behind democratic rhetoric and which has been purged of a desire by the initiators to lead people to emancipation could be a worthwhile enterprise within the broader reconstruction of South African education (Wedekind, 1995: 165 - 166).

In the words of Flanagan, I still believe that “action research is the most promising means by which teachers can begin to take control of their working lives” (1991: 39).

7.9. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

I would suggest that my teacher-based action research illustrated a **process** in which my assumptions about curriculum were tested and developed in action. The process was characterised by the following:

- It was a process which I initiated in response to a particular situation with which I was confronted. The question was how to develop and teach an Educational Studies Curriculum course to the in-service teachers in their final year of study at Promat College.
- The practical situation was problematic because no such course existed at Promat at this time and because it was likely that students who embarked on this course had no notion of curriculum theory.
- The course was devised and implemented. It aroused confusion, insecurity and some controversy within the student group, because fundamental beliefs embodied in their existing practices about the nature of teaching, learning, curriculum and evaluation were challenged.
- These new concepts and perspectives were discussed and debated openly until they became less threatening. At all times respect and tolerance for students' views was of paramount importance.
- Changes, both to the curriculum course, as well as to the students' views on curriculum issues, were treated as provisional hypotheses to be tested and explored further.
- Implicit in the process was a bottom-up approach to curriculum development.

(Adapted from Elliot, 1991: 9).

The fundamental aim of action research is to **improve practice** rather than to produce knowledge (Elliot, 1991: 49). I am convinced that my practice was improved during this research process. I reflected systematically on my teaching, on the students' learning and on the design of the curriculum programme. The insights from student journals were invaluable. They served to assist me in becoming better acquainted with my students on a personal level and in improving my teaching from this formative feedback.

Ongoing discussions with Debbie regarding problems I encountered in documenting my research and solutions to these problems were crucial to this final copy. Further planning, outside the parameters of this research project, was fraught with difficulties, especially in the translation of the curriculum course into Promat distance materials for part-time students. The support, advice and theorising between Debbie and myself became the norm, rather than just an aspect of a research project.

Throughout the research project a constant feature was the belief held by the majority of participants, that action research was the **best method** to introduce change and innovation in schools, because all teachers could become actively involved in the process.

All teachers need to be involved in this process of action research, because we teachers must become researchers. I think it will help us to solve problems that we encounter during teaching situations in the classroom (Nonkululeko, Journal writing).

I agree with Nonkululeko that the value of action research lies in the fact that the teacher can become a researcher as well as a learner in her classroom. In this way, the power relations are reduced in the classroom and the gap between the teacher and the learner becomes narrower. This concept was discussed in Chapter Two with reference to the work of Stenhouse (1975) and Freire (1978).

In Chapter One we referred to a distinction made by Parker (1988/89) between change as reform and change as a more radical progressive transformation. My classroom research was neither transformative nor emancipatory. Instead it was more **reformist** in nature. During different phases of the research project two different modes of action research were evident. In the initial planning stages of the project and during the early stages of the first action research cycle technical aspects were dominant. The practical phase was evident towards the end of the first cycle and during the second cycle.

The students in my study were involved more in reflection than research, with these reflections ranging from the technical to the practical rather than the emancipatory. Students underwent shifts in their thinking and, through the research process, gained greater confidence in their own knowledge of curriculum and in their personal ability to bring about change. The value of working closely with other teachers, in sharing and debating ideas and educational experiences, cannot be underestimated. I would therefore argue that action research underpinned by a view of teachers as reflective practitioners is an **appropriate model** for school improvement in South Africa.

Along with Walker I agree that to dismiss action research would be to lose the possibility for teachers as researchers to offer examples, episodes and narratives of how to work with children in educational contexts, in ways which might contribute to teachers gaining control of practice and to the shaping of a critical pedagogy (1990: 62). Action research allows teachers' voices and those of their pupils, as partners in the research enterprise, to be heard as **producers** of educational knowledge It creates opportunities for teachers to work together, to share experiences and problems and to collaborate in their own growth as they attempt alternative ways of teaching (Walker, 1990: 62).

This research project provides an ideal **point of departure** for further study of a sample of these forty-two teachers in their schools as they attempt to implement classroom changes as discussed at a theoretical level in the curriculum classroom. An action research approach could be used by the participants to monitor the classroom changes. A similar view was recorded by Volmink and Hardman in their evaluation of Promat:

If a number of teachers from a school have studied at Promat, a member of staff could encourage an action research cell to work with her on implementing the Promat methodology course ideas in the school. This could be written up and would form a valuable study (1994: 32).

APPENDICES

A - G

APPENDIX A

PROMAT COLLEGE OF EDUCATION : IN-SERVICE

PINETOWN CAMPUS

EDUCATION (CURRICULUM) COURSE

FEBRUARY 1996

INTRODUCTION

The COTEP document of July 1995, entitled "Norms and Standards for Teacher Education in South Africa", is part of an endeavour to establish a national policy on teacher education. It outlines a radical paradigm shift away from a content, additive product model (listed subjects to be covered in the curriculum) and a move towards a process model in terms of agreed-upon aims and competences, taking into account the context in which teacher education is to occur. Teacher education institutions have the freedom to devise their own curricula taking account of broad fields of study and practice. Innovative and creative curriculum development is deliberately encouraged.

In line with the COTEP document, Promat aims to

educate and train teachers to teach effectively in order to facilitate learning, recognising the full complexity of the South African context (COTEP: 1995, 6).

Promat believes that "teacher education should prepare teachers to be active and reflective members of the teaching profession" (COTEP: 1995, 12).

Teachers must be empowered to become autonomous, flexible, creative and responsible agents of change in response to the educational challenges of the day and in relation to the espoused aims of education in South Africa (COTEP: 1995,13).

GENERAL AIMS OF THE COURSE

1. For the teacher to reflect on and evaluate his/her classroom practices so as to develop a pedagogy which is in keeping with democratic values, accountable to a range of educational stakeholders and is sensitive to his/her pupils' and the community's developmental needs.

2. This programme aims to assist the learners to develop their understanding of the social and political context of schooling and to enable them to instigate and implement educational change within their schools.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learner will be able to:

1. Access information from a variety of sources - printed, audio and visual media, personal and other peoples' observation and experiences.
 - Use a library classification system.
 - Find books, videos and audio tapes in a library.
 - Find relevant articles in journals.
 - Use a contents page of a book or journal.
 - Use the index of a book.
 - Develop an interview questionnaire.
 - Interview people.
 - Make observations of educational events.

2. Record information and opinions in oral, written and graphic forms.
 - Structure the presentation of ideas in a logical and systematic manner.
 - Present information in graphic form.
 - Summarise passages in own words.
 - Present a logical argument.
 - Select the medium best suited to the purpose of the

presentation.

3. Analyse information to assess its validity and relevance for classroom practice.

- Draw inferences based on the "facts" presented.
- Perceive and make relationships by recognising patterns, trends, and emphases in written and oral arguments and discussions.
- Describe the meaning and message of a written and oral discussion.
- Test personal analytic procedures against those of authorities in Education.

4. Solve problems which are preventing him/her from getting things done.

- Analyse and evaluate personal problem-solving processes.
- Define a problem.
- Select an appropriate problem solving strategy.
- Implement and evaluate solutions.

5. Identify and clarify values which influence his/her decisions.

- Clarify personal values which shape the understanding and organisation of personal experiences.
- Identify cultural and societal values which shape personal and group understanding and organisation of experiences.
- Analyse how values impact upon change and vice versa.
- Analyse and explain the values contained in various approaches to teaching and learning and educational policy documents.
- Clarify and explain the values which underpin the learner's perspective of his/her role as a teacher.

6. Get things done by working in co-operation with other people.

- Assess his/her effectiveness as a member of a work team.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of other members in the achievement of team outputs.
- Motivate and manage team members in the achievement of team outputs.
- Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills when with

individuals and groups.

7. Make informed judgements and test them against the views of other people.
 - Assess his/her knowledge, skills and values on educational issues.
 - Make objective judgements based on rational thinking and supported by the views of authoritative sources.
 - Articulate clearly personal points of view.
 - Test his/her views against the views of others.
 - Listen and respond to the points of view expressed by other people.
 - Demonstrate a willingness to modify and change personal points of view after have discussed them with other people.

8. Make a meaningful contribution to the up-liftment of the quality of life in his/her community.
 - Assess the educational and other needs of his/her community.
 - Prioritise needs.
 - Select appropriate strategies to satisfy identified needs.
 - Identify and utilise the human and material resources which can be utilised to satisfy community needs.
 - Plan and implement community up-liftment programmes.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of programmes.

CONTENT OF COURSE

1. Definitions of curriculum: towards choosing an operational definition.

2. Developing the Primary School Curriculum.
 - a) Some models of curriculum development (eg the Tyler model, Walker's naturalistic model, action research, centrally-based curriculum development, school-based curriculum development)

b) The notion of the "reflective teacher".

c) Theories of Curriculum

- The Traditionalist Paradigm

- The Hermeneutic Paradigm

- The Critical Paradigm

3. The Self-evaluating school.

a) Determining the curriculum needs of a school.

b) School effectiveness.

c) Curriculum development and change within institutional settings.

d) Planning, managing and evaluating change.

STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING AIMS

1. Establish teachers' notions of the concept of curriculum, teaching and learning prior to embarking on the course. This will be done through a questionnaire.

2. Both lecturer and students will embark on a process of action research for a 4 month period. Action research is a cyclical process which allows teachers (within a group or individually) to take responsibility for researching solutions to their problems.

3. Action research is:

a way of thinking and systematically assessing what is happening in a classroom or school, implementing action to improve or change a situation or behaviour, monitoring and evaluating the effects of the action with a view to continuing improvement (Thomson).

4. Formal lectures will be given whenever it is necessary for the students to be provided with content information.
 5. The students will be divided into tutorial groups. Conversational and problem-solving teaching/learning strategies will be used frequently in tutorial sessions.
 6. Students will be expected to prepare themselves for the tutorial sessions by having read an article or having prepared a short discussion paper. They will be expected to participate in tutorial group discussions.
 7. Students will be required to present assignments to their tutorial groups. Presentations will at times be done individually and at other times in syndicate groups.
 8. Assignments will take the form of problem-solving activities whenever possible. A problem will be posed and the students will be required to use a variety of resources to develop solutions to the problem.
-

APPENDIX B
PART I

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

A. BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

1. What is your sex?

Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. What is your age?

20 - 30	<input type="checkbox"/>
31 - 40	<input type="checkbox"/>
41 - 50	<input type="checkbox"/>
51 - 60	<input type="checkbox"/>
61 +	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What is your marital status?

Single	<input type="checkbox"/>
Married	<input type="checkbox"/>
Living Together	<input type="checkbox"/>
Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Separated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How many years full-time teaching experience do you have?

0 - 1 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 - 5 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 - 10 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 - 20 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 + Years	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Describe the area in which your school is situated.

Rural	<input type="checkbox"/>
Urban	<input type="checkbox"/>
Township	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. What category of pupils do you teach?

SSA - SSB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Std 1 - Std 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Std 3 - Std 5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Std 6 - Std 10	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. On average, how many pupils do you usually teach per class?

0 - 20	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 - 30	<input type="checkbox"/>
31 - 40	<input type="checkbox"/>
41 - 50	<input type="checkbox"/>
51 - 70	<input type="checkbox"/>
71 +	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. What is your official school post that you currently hold or previously held if you have resigned?

Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head of Subject	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head of Phase	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head of Department	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deputy Principal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principal	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. At what educational institution did you gain your initial teaching qualification (Primary Teachers' Certificate)?

10. You are presently studying for the final year of your Primary Teachers' Diploma. At which institution did you obtain your M+2 qualification?

Promat College	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vista	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cesa	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lyceum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: Please name	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Do you intend to study further for another qualification?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maybe	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. If you answered 'Yes' to the last question, for what type of qualification do you intend to study?

B. PERSONAL VIEWS ABOUT TEACHING

1. What was the main reason for your decision to become a teacher?

2. What would you say is the main aim of education?

3. What does the term "curriculum" mean to you?

4. What sort of attitudes and values would you like the children whom you teach to learn from you?

5. What are your views on discipline and punishment in schools?

6. What is the best method of teaching primary school children?

7. What teaching methods do you use most often in your teaching? Please give reasons for your choice of methods.

8. Without additional resources, how could you as a teacher improve the quality of teaching and learning at your school?

9. Do you think physical resources and facilities are the MOST important signs of a good school? Please give a reason for your answer.

10. What qualities do you think identify a teacher as a professional?

11. What should the role of the community be in your school?

12a. How should schools change in the new South Africa?

b. Who is responsible for bringing about changes in schools?

13. What do you hope to gain by doing this curriculum course?

APPENDIX B

PART II

SYNOPSIS OF THE INITIAL TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Biographical Details

Most of the class :

1. are women
2. are between 31 and 40 years old
3. are married
4. have between 11 and 20 years full-time teaching experience
5. teach in rural schools
6. either teach SSA-SSB or Std 3 - 5
7. have 41 - 50 pupils or 51 - 70 pupils in their classes
8. are teachers. It is interesting to note that 9 are principals
9. gained their P.T.C. from Madadeni College of Education
10. gained their M+2 from Promat College
11. intend studying **further**
12. intend studying for an H.D.E.

Personal views about teaching

1. What was the main reason for your decision to become a teacher?

Many students gave more than one reason:

- 19 comments were concerned with helping the African community and educating the Black nation
- 19 comments were concerned with an interest in and love for young children and their development
- 3 students had an excellent teacher who stood as a role model for them, whom they could imitate, while another was motivated because, as a pupil, had enjoyed going to school so much
- 3 students had family (aunt of father) who motivated them
- 2 were motivated by the status of teaching and 1 student by the high salary (I hadn't noticed!)
- 1 student was motivated by the school holidays; another, as a woman, enjoyed afternoons off to be with her children
- 2 commented that by becoming teachers they could educate themselves
- 1 enjoyed working and communicating with people in general

2. What would you say is the main aim of education?

Students sometimes gave more than 1 answer:

- to facilitate in order that pupils can face the future successfully and have a better standard of living (8)
- for pupils to get more knowledge (8)
- for enlightenment (8), while 1 spoke of empowerment
- to ensure that people get employment / good jobs (5)

- nation-building (4)
- develop whole human physically, mentally, emotionally in order to achieve future success (3)
- help child to become independent and responsible (3)
- develop communication, especially English literacy (3)
- educate community with skills to be successful (3)
- teach children new subjects, new methods (3)
- help children learn to socialise (2)
- develop a child to adulthood (2)
- teach a child to read, write and learn (1)

3. What does the term “curriculum” mean to you?

26 responses were very similar: Curriculum is all work set to be done in a particular year. It is planned and organised. It is the syllabus, subjects, programme, course, studies or timetable and it generally occurs in a classroom.

Other answers were as follows:

- a system of education (2)
- changing of methods of teaching in order to develop independent thinking (2)
- subjects, school management, rules and regulations to help child develop (2)
- general umbrella of all that is done at school, subjects and sport (2)
- guidelines for making education meaningful and acceptable (1)
- arrangement and structure to be followed when teaching (1)
- material needed to maintain the school process (1)
- planned activities that are to be done at school to help a child grow intellectually, physically and emotionally (1)
- effective teaching with the help of resources (1)

My comments:

The 26 similar responses remind me of definition number 3 (Department of Education, Ireland, 1980):

Curriculum will be taken to mean simply the range of subjects, with their individual syllabi, that are approved for study at a particular level.

This refers mainly to the formal curriculum and it implies a teacher-centred philosophy as it does not take learner needs into account. It also implies that teachers are implementers of a received curriculum, they are disempowered from any form of curriculum decision-making. The curriculum is a “blueprint for instruction” (Pratt, 1994).

The other student comments offer a little more breadth with words like ‘guidelines’, ‘meaningful education’, ‘materials / resources’, ‘structure / management’, ‘whole development of the child’, ‘independent thinking’ and ‘methodologies’.

The comment “general umbrella of all that is done at school” accords with definition no 2 (American Educational Research Association’s Encyclopaedia of Educational Research) and no 6 (Kerr, 1968).

No student mentioned values, ethos, relationships, aims, transparency, unintended learning outcomes, hidden curriculum, control of curriculum, assessment and learner needs.

4. What sort of attitudes and values would you like the children whom you teach to learn from you?

Students believe that teachers should be good role models and good leaders and they should have a positive attitude. Values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, loyalty, dedication, service, self-discipline, self-confidence, obedience, humour, punctuality, harmony, co-operation, willingness, independence, freedom, helpfulness, equality, empathy, courage, trust, kindness, perseverance, accuracy and cleanliness were mentioned. One student mentioned the importance of one's own culture while another mentioned the importance of a reading culture.

5. What are your views on discipline and punishment in schools?

22 comments suggested that discipline is essential in schools. 14 comments viewed punishment as acceptable as long as it was viewed in a 'good way', i.e. one uses reinforcement techniques. 12 students firmly stated that punishment was not needed as it is outdated and only results in pupil fear and anxiety. 8 students specifically mentioned corporal punishment as being unacceptable.

One student suggested that a change from traditional methods of teaching would reduce the need for punishment. Another student maintained that if pupils were kept busy there would also be less need for punishment. Yet another student suggested that parents should be consulted and the student problem discussed before resorting to punishment. One interesting comment suggested that punishment should be done according to one's culture and, in the case of the Black African, discipline and punishment play an important role.

6. What is the best method of teaching primary school children?

Again students sometimes mentioned more than one method:

16 students felt that group work is the best method of teaching primary school children. Reasons were given such as the chance for children to initiate work on their own, expression of own ideas, co-operation and sharing, problem-solving, participation with lots of activity which will lead to enjoyment.

10 students referred to the progressive method of teaching as being the best method because it is learner-centred with the teacher as facilitator.

6 comments involved the use of teaching aids as concrete examples to stimulate the child. This could link to the 4 comments about discovery learning using all senses.

Story-telling, dramatisation and games were also mentioned.

Two students commented that there was no one best method, different methods were used depending on the subject and circumstance.

One student suggested that drill was the best method while another said that action research was!

7. What teaching methods do you use most often in your teaching? Please give reasons for your choice of method.

A multitude of answers were given:

- Group : 12
- Telling method (do and say) : 12
- Progressive/ learner-centred/ discovery: 11
- Question & answer : 9
- Discussion : 8
- Narrative : 4
- Dramatisation: 2

Some interesting comments from students:

“Before I came here (to Promat) ,I thought I was the only person responsible for talking and doing things, not the child”/

“Question / answer method is used because children are familiar with it”.

“Story-telling is used because there are no books in our schools”.

8. Without additional resources, how could you as a teacher improve the quality of teaching and learning at your school?

- 4 students believe it to be impossible
- Correct methods / Progressive approach with pupil involvement through discovery, discussion and group work : 14
- Creation of teaching / learning aids out of newspapers etc. : 8
- Using Action Research : 6
- Using the available resources effectively: 5
- Excursions: 3
- Discussion of problems and their solutions with colleagues: 3
- Inclusion of parents and community: 2
- Use of outside expert (READ) in development of a reading corner: 2
- Remedial work: 1
- Generate an income through concerts: 1
- Only a few students suggested improved teacher qualifications, increased numbers of qualified teachers and more extensive reading by teachers in order to acquire more knowledge

9. Do you think physical resources and facilities are the MOST important signs of a good school? Please give a reason for your answer.

28 Students answered YES, (i.e. 74%).

Comments:

- “Without them formal teaching cannot occur”.
- “Without resources, self-discovery in subjects, e.g. science, cannot occur”.
- “A lack of resources leads to rote learning and memorisation”.
- “We need to have pride in a good, beautiful school”.
- “Yes because they can be used by our grand-children”!!
- “They are good because pupils sit on them”!!

10 Students answered NO, (i.e. 26%).

Comments:

- “The most important sign is the quality of the teacher and his dedication to his work”.
- “A good quality education can be produced under the trees, depending on the teacher”.
- “Physical resources and facilities are partially good. But if a teacher does not perform his work thoroughly and also if pupils do not attend school regularly, then teaching will be a failure.

10. What qualities do you think identify a teacher as a professional?

Students seemed to find this question difficult to answer. 6 students (16%) left this answer blank. It might be a good idea to build into the Curriculum Work Programme some discussion and debate around the topic : The teacher as a professional.

- 9 students mentioned that the quality of a teacher is measured by the quality and understanding of and his relationship with his learners
- 8 students suggested that the use of different and improved teaching methods is a measure
- 8 students suggested co-operation with colleagues, communication, support of principal and staff, as well as the manner in which you approach people
- 7 students mentioned exemplary behaviour and leadership qualities
- 7 students mentioned commitment, dedication, diligence and perseverance
- Self-discipline, honesty, empathy, responsibility, humour, loyalty, friendliness, humour, punctuality, respect, acceptance of criticism, dress, flexibility, impartiality, cleanliness and intrinsic motivation were also mentioned
- 8 students mentioned certification , qualifications, knowledge and ongoing learning as important

One student is of the opinion that “a professional teacher differs from an unqualified teacher because of his methods and he knows how to handle problems”.

My response is a question: Do all qualified teachers behave in a professional manner?

11. What should the role of the community be in your school?

- 23 students were of the opinion that the community should communicate with and help teachers

by discussing pupil problems, needs and progress

“Parents should know that school is for their kids”.

- 8 students believed that parents should be responsible for school buildings, furniture, equipment and books
- 7 responses were broad: parents should take part in school activities
- 1 student felt that parents should take responsibility for feeding children
- Yet another felt that parents should provide teachers with accommodation and protect them!

12 a. How should schools change in the new South Africa?

- 7 responses saw the need for 1 education system
- 11 mentioned democracy in order that there be equality of educational opportunity, especially in the rural areas
- 11 mentioned new progressive methods in order to improve teaching
- 5 mentioned more facilities
- 5 mentioned the mixing of pupils of all races in multi-racial schools
- 3 mentioned relationships with parents and the community
- 3 suggested an increase in the number of teachers (1 : 35)
- 4 suggested improved teacher qualifications, in-service training and workshops
- 2 suggested that education should be compulsory

Further comments:

“There should be pre-schools and combined schools should be abolished”.

“Schools should be relevant with subjects that relate to the wider world”.

“Model C schools should be abolished because only privileged people can go there”.

3 students wanted Model C schools abolished in order to obtain equality. I wonder whether rural schools could not aspire to dramatic change and Model C status as a long term vision?? Is this too idealistic?

12 b. Who is responsible for bringing about changes in schools?

- teachers : 27
- community: 16
- pupils: 13
- principals: 2
- government: 10
- education departments: 10
- parents: 8
- inspectors: 8
- planners: 3
- S.R.C.'s : 1

13. What do you hope to gain by doing this curriculum course?

- 15 students mentioned skills to make them better teachers in order that they could bring about

change in their schools

- 8 students mentioned increased teaching knowledge
- 5 hoped to gain new teaching methods
- 3 wished to develop themselves further as professionals with confidence
- 3 hoped to be able to plan a better curriculum which would suit their needs
- 2 wished to be involved in their own decision-making in their schools
- a higher level of education: 1
- draw up timetables successfully: 1
- see correlation between subjects: 1

MY CONCLUDING COMMENTS

It seems to me that the M+3 Promat students see a need for change in their schools and they are aware of changes at a macro level. Most agree in theory with the notion of teachers as curriculum shapers : most are very keen to become empowered. Yet they are unaware of the vastness of the curriculum issue and view curriculum only as the formal subjects , courses and syllabuses offered at schools.

Majority of the students see the need for a learner-centred approach in their schools. They feel empowered to bring about change in their own classrooms with a shift from their previous traditional methods of teaching to more progressive methods of teaching and learning. It can be mentioned here that approximately 70% of these students were at Promat during 1995 where they were briefly exposed to the traditional versus the progressive debate as well as to Action Research.

There is little mention at this stage of a broader curriculum definition which includes the school ethos, values, relationships, unplanned learning outcomes, and so on. At present it is my view that students are in the technical stages of curriculum development: they are implementers of a 'received curriculum'. They need exposure to broader curriculum definitions as well as knowledge and practical advice about how to become more involved in curriculum development.

STUDENT SPELLING ERRORS TO BE MENTIONED:

- sick (seek)
- pier (peer)
- collic (colleague)
- device (vb: devise)
- defer (differ)
- carrier (career)
- representative (representative)

APPENDIX C
M ED COURSEWORK NOTES (1996)
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL - PIETERMARITZBURG

**WHAT IS CURRICULUM?
RANGE AND SCOPE**

Consider and compare the definitions of curriculum below. These differ quite markedly in scope, as you will see, and collectively they may confuse rather than illuminate. However, if we are thinking of planning a curriculum, what is a **reasonable operational definition**? Please write down your thoughts on this issue. Your definition of curriculum does not have to be elegantly phrased: you may prefer simply to list the elements that it includes. That's fine. Perhaps you may wish to draw on the various given definitions and list what our operational definition of curriculum should not include. Don't be intimidated by this exercise. There is no "true" definition in the absolute sense or one that is permanently valid, but some definitions may be more useful than others if we are thinking of planning a curriculum.

SOME DEFINITIONS OF "CURRICULUM"

1. "Course (of study)" (Oxford Concise Dictionary).
'Curriculum' is derived from the Latin work currere "to run";
curriculum being a diminutive form meaning a chariot race or race track.
2. "..... all the experiences a learner has under the guidance of the school",
(*American Educational Research Association's Encyclopaedia of Educational Research*).
3. "Curriculum will be taken to mean simply the range of subjects, with their individual syllabi, that are approved for study at a particular level" (*Department of Education, Ireland, 1980*).
4. "..... a plan for teaching and instruction Curriculum is analogous to the set of blueprints from which a house is constructed. A curriculum can be viewed as a blueprint for instruction" (*Pratt, 1994*).

5. "A school's curriculum consists of all those activities designed or encouraged within its organisation framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its pupils. It includes not only the formal programme of lessons, but also the 'informal' programme of so-called extracurricular activities as well as those features which produce the school's 'ethos', such as the quality of relationships, the concern for equality of opportunity, the values exemplified in the way the school sets about its task and the way in which it is organised and managed" (*Department of Education and Science, UK, 1985*).
6. "... All learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school" (*J F Kerr, 1968*).
7. [The curriculum is the] "range of compulsory and optional activities formally planned for an individual by a school" (*R Tunmer, 1981*).
8. "..... those learning experiences or succession of such experiences that are purposefully arranged by formal educational organisations" (*Musgrave, 1973*).
9. "..... the content of education (what is taught), the pedagogy (how that content is transmitted), and evaluation (the methods used to ascertain whether the content has been internalised and understood)" (*Salater and Tapper, 1981*).
10. "Curriculum is the planned composite effort of any school to guide pupil learning toward predetermined learning outcomes." (*Inlow, 1966*).
11. [The curriculum is] "a selection from a culture" (*D Lawton, 1983*).
12. "... The planned structuring of the educational ideals of a school in accordance with the psychological needs of the pupils, the facilities that are available, and the cultural requirements of the time" (*D Warwick, 1974*).
13. [The curriculum] "..... with its component syllabuses, embraces and defines no more and no less than the content of education. As a consequence any consideration of the curriculum in education must, of necessity, include what is taught; by whom it is taught; the spirit in which it is taught; who prescribes what is to be taught and whether those to whom it is taught want it to be taught" (*Maurice, 1982*).
14. "A curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice" (*L Stenhouse, 1975*).

15. "Curriculum is concerned not with what students will do in the learning situation, but with what they will learn as a consequence of what they do. Curriculum is concerned with results" (*M Johnstone, cited in J Wiles and J C Bondi, 1984*).
16. The curriculum "effectively comprehends the sum of experiences to which a child is exposed at school" (*1977 Report of the Taylor Committee, cited in the Time Education Supplement, 13/10.87*).
17. "..... a child's curriculum in a give day of his life is all that he experiences from the moment of his waking to the moment of his falling asleep" (*R C Doll, 1989*).
18. "The curriculum is an elaborate device to fill the available time" (*Anon*).
19. "A curriculum will include a listing of content, but there will also be a detailed analysis of other elements such as aims and objectives, learning experiences and evaluation, and explicit recommendations for integrating them for optimal effect" (*Marsh and Stafford, 1988*).
20. "A broad curriculum is the collection of subjects/instructional offerings, their structuring and related requirements, with which provision is made for the pursuit of an aim with a particular target group" (*A Curriculum Model for South Africa, 1991*).
21. "The curriculum embodies social relationships. It is drawn up by particular groups of people; it reflects particular points of view and values; it is anchored in the experiences of particular social groups; and it produces particular patterns of success and failure. Assumptions about what counts as valuable knowledge, as basic skills and as essential learning experiences for the curriculum are themselves socially influenced and contested. Viewed in this way, the curriculum can never be neutral or stand outside of patterns of power" (*Pam Christie, 1992*).
22. "..... no one has yet produced a definition of the curriculum that is generally acceptable, even in educational circles" (*Pen University, 1976*).

23. “The curriculum is understood to be more than syllabus documentation. It refers to all of the teaching and learning activities that take place in learning institutions. It includes:

- the aims and objectives of the education system as well as the specific goals of learning institutions
- what is taught : the underlying values, the selection of content, how it is arranged into subjects, programmes and syllabuses, and what skills and processes are included
- the strategies of teaching and learning and the relationships between teachers and learners
- the forms of assessment and evaluation which are used
- how the curriculum is serviced and resourced, including the organisation of learners, and of time and space, and the materials and resources that are made available
- how the curriculum reflect the needs and interests of those it serves including learners, teachers, the community, the nation, the employers and the economy”
(ANC : A Policy Framework for Education and Training).

APPENDIX D
HANDOUT ONE

M+3 : EDUCATION (CURRICULUM) COURSE

1 MARCH 1996

Greetings to my favourite group!

You have now had two weeks to discuss in groups and reflect on the three pages of curriculum definitions I handed out to you. I am unable to be present in your tutorial session on Monday but I would like you to do the following for me:

On the A4 sheets given to you I would like you to write down your answers to the following questions. Remember that this is NOT a test! You will not be awarded a mark for your answers. Neither is there any right or wrong answer. I simply want your personal responses to the questions. This will be the starting point for further interaction with the group regarding curriculum issues on Friday.

Please be as honest as possible as this will be the stimulus for an exciting Friday session.

1. Which definition did you like the most?
Give reasons for your answer.

2. Which definition did you like the least?
Give reasons for your answer.

3. Which definition(s) did you not understand?
What are the possible reasons for this?

4. Did your discussion group help you in understanding the definitions better? If yes, in what ways did the group give assistance?

5. Do you think there is ONE right definition of curriculum?
Give a reason for your answer.

6. At this early stage of the year, what do you think your own personal definition of curriculum would be?

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY: HANDOUT ONE

COMMENTS ON HANDOUT NO. 1 OF 1 / 4 MARCH 1996

Preamble:

I received in 39 of the 42 reflections books from the group. Three students were unable to hand their books in:

- Ms Albertina Mhlongo: Problems with study leave, had to resign her job in order to remain at Promat.
- Ms Sizakele Dlamini: Death of her three week old child.
- Ms Ruth Zwane: Illness

One student, Ms Nokuphiwa Madlala, left out the answers to Hand out 1, although the rest of the hand outs were answered.

Another student, Ms Nonkululeko Mthembu, left out the answers to Hand out 1, questions 1 - 3, but answered questions 4 - 6.

1. Which definition did you like the most? Give reasons for your answer.

Def 23: A.N.C. 18 / 37 49 %

Reasons given were that it is broad, covering all aspects of the curriculum. It is logical and clear, being in point form.

Def 5: Dept of Education & Science: 13 / 37 35%

Reasons given were that it covered the whole development of the child as well as the formal, informal and extra-curricular aspects. It also covers school ethos, organisation, relationships and values.

Def 6: Kerr: 3 / 37 8%

Emphasis was placed on the words planned, guided, individuals and groups

Def 3: Dept of Education (Ireland): 2 / 37 5%

Emphasis was placed on subjects, syllabi at a particular level.

Def 13: Maurice: 1 / 37 3%

Emphasis on what is taught, ethos, by whom etc.

2. Which definition did you like the least? Give reasons for your answer.

Def 11: Lawton: 7 / 37 19%
It was felt that the definition is too vague. Not only culture is to be considered in developing a curriculum. Further it was felt that the definition reminds them of the Apartheid curriculum, 'whose' culture?

Def 7: Tunmer: 6 / 37 16%
Various comments here:
- "Curriculum here is planned for an individual; a curriculum must be of a national standard in order to enable everyone to gain more information".
- "A curriculum should not be compulsory".
- "What about the individual's planning of the curriculum?"

Def 1: Oxford Concise Dictionary 5 / 37 13,5%
Not all aspects of a curriculum are included. Pupil needs are not considered. A chariot race has nothing to do with lessons.

Def 2: American Educational Research Encyclopaedia 3 / 37 8%

3 / 37 students misread the question, misunderstanding the term 'least'. 8%

Def 3: Dept of Education (Ireland): 2 / 37 5%
Curriculum does not only consist of subjects but also is concerned with the whole development of the child as well as with relationships.

Def 15: Johnstone: 2 / 37 5%

Def 23: A.N.C.: 1 / 37 2,8%
(Too long-winded and confusing)

Def 17: Doll: 1 / 37 2,8%

Def 18: Anon: 1 / 37 2,8%

Def 10: Inlow: 1 / 37 2,8%

Def 4: Pratt: 1 / 37 2,8%

Def 22: Open University 1 / 37 2,8%

Def 21: Christie: 1 / 37 2,8%

Def 19: Marsh & Stafford 1 / 37 2,8%

Def 6: Kerr: 1 / 37 2,8%

3. Which definition(s) did you not understand? What are the possible reasons for this?

Students sometimes gave more than one answer to this question.

Def 11: Lawton: 18 students
The nature of culture is not clear. Whose culture? Other cultures are neglected, a reminder of the Apartheid curriculum.

Def 18: Anon: 8 students
What time is available to be filled?

Def 4: Pratt: 5 students
This is too inflexible. House-building is not the same as curriculum-building.

Def 15: Johnstone 5 students
Is curriculum concerned with results?

Def 7: Tunmer 4 students
The Department of Education should plan for different regions and schools. Schools cannot plan curricular.

Def 1: Oxford Dictionary 4 students
What has running of a race to do with curriculum?

Def 22: Open University 2 students

Def 17: Doll: 1 student
Can each individual have his own unique curriculum?

Def 14: Stenhouse: 2 students

Def 23: A.N.C. 1 student

Def 2: American Encyclopaedia: 1 student

Def 20: Curriculum model for S.A. 1 student

Def 16: Times Education Supplement 1 student

4. Did your discussion group help you in understanding the definitions better? If yes, in what ways did the group give assistance?

YES: 35 / 38 92%

Reasons: Group work helps with understanding of concepts, sharing of ideas and making of comparisons. Members analysed and explained words, sometimes with the help of dictionaries. Some students mentioned that through group discussion their original definition was extended to include values and evaluation.

The following comments felt sound to me:

- “ I realised that you don’t necessarily have to agree on one definition of curriculum”.
- “ I used to think that a curriculum is always drawn up by the Department of Education concerning syllabus. Therefore I’ve perceived from my group that whatsoever the teachers plan ahead for the school, its also curriculum”.

NO: 3 / 38 8%

Reasons: Many definitions are similar. There is little group understanding because each member has a different meaning of curriculum.

5. Do you think there is ONE right definition of curriculum? Give a reason for your answer.

NO, there is not. 34 / 38 89%

Comments:

- “ One defines curriculum according to one’s understanding, and is guided by the community and its influence”.
- “ No, because there are differing needs, e.g. urban and rural”.
- “ There are many different approaches (and philosophies) to teaching and so teaching / learning is changing constantly, so curriculum definitions are going to differ”.
- “ There is one definition I like most, but that doesn’t mean that the others are wrong”.

YES, there is. 4 / 38 11%

Majority of these students suggested that the A.N.C. definition (no. 23) is the ONE right one.

6. At this early stage of the year, what do you think your own personal definition of curriculum would be?

This question was not clearly answered but certain trends were evident:

- arrangement of school subjects, the programme, what must be taught at different levels
- activities that promote intellectual, physical and emotional development of a child
- curriculum is fully planned on a long-term basis which aims to achieve adulthood
- all learning activities, experiences and aspects inside and outside the school
- the formal and informal curriculum
- must include the needs of teachers, pupils, parents and communities (bear in mind background)
- teachers must be more involved to make subjects meaningful in rural areas
- categories of the A.N.C. definition were very popular
- COTEP quote (1995): Teachers must be empowered to become autonomous, flexible, creative and responsible agents of change...

MY PERSONAL COMMENTS:

A few students are using Fundamental Pedagogics terminology, such as 'educator', 'educand' and 'leading a child to adulthood'. Majority of the students using this terminology were not at Promat last year and have not been involved in the philosophical discussion around this language choice.

It is important for students to know that not all 23 definitions have the same meaning. Would it not be a good idea to group them in terms of their different trends? This could be done as a class activity.

There needs to be more discussion around definition no.11 by Lawton: "The curriculum is a selection from culture". 'Whose culture'? Link this to the Apartheid curriculum. Can we have a culture-free curriculum? Link this idea to def 21 (Christie) as well as def 14 (Stenhouse) who mentions a 'proposal' which is 'open to critical scrutiny'.

Explain def. 18 (Anon) If this is true, do we want to remain in the teaching profession?

Some students still see teachers as 'curriculum receivers'. They speak of the Department developing the curriculum and then passing it on to inspectors who, in turn, pass it on to principals. Principals guide teachers in implementing it, using 'new' methods such as the progressive method, group work and discovery learning.

One student though does see the need for teachers becoming involved in curriculum development:

“ During the past years we received the curriculum from someone or a number of people from the department. They drew up the curriculum having never or not for a long period of time been exposed to the school situation. According to the present Government, each province is going to have a committee from different regions who are going to draw up the curriculum. These committee members will be people who are exposed to the school atmosphere and who know what is needed in the society. The curriculum must be flexible”.

This change at macro level must be explained to the class. Must teachers be involved in this process? Is it possible? Can we educate and empower teachers to become curriculum developers?

Finally discussion around def 17 (Doll). A child’s curriculum is determined by his own unique needs? Is this feasible in a school situation?

STUDENT SPELLING ERRORS TO BE MENTIONED

quiet / quite
defanition (definition)
colique (colleague)
clearlly (clearly)
arose (arise)
curicullum (curriculum)
simmilar (similar)
pyschologist (psychologist)
speciffically (specifically)
assesment (assessment)
exactly (exactly)
creatised (criticised)
cause (course)
openion (opinion)

APPENDIX D
HANDOUT TWO

M+3 : EDUCATION (CURRICULUM) COURSE

11 MARCH 1996

This week's work:

We have now had class discussions on Friday and today regarding the list of definitions of curriculum. I wonder if you have changed some of your ideas from your writing and reflections of the 1 March? Have the discussions given you more insight into the meaning of curriculum?

Answer the questions below in your books, reflecting on today's lecture and any new ideas you may have.

Remember that this is NOT a test! You will not be awarded a mark for your answers. Neither is there any right or wrong answer. I simply want your personal responses to the questions.

1. Which definition(s) did you like the most?
Is it the same definition as the one you chose last week?
Give reasons for your answer.

2. Which definition(s) did you like the least?
Is it the same definition as the one you chose last week?
Give reasons for your answer.

3. Following our class discussions, what new thoughts/ideas do you have regarding the concept curriculum?

4. Has your own personal definition of curriculum changed or evolved following our discussions? Discuss.

5. Looking at all 23 definitions, could they be grouped into any particular categories? What types of categories might one use? (You may like to reflect on the Education 2 course of 1995: please team up with and help the new class members who were not students at Promat last year).

** Please read the chapter entitled "Tyler's model of curriculum....." for Friday.

Thanks!

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY: HANDOUT TWO

COMMENTS ON HANDOUT NO. 2 OF 11 MARCH 1996

1. Which definition did you like the most? Is it the same definition as the one you chose last week?

Def 5: Dept of Education and Science:	18 / 39	46%
Def 23: A.N.C.:	15 / 39	38%
Def 14: Stenhouse:	2 / 39	5%
Def 13: Maurice:	1 / 39	2,75%
Def 21: Christie:	1 / 39	2,75%
Def 6: Kerr:	1 / 39	2,75%
Def 12: Warwick :	1 / 39	2,75%
Change in choice from last week:	18 / 39	46%
Same choice as last week:	21 / 39	54%

2. Which definition did you like the least? Is it the same definition as the one you chose last week?

Def 11: Lawton:	9 / 39	23%
Def 18: Anon:	5 / 39	13%
Def 7: Tunmer:	5 / 39	13%
Def 4: Pratt:	3 / 39	8%
Def 22: Open University:	3 / 39	8%
Def 6: Kerr	2 / 39	5%
Def 2: American Educational Encyclopaedia	2 / 39	5%
Def 1: Oxford Dictionary	2 / 39	5%
Def 15: Johnstone	2 / 39	5%
Misreading of question	2 / 39	5%

Def 3: Dept of Education (Ireland)	2 / 39	5%
Def 14: Stenhouse	1 / 39	2,5%
Def 23: A.N.C. :	1 / 39	2,5%
Change in choice from last week:	28 / 39	72%
Same choice as last week:	11 / 39	28%

3. Following our class discussions, what new thoughts / ideas do you have regarding the concept curriculum?

- Formal / informal aspects:	19 students
- learner needs, experiences / whole learner development:	16 students
- planning (aims) but there must be flexibility (proposal)	13 students
- involvement of teachers, parents, community, pupils	12 students
- values and ethos	10 students
- which are open to scrutiny, clearly stated	5 students
- methods, content, assessment:	5 students
- relationships	5 students
- not drawn up by an individual but by a group	2 students
* each school should have its own curricula according to its own needs	1 student
* never be neutral or stand outside of patterns of power	1 student
* what about the unofficial, unplanned or unintended learning outcomes?	1 student
* who selects the knowledge and who decides how it should be taught?	1 student

The 4 points marked with an (*) need to be discussed and debated further in class.

4. Has your own personal definition of curriculum changed or evolved following our discussions?

YES	27 / 39	69%
NO	9 / 39	23 %
NOT MUCH	3 / 39	8%

5. Categorising of the curriculum definitions.

Students found this question difficult. It needs to be discussed further in class.

-Teacher-centred vs learner centred or Mc Gregor theory X vs Y or Psychometric vs Phenomenological	19 students
- Action research and reflection	3 students
- Norms and values	2 students
- Effectiveness in practice	1 student
- Planned vs unplanned	1 student

APPENDIX D
HANDOUT THREE

M + 3 1996 STUDENTS

18 MARCH 1996

1. Is Tyler's model of curriculum planning a good model?

Write a paragraph explaining your answer.

2. Read through the paragraph on Walker's deliberative approach to planning.

Write down your thoughts regarding this model, listing both the positive and negative aspects.

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY: HANDOUT THREE

COMMENTS ON HANDOUT NO. 3 OF 18 MARCH 1996

Preamble

One of the 39 students, Mr Jerome Simelane, did not answer this handout. The total number of students who submitted this work is therefore 38.

1. Is Tyler's model of curriculum planning a good model? Write a paragraph explaining your answer.

YES	32 / 38	85%
-----	---------	-----

- widely used
- clear, common sense
- objective and organised
- rational and logical
- aims and purposes which are:
 - based on learner needs and experiences
 - based on subjects specialists
 - based on society with values
 - philosophical and psychological principles
- teaching activities
- applies to any subject at any level
- content and evaluation

NO	2 / 38	5%
----	--------	----

- ignores informal & extramural curriculum
- does not state why some objectives are chosen and others left out
- does not emphasise inter-relationships
- ignores unintended learning outcomes

BOTH YES AND NO	2 / 38	5%
-----------------	--------	----

NOT ANSWERED	2 / 38	5%
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2. Thoughts regarding Walker's deliberative model.

THE MODEL IS GOOD 20 / 38 53%

- lots of planning
- many people involved
- discussion and debate about what the platform should be (values, beliefs)
- many alternatives, choices need to be made
- how curriculum planning occurs in practice
- 3 logical stages: platform, deliberation, design

NO PERSUASION 18 / 38 47%

Negative aspects:

- time-consuming
- not useful for simple, routine issues or school-based curr dev
- who are the planners?
- are all curr planners enthusiastic and willing to participate?
- many may just keep quiet
- what should be included and why?

GENERAL COMMENTS:

At the time of setting this handout I was involved in management meetings and was seldom able to get to class. The students therefore had to study much of this material on their own. Due to lack of time, hand out no. 3 was set in a hurry with no thought to the structure thereof. It therefore offers a content-based approach with no real measure of true learning outcomes. With the aid of a few chalkboard summaries during lessons students were able to make some sense of what the chapters involved, but there needs to be far more discussion and clarification thereof.

Hand out no. 4, question 2 may offer a more valuable perspective as it involves thought and comparison between Tyler's model, Walker's model and Action Research.

The models may further be understood and misunderstandings ironed out when we move on to the three curriculum paradigms and place the models therein.

STUDENT SPELLING ERRORS TO BE MENTIONED

- deliberation (deliberation)
- curricullum (curriculum)
- clarified (clarified)
- accomodate (accommodate)
- aproach (approach)
- studant (student)
- negetive / nagative (negative)
- behaviours (behaviours: ... discuss america behaviors)
- expiriences (experiences)
- devided (divided)
- sauces / sources

APPENDIX D
HANDOUT FOUR

PROMAT COLLEGE OF EDUCATION: IN-SERVICE

DURBAN CAMPUS

M+3 EDUCATION (CURRICULUM COURSE)

25 MARCH 1996

1. Read through Marsh ch 17 again. It would also be useful to read Davidoff & Van den Berg (1990) on short loan in the library.
 - a. Write down your thoughts about action research for teachers in the classroom.
 - b. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages to using this method?
 - c. Would you use action research in your classroom when you return to your school next year? Give reasons for your answer.

2. Compare Tyler's model and Walker's model of planning with the action research model. What noticeable differences can you see? Which of the 3 models do you prefer? Give reasons for your answer.

3. HOLIDAY ASSIGNMENT:

Read through Marsh ch 18 and 19.
 - a. Which form of curriculum development do you think was used during the South African apartheid era; centrally-based or school-based curriculum development? Give reasons for your answer.

 - b. Which form of curriculum development do you think should be used in the newly formed democratic South Africa; centrally-based or school-based curriculum development? Give reasons for your answer.

*** EXTRA READING

1. Kelly, A.V. (1989)
 - What is the curriculum? (pages 10-15)
 - Planning models (pages 15-18)

2. Reeves, C. (1994)
 - A new vision for education (pages 100-105)
 - Centralisation or decentralisation (106-109)
 - Curriculum & classroom practice (114-127)

3. NEPI (1992)
 - Principles/values underpinning a curriculum for a new South Africa.
 - Centralisation vs decentralisation

ENJOY YOUR EASTER HOLIDAYS!!

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY: HANDOUT FOUR

COMMENTS ON HANDOUT NO. 4 OF 25 MARCH 1996

1a. Thoughts about action research for teachers in the classroom.

A GOOD METHOD FOR TEACHERS TO USE	31 / 39	79%
DID NOT COMMENT	8 / 39	21%

Thoughts:

- useful for monitoring teaching in order to make changes for ongoing improvement / effective teaching	30 students
- learner-centred, participative, collaborative, democratic	16 students
- positive critical comment by facilitator i.o.t understand teaching	8 students
- renews enthusiasm, enjoyment of the teaching / learning situation	6 students
- teachers can become 'architects' in their own classrooms **	4 students
- "action research will do a lot to build the future of our young pupils in S.A." (change from the traditional, teacher-centred method)	3 students
- "action research gives us a mirror image of our teaching / learning situation"	1 student

** The use of the word 'architect' could be used as a stimulus for discussion around the debate regarding teachers as curriculum developers vs teachers as curriculum implementers (analogy: music conductor vs music composer)

1b. Advantages of action research

- improves teaching practice	28 students
- improves teacher self-confidence	26 students
- good staff relationships, team spirit, collaboration	23 students
- understanding of the research process	20 students
- empowerment of teachers	19 students
- willingness to experiment	15 students
- student involvement, good relationships	14 students

Disadvantages of action research

- time-consuming method	35 students
- teachers not free to make changes, esp in rural schools with traditional principals	30 students
- limited impact on staff not involved	27 students
- it might expose the lazy teacher	4 students
- external facilitator may be destructive, pupils may be biased	3 students
- initial insecurity by pupils / learners	2 students
- only good for small classes of pupils	2 students

1c. Would you use action research in your classroom when you return to your school next year?
Give reasons for your answer.

YES 37 / 39 95%

Reasons:

- improve my teaching
- professional development (accept positive criticism)
- better for the learner
- cope with change which will extend to the whole school
- many advantages (discussed in 1b)
- easy to follow

NO 1 / 39 2,5%

Reason:

- "inspectors and my principal won't let me"

DID NOT RESPOND 1 / 39 2,5%

Interesting student quote:

As soon as I return to my school I will introduce action research in my classroom as well as in-service courses for teachers.....

The department used to give us planned schemes of work for teachers to follow.....

Their planning of the curriculum was not flexible. Inspectors visited schools just for criticism. They discouraged teachers instead of encouraging and motivating them. I like action research because it improves teaching practices. It also allows room for a good relationship between teachers and pupils because they have to talk and discuss issues.

2. Compare Tyler's model and Walker's model of planning with the action research model. What noticeable differences can you see? Which of the 3 models do you prefer? Give reasons for your answer.

Many differences yet some similarities, e.g. the different steps. Many students found similarities between Tyler and action research. These seemed to be superficial and sometimes incorrect. More discussion needs to be spent around the 'means / end' concept (intended learning outcomes) as opposed to the cyclical nature of action research with its more regular assessment of its intended and sometimes unintended learning outcomes. Also the question needs to be asked: who are the people who plan the curriculum in each of the three models?

Some interesting quotes:

- "Both Tyler's and Walker's models are controlled by the government whilst in action research the teacher is planning what she wants to teach".
- "Action research does not look for input from curriculum planners and subject specialists but from teachers, pupils and colleagues".

Preference of models:

ACTION RESEARCH	25 / 39	64%
Reasons:		
- empowers teachers and learners		
- critical understanding of teaching, esp in a multi-cultural and diverse S.A.		
- 'critical friend' for support and co-operation		
- individual teachers can become curriculum developers		
WALKER'S MODEL	4 / 39	10%
TYLER'S MODEL	2 / 39	5%
DID NOT MAKE A CHOICE	8 / 39	21%

I added a final question to this hand out, asking students to offer their personal impressions of this Education (Curriculum course) as a whole.

Students' personal comments

- course is relevant, challenging and interesting	14 students
- limited time to collect and do all readings	2 students
- should use 1 book, not these many handouts (readings)	2 students
- lecturer is good, dedicated, loves her work, enthusiastic	7 students
- good relationship between lecturer and her students	2 students
- good use of teaching methods (questioning technique & self-discovery) by lecturer	16 students
- lecturer has too many other management commitments, we miss her presence	10 students
- written work is unmarked, leading to insecurity	2 students
- action research is difficult at first, it becomes better with time. It should be used in all schools. We will explain it to our principals and inspectors: there needs to be week-long workshops for all teachers	7 students
- I have been empowered to develop my own curriculum	3 students

A comment to make me feel a little better:

“She (the lecturer) is a quarry of knowledge herself”. (If only the student knew!)

My own response:

**** Extra 2 x 1 hour sessions per week for the 2nd term:**

- Monday : 9.00 - 10.00 : lecture as normal (Promat observer??)
1.00 - 2.00 : extra period for group discussion
- Tuesday: 1.00 - 2.00 : extra period for journal writing (to be handed in, marked by Friday)
- Friday: 10.00 - 11.00 : lecture as normal (Promat observer??)

**** Try to avoid Promat management from preventing me from getting to class
(Culture of teaching and learning; remember not to lose sight of student focus)**

**** Management and administrative structures in place to cope with the overwhelming growth of Promat Durban, part-time and full-time**

**** Explain to students the reasons for the many handouts (no one textbook covers all aspects of curriculum as I would like it presented). Debate the issue of text book-centredness? Does it allow for teacher / learner needs as well as flexibility? What happened with textbooks during the Apartheid era? Do we want a content-based curriculum?**

APPENDIX E
WORKSHEET TO GUIDE DISCUSSIONS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

EDUCATION (CURRICULUM)

13 MAY 1996

- 1) "Curriculum is a neat, settled and clearly bounded discipline of education". Do you agree with this statement? Discuss.

- 2) Educationists have borrowed the terms "scientific" and "interpretive" paradigms when trying to understand curriculum.
 - a) What does the term paradigm mean?
 - b) List some of the assumptions of the scientific paradigm's model of science.
 - c) List some of the assumptions underlying the interpretive paradigm's model of science.

- 3)
 - a) What does the word dichotomy mean?
 - b) Give some examples of dichotomies that you have come across in Education.
 - c) A question from George:
What does the word "authoritarian" mean?
What does the term "laissez -faire" mean?
Are these dichotomies?

- 4) According to Tyler's model:
 - a) Who develops the curriculum?
 - b) Does Tyler's model follow the scientific or the Interpretive paradigm?
Give a reason for your answer.
 - c) Which paradigm of curriculum theory does it fit into?

- 5) According to Walker's model:
- a) Who develops the curriculum?
 - b) Does Walker's model follow the scientific or the Interpretive paradigm?
Give a reason for your answer.
 - c) Which paradigm of curriculum theory does it fit into?
- 6) Why do you think the term "Traditionalist" Paradigm is used? It is also termed the "Technical" paradigm ... what does this term mean to you?
- 7) What is the essential idea of the Practical/Hermeneutic Paradigm?
- 8) What is the essential idea of the critical/emancipatory paradigm?
- 9) Into which paradigm does action research fit? Explain your answer.
- 10) Which values does the NEPI report suggest should underpin a curriculum for S.A.?
-

APPENDIX E
HANDOUT FIVE

M+3 GROUP

EDUCATION (CURRICULUM) COURSE

17 MAY 1996

Reflections

1. How do you view 'curriculum' ? Is it simple, clear and rational or complex and contested? Discuss.

 2. As a teacher, in which paradigm or model would you classify yourself; the technical, practical or emancipatory? Explain your answer.

 3. Do you think teachers can be empowered to develop their own curriculum? Explain your answer.
-

APPENDIX E
HANDOUT SIX

M+3 CURRICULUM

ASSESSMENT

24 MAY 1996

You are in the process of studying the 3 curriculum paradigms; technical, practical and emancipatory.

Today you have been looking at the Promat assessment policy for the Durban campus, May 1996.

Now try to categorise the different types of assessment into the 3 curriculum models.

Which type(s) of assessment procedures would you use when you return to your schools and begin your curriculum development? Give reasons for your answer.

APPENDIX F

“CRITICAL FRIEND” REPORT

Background

My involvement in Callie’s action research project came about when she approached me at the beginning of 1996 and suggested that I become a ‘critical friend’ to the group tackling this project. She gave me a broad outline of the project and some of the handouts that the students had received on curriculum issues and action research. She invited me to attend classes once a week having previously negotiated this with the rest of the group.

We did not at any stage define a particular role for the critical friend but I did find some suggestions in Marsh (1992) as to the role of what he called an external facilitator i.e.

- providing a wider perspective
- asking participants to clarify ideas
- giving individuals support when needed

This seemed rather intimidating to me as I was in no way an ‘expert’ providing help, but rather a fellow participant grappling with the same issues as the rest of the group. I thought of myself as an observer and participant in the process at this stage.

Perhaps my role could have been more effective especially with the students had we explored it more thoroughly and clearly at the outset?

Issues from classroom interactions

I had some formal but mostly informal discussions with students around this research and educational issues generally.

A number of issues emerged from my attendance in class:

- I felt extremely uncomfortable to be ‘evaluating’ the group despite having a good relationship with them. Clearly my own learned attitudes were coming through. This feeling of discomfort did disappear with time. Perhaps my presence in class also helped students to see that teaching and learning can be a collaborative endeavour and that Callie opening herself to criticism was an important part of that process?
- I was certain that students were not seeing themselves as curriculum developers/action researchers. Despite some excellent group and class discussions it seemed to me that students did not see themselves as partners in the process. I asked students during the next session to decide where Callie fitted in the group. They were unanimous that she was part of rather than separate from the group. “She is one of us” was the response from Pius. I suggested that this sense of community was admirable but asked them to consider whether they were allowing Callie to take all the responsibility for researching/leading the process or not. This discussion was not carried any further.
- Students received a large amount of material to study and absorb. I felt that this may have been somewhat overwhelming for students. Callie and I had numerous debates around process versus content and the relative importance of each. This was also discussed with students in the primary science course.

On reflection, I think my role in the classroom may have been more effective if I had participated more fully(e.g. by taking some classes) and for the whole period of the study. I would have liked to explore the collaborative action research further- especially in view of a more integrated curriculum at Promat in the future.

Issues from discussions with Callie

I had many informal talks with Callie around action research and educational issues generally. These discussions were(are) ongoing and frequent given our mutual passion for teaching and learning! I also provided her with research articles from my own reading that seemed worthwhile.

Perhaps the main issues were as follows?

- Our lofty ideal of empowering students and the use of action research as a technique to implement change. Although presenting students with a variety of definitions or opinions were we not directing them to our view and our agenda? We debated our assumptions around this issue-also the ways in which action research can become yet another implementation mechanism very similar to the positivist research tradition.
- We discussed power relationships and Callie's attempts to introduce a non or at least less hierarchical relationship between herself and the rest of the group.
- Learning / unlearning and constructivism / deconstructivism. These areas of learning are of particular interest to me and perhaps some discussions and readings around these issues helped Callie to clarify her ideas?

- We discussed the either/or dialectic so commonly found in the literature. Students would often present the technicist tradition as ‘bad’ and the emancipatory tradition as ‘good’. We discussed ways to get around this labelling.
- Although this was not of direct importance to Callie’s research, I did find in my reading of action research that ‘the scientific method’ was dismissed as a method for answering questions about social interactions/human experiences. I felt that closer scrutiny of variables and assumptions-essential to scientific research could be important in the inquiries of action research. This not so that every aspect of education is predicted and controlled but, so that critical self-reflection is maintained.

I think that my role as ‘sounding board’ and later reader of her documentation was more useful to Callie than my observations or participation in the classroom.

DEBBIE KNIGHT
DECEMBER 1997

APPENDIX G
REPORT ON STUDENT INTERVIEWS

PAGES 205 - 217

Report on interviews with PROMAT students

1 Background

Semi-structured individual interviews were held with five students on 19 June 1996.

The aims of the interviews were:

- (a) to explore students' perceptions of the concept of curriculum, with particular reference to changes that may have occurred as a result of the Curriculum course. A secondary issue was whether the students believed their experiences on the course would influence their practice;
- (b) to probe students' perceptions of whether their lecturer had used action research and, if so, how this had been apparent, and to what effect.

Respondents included 4 women and 1 man. All of the students were over the age of 40.

Interviews were conducted in English. This did not appear to present a significant problem for respondents, and in cases where questions were not understood they asked the interviewer to repeat or explain the question. With the permission of students, interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

Points made in this report are illustrated by quoting students. Such quotes are presented in unedited form. This has the unfortunate effect of presenting respondents as being less articulate and fluent in English than they really were. Inevitably, elements are lost or become unclear in the process of transcription which additionally does not have access to gestures and nuance which were part of the actual communication. Despite this difficulty, in the interests of accuracy, respondents are quoted in the form in which their views were transcribed.

2 General impressions

The respondents spoke freely and appeared to be relaxed. A feature of their responses was the similarity of their views. There may be two reasons for this rather surprising uniformity:

- (a) Uniformity of opinion may have been forged by the teaching methodology (which reportedly involved students in debate, discussion, and the collective making sense of issues);
- (b) The fact that these were residential students may have contributed to their opportunity for discussion on issues raised in the course, thus reinforcing common understandings. Socially, the group may have had much in common: they were of similar age, and married. The group certainly appeared to be a tightly-knit and cohesive social

¹ XXX = could not be transcribed.

unit. This was expressed in terms such as the following comment on the course:

"But now I must say that I really enjoyed it. **We** enjoyed it" (writer's emphasis).

A second impression of the students was their commitment to studying and the sacrifices they were making to do this. One of the married women, for example, who rather coyly gave her age as "between 40 and 43", had five children and a home "on the border between Piet Retief and Swaziland". She was able to see her children "about once month, because it's far and it's expensive because I use public transport." Another 44 year old married woman lived on "the boundary of Mozambique" and was able to return home once a month. The only male respondent (a 44 year old) was from Josini in northern Zululand. He was able to afford to go home only during the college vacations, but there was an additional complication:

"But it is very difficult, it is very difficult. Because I can't even phone, there is no telephones, there's just a problem. But if there is a reason, they just contact me by letter. Then I will make some means to go home and see them. It's just that."

Respondents expressed great appreciation for the course, and affection for their lecturer.

"When I talk of curriculum it is because of Cally, otherwise I didn't know anything."

3 Responses to questions about the course

Question: What was your understanding of curriculum at the beginning of this year, before you started this Promat curriculum course?

Summary of respondents' views

The curriculum had previously been viewed in terms of syllabuses, subjects and books, all of which "came from Pretoria". Some respondents reported having never thought about it, as it was not their responsibility. Curriculum was also seen as something imposed, but there was also an element of the "hiddenness" about curriculum issues.

Illustrations

INTER. Right. Thanks. What were your views on the curriculum when you began this course at the beginning of the year?

RESP. At the beginning of the year, I was a little bit confused because I didn't understand it very well. It was where, for these years I've been teaching, we used to be using the syllabuses at school and that would be as planned, (XXX) argument, everything was centrally planned - so it means that at school we, we - it gets

into our necks that we were not responsible for the planning of the curriculum.

.....

RESP. I knew nothing about curriculum, nothing at all. Because it was there just - I didn't know where it was coming from, I didn't know anything about curriculum.

INTER. What did you base your own teaching on?

RESP. I was just given material, and books, and a scheme book, just to teach. I knew nothing what was their planning, what was the common goal. That was all.

.....

RESP. It used to come from Pretoria. You must do this and this, and for what reason - no reason, just do it. If you say left turn, left turn! Why? No answer! Right turn! Just that. It was just that.

Question: What are your views on curriculum now? Has there been a change?

Summary of respondents' views

Respondents felt they had developed new understandings. The role of teachers, and the people the curriculum serves, featured strongly in responses. Parents' views and wishes were highlighted; and there was a belief that the curriculum should be sensitive to pupils.

Illustrations

RESP. Ei, I didn't understand clearly at the beginning, but at the middle it seems as if it was taking out the curtain and I see the light. I saw the curriculum in the building, in the school. I see, when I look back, that the old ways I am being using when I have been teaching, I see that, ei, I was not doing well.

.....

RESP. Now I know that who should be involved to the curriculum. I've discovered that children are so important to be involved in the curriculum. And also parents. Because in our areas, in our schools, parents were neglected. They have no word to say in the school. But now, as transpires, I see, in this, in a few years (XXX) trying to teach parents are meeting, but I see, but I saw that there was a need that parents should be involved in this. Because, they are the ones who must be, or who are the parents to the children whom we are trying to teach. And the teachers also should be included because we're trying to make this teaching a success. Yes. Even the, I saw that

even the experts or the one who knows mainly about the - what teaching is, what should we need for the teaching, should be involved also in the curriculum. That is what I discovered. Yes.

.....

RESP.

So now, when Cally taught about the curriculum, I thought, it's not for me - I'm not fit for planning the curriculum, me myself. But in the end I see we are - I am responsible for the planning of the curriculum, because if we look back ... even the principals and inspectors were not prepared to listen to us as teachers. So now seeing this curriculum, I see that we are empowered now to change it if we want to change it, because always you find that the syllabus was followed as it was, and even if you want to change something, you may not - you have to tell people, the pupils that their syllabus says like this, I cannot change - even if there is one student who is asking questions, you just neglect that child because you know that you are not allowed to change anything from the syllabus. So now, since we are empowered, I think it's a good idea, and when you go to our schools now, it will be possible for us to talk with the parents. Because all along we're neglecting the parents, seeing that the curriculum was less concerned about the parents and their children, and the teachers, they think about our needs. But now as I look at the curriculum I see it's important for us to come together and discuss effects, as the society of the community at the place, and see where we need to share ideas, and there's no-one who is, the only person who has got thoughts, as it was during the past, in the traditional way, because the teacher was taken as somebody who knows everything. But only to find that now it's clear to me that no-one is an expert in teaching, because day by day we learn new things, and we learn new methods of teaching, so it means that this curriculum will help us if we, if we try and bend it according to the needs. Because sometimes we find it difficult about the facilities. These - the government was planning the curriculum without thinking of the schools. Schools are not the same, others have got facilities, others are struggling, they don't have facilities. And only to find that if you talk with the parents, let's say you want money to buy a computer or an overhead projector, find that they cannot afford because they are poor. Even that R20 they are struggling to pay for the child's school fees. So it was not easy - everything was not easy for the parents and teachers. But now I think - because we will sit down and discuss it then, and let them see the needs. Because the problem is that we were not looking at the needs of our community. We just are following the rules of the government. So I think it will work. So, I have a feeling that, I mean, we as

teachers, we stay, I mean, more, I mean, the most part of the day we are the ones who stay with the pupils. So I think we get enough chance to know them or to know what they believe in, and to know what they want, you see. So, if we can come together and call in the parents, and even the pupils themselves, can talk together and see what is good, what we can do that will be good for them. I think it's a good idea.

.....

INTER. What's your definition?

RESP. I - I, you see, I'm thinking of sort of an umbrella if I think of the curriculum, because it has got many, what you call, - can you call it tentacles. It is sort of an umbrella, because everything determining the school leans under this umbrella, which is a curriculum. As long as it is planned, as long as it is guided by the school, it really folds up under this umbrella which is a curriculum. I'll take it as an umbrella, which embraces everything done at school, but on a planned line.

Question: Do you think you will be able to translate your views on curriculum into practice when you return to your school next year?

Summary of respondents' views

Without exception respondents believed they would teach differently. They pointed out that their practice would be informed by their broader understanding of curriculum, particularly with respect to recognition of their own professional responsibilities. Action research, in which a "critical friend" played a role, was prominent in the views, and there were suggestions of a changed methodology that involved pupils more actively in the learning process.

The major obstacle to change was regarded as the school principal. An exception, unsurprisingly, was the student who was the principal himself! Students were confident that pupils would not resist change if teachers explained what they were attempting to do.

Illustrations

INTER. That's interesting, thanks. It does - it sounds as if teaching is going to be more work from now on though.

RESP. It's, it's not really. It's my dream. It will depend upon sometime the principal, because sometimes the principals are really troublesome. You find that you come with an idea and that principal says, oh you are trying to be higher than he, or you are trying to make yourself better. But I think as we have been taught

here, that we have to sit down and discuss everything, and if you don't - if you see that the principal does not allow me to do that, I'll do it in my classroom. I hope that the results of the children will talk more than my ways. Because even if she doesn't want me to practice this at the school, only the whole school, but in my classroom I can practice it, and they will see that the results of my pupils will be much better. Because this letting of the children not to talk, it makes them hide their talents. I think if I give them a chance to discuss facts in the classroom, that will encourage them to be more active and creative, and the school, the whole school even the staff, will see the results of my class.

.....

RESP. ... in the method that I was using during my younger days, as a traditional teacher, I sort of shifted, and sort of moved and I'm now being influenced by this curriculum, by this paradigm. So I would say, it is a good course. I will be a changed teacher. We speak of action research, I didn't know anything about action research. But now, when I go back to my school as a Principal, I'm sure that I will be a changed principal because I will have to put a lot into practice, and I'm sure it will work. ... I think I can even apply it [action research] myself, as a principal. Ask my lady teachers to teach and you criticize that teacher in a professional way, and I'm sure (XXX) it will be (XXX) for other teachers to know you criticize the other teachers, and that there will be that improvement. Surely there will be a step forward. So I'll be doing that thing with them, not through the department, but when I go back to my school and bring this new approach. I like it.

INTER. That's interesting. Do you think teachers would be uncomfortable with the idea of a "critical friend"? I ask that because I think some of the teachers that I know think that they are the teacher, they have the knowledge, it is their classroom, and so why must anybody else come along and be a "critical friend"?

RESP. Well, I think it is a matter of explaining to them clearly the reason. You tell the teachers OK, look here, we want to make an improvement in our teaching. You see. Everyone has got his strengths, that if I come and criticize in a professional way, I need not to damage. It's just to give that opinion, that suggestion. Now, if you can test it, and do it the right way, I think that this would be much better. Pupils will understand better. Try it this way. They'll have to accept it. It will depend on the approach, amongst the teachers. Because I think the approach is very important. You need to talk to them very politely, to be very polite. They'll accept it.

There will be no problem. I'm sure. Because in the first place, they will be free, because there will be no outsider, there'll be no outsider in this case. I will help them to go with the other teachers, she will teach in front of this class, and he will get the chance when it is the turn of the other member of this (XXX) class to listen and then criticize and do the very same thing. And the atmosphere will be so good, and as the time goes on, they will have confidence. They can even challenge me, that now, look here, you can come out and welcome if they can criticize in this fashion. I don't think there will be any difficulty.

.....

RESP. My school is Nongoma.

INTER. Oh, Nongoma, yes. So, when do you go back to Nongoma, will your teaching be different in any way, because of the way you view curriculum now?

RESP. Yes, it will, will change. When I go home, my teaching will change, because I've seen that (XXX) maybe the teachers are just teaching in the old traditional way where it was just to spoon-feed children, with knowledge, yes, now I, that means I have (XXX) a lot.

INTER. What of the - can you perhaps give me some examples of how you will change in your teaching?

RESP. I think the involvement of parents, yes. And I, to involve parents in this way, they must come, we must invite them, come and see how things work, cover the exercise books, and even when there is something (XXX), and then so - and the new teaching skills, to introduce to the school. Where children - they must discard, if they must discover, then they must question, and criticize. We must ask ourselves this is this, I must give them their chance to assess things, to question things, and criticize, so that they will discover and - build that creativity in them. We must take the initiative in learning. Yes.

INTER. Do you think that children will accept that? What I'm thinking of here is that sometimes I think pupils believe that the teacher is the teacher because the teacher has knowledge. So it's the teacher's job to give them that knowledge. So, how can they criticize you?

RESP. I think, sir, children for instance, I raised this in the - (XXX) (XXX), if they can do the things. They see, they remember, but if they do, they understand in that way. Yes. They must be interested, as the teacher must take their interest, must take their interest so that they can really feel - they must have the love of that school, yes.

Question: How do you think most teachers view themselves in relation to the curriculum? Do you think they see themselves as people who are implementing a given curriculum, or do you think they see themselves as curriculum developers?

Summary of respondents' views

Without exception teachers generally were viewed as curriculum implementers. The reason for this was that they did not understand the dimensions and scope of the curriculum.

Illustrations

RESP. I think the majority see themselves as curriculum implementers. ... I don't know about the other institutions, but here, let me can say, I think you are the first ones who know what the curriculum is. Because the people are still sticking to that old curriculum. Anyway, I don't blame them until they get the real view of what curriculum is. But for example, I think we are the first ones. Yes, I think we are the first ones who know what a curriculum is.

.....

RESP. As I've said before, all along it's been working in the darkness, and I don't think they know anything about the curriculum. As even ourselves we had these PTC certificates but we didn't know anything about the curriculum. So I think they know nothing about it. Because they are still using those traditional methods of teaching, they are still following the syllabuses and I think we, as who have been here, we come with the school-based curriculum, they'll know that they are empowered to use the school-based curriculum. ... I think we are the ones who will tell them, sometimes to organize the inspectors to give us a chance to talk with the teachers and make it clear to them because they are still following the old methods of following the syllabus. And only to find that even the child, if the child asks a question, the teacher cannot stop his teaching to attend the question of the child. You find that that the teacher can say, Stupid, keep quiet, keep quiet. Then it means that the teacher is not aware of how to handle the child, and that them telling the child to shut up, sometimes it's a negative attitude to the child. You find that the child is feeling small in the classroom, he's feeling unhappy, even if you teach the child and find that they do not understand their lessons, because we are harsh. So it's the problem with the teachers. Because they are still following those roles rules - they are not aware that now as the new South Africa, they are empowered to change things. I think we are the ones who must try to introduce this from home.

Question: Callie attempted to use action research when teaching the Curriculum course. Were you aware of this, and do you think it was successful?

Summary of respondents' views

All five respondents recognised the process of action research. This was signalled most clearly by the use of a "critical friend". An interesting dimension of the "critical friend" was the implication of greater "openness" of classrooms. This was a novel idea that students appeared to find attractive: the "critical friend" was a way of breaking down the privacy of classroom practice and exposing it to professional critique.

Illustrations

INTER. Very interesting. I think that Cally dealt with action research in the course?

RESP. Yes, she did.

INTER. Apart from reading about action research, do you think you saw Callie doing action research?

RESP. She practised it.

INTER. She practised it?

RESP. Yes, yes, we've got a critical friend here, Debbie. Debbie, usually she calls her to come to the classroom and listen, and observe the way she teaches, and if there is something she usually tells us where we are going wrong. And I think this action research is useful. Because it reflects your actions. Sometimes even if they are not good, you have gone wrong, you can easily see that I have gone wrong here, and try to make it better. This action research I think I need even myself, I will try to apply it in my school. Because in the past we are afraid to call someone to be in the classroom and listen to you whilst teaching, even us teachers were not strict, we are shy to talk in front of others. So I think now as it is said, it is a critical friend. And I will try to practise it with my best friend, whom I know that he or she will not laugh at me, or she will not tell others, "Oh, this teacher is bad to hear," but she'll try to motivate me and help me to improve my methods of teaching. I prefer that, it's very long - it's a good idea.

Question: Did you experience any changes in Callie's teaching during the past five months?

Summary of respondents' views

Respondents commented on a change from the familiar lecturing approach to one more akin to a workshop approach, with students

being given problems and being expected to arrive at answers through discussion. Some of them found this approach mystifying at first, leaving them with the impression that this was a very difficult course. Respondents reported having adjusted to the new pedagogy, however, and their new insights into methodology arguably represent the most significant shift in their view of teaching.

However, it was not clear to me whether students were reporting a change in teaching approach **during** the course of the current year, or whether they were describing a change from the **previous** year. In retrospect, asking students about the **results** of action research and changes in teaching may have been unreasonable. Unsurprisingly, the **process** of action research was clearer to students than its results.

Illustrations

INTER. Apart from the critical friend, Debbie, who came along to some of Cally's classes, did you see any change in the way in which Cally taught, do you think as a result of Debbie being there, or as a result of the discussions with you?

RESP. Yes, comparing from the starting of the course, Cally was not active as she is doing now. Because now, at the beginning she was teaching us, explaining things for us in such a way that we knew that she's teaching now. But these days, I think from this year, she's not teaching or transmitting knowledge to us. Usually she comes and gives us a problem to be solved, and sit down. Sometimes she just says what are her views about the curriculum, and then sit down and we'll debate, asking questions, arguing with one another. And she will sit down and keep quiet. And sometimes we find that we nearly clash because the views are not the same, and we find some others saying, "Tell me, what is the solution?" - she just keeps quiet, and we continue with the debates until we come to the end. And then she tells us what is right and what is wrong by taking the facts that we have been discussing. But the way she teaches us, I think it's very good, because it creates thinking, you think creatively and everyone is involved. We feel like participating. Unlike when she will tell you everything. Because you just listen and try to memorise what she is saying. But if you discuss the thing, I find it's very important because it is reinforced in the mind, in my mind. I find what I talked, or what I said, I didn't forget it easily, because I know oh, that day we were arguing about these points and then find that I know that point better - much better than before. So, her method of teaching is very good. As far as I'm concerned, and I think I will practise it in my school. Because, usually the children become passive because they know that the teacher is the transmitter

of knowledge, only to find that that is not good way of teaching, because we find that it encourages memorisation, because they know that you want the product of what you have said to them. They don't think about that in such a way that it comes to their hearts, that that point is important. So just, well, I don't know that, if I write the examination and cough all that she has told me, I pass. So then this method of discussing is much better. Yes.

.....

RESP.

... sometimes she gave us the piece of work, and she'd say, OK, just read this for yourselves. And girls said, "How can we? But this thing is so deep? How can we?" But, at the same time, and said, OK, during this day I want you to come together and we discuss this, so everyone must be prepared. Ei! That's when we start milling around trying to find books and trying to - you see everyone, but everyone is moving! But, first comments, but Cally, ei, ei, Cally here! Then last time I come, when you come to the classroom and still give us time to discuss. Sometimes she sits down with her book and just listens to us discuss. Sometimes we find that there's a big argument against .. and then you find that the lesson is so, is so, I mean, it's so what you call it, - everybody enjoyed the lesson because they were arguing with each other. That's someone said, "No, I know it's like this!" and somebody said like this until we all laughed. And then lastly she would collect all our points, well arrange them, and then we go on with each day. But I think we, I mean, I've enjoyed it, I mean the joy of learning. But in the beginning I said, Hoo, it's a hell of a job! Now Cally doesn't want to teach us any more.

Question: Do you intend to use action research in your own classroom, and if so, what difficulties would you foresee?

Summary of respondents' views

There was some overlap between this question and the third question. All respondents felt that action research was feasible. As before, the school principal was viewed as the major potential obstacle.

Illustration

INTER. And you think you could use that [action research with a "critical friend"] in your school?

RESP. Yes, I like it very much, and I could use it, with the permission of the principal. I know that the principal will say it's the time-consuming while I'm taking the

teacher out of the class while those children are left alone and will get behind. But I will try my best to do it, or to ask somebody, or I will do, I will ask the principal himself to go. Action research matters in my class. I like it very much. Because it's like a mirror.

4 Conclusion and discussion

Findings

A number of firm conclusions suggest themselves:

- (a) The course had broadened students' understanding of the curriculum. The change was from a view of the curriculum as "given", external to teachers, and indeed hidden from them. Clearly they had come to embrace the notion of the teacher as a curriculum developer and its attendant implications.
- (b) Respondents believed that they had seen action research in action. Symbolically, this was signified by the role of the "critical friend", and they associated the process with the opening of classrooms to professional critique and with a change from a lecturing to a workshop approach.
- (c) Respondents were confident that their practice would be transformed by their new understandings of curriculum and methodology.

Despite this confidence, however, it is clear that a necessary but not sufficient condition for change had occurred. More specifically, there was a suggestion that students' thinking had not undergone a paradigm shift that was entirely neat and clear-cut. They demonstrated a lingering view of a teacher as someone who has the "right information" to convey in such a way that notions of transmission type teaching do not appear to have been entirely jettisoned. One example:

INTER. That's - my last question. Would you like to say anything about the course in general? It could be critical, if you like, there's no problem with that. Anything that we haven't discussed so far, anything else that you think that you'd like to say?

RESP. I - er, seeing, looking at the course that it is, I am satisfied with the way we are taught here and comparing with other universities and colleges, I think Promat is the best. Because, when you discuss with other students from other colleges, I find that they know that about our subjects and they, - I've got my brother at XXXX, he usually takes my notes and photocopies them. It means that they are not giving enough information there and they don't have chances to find out the information from from the school. So I think here at Promat we've got a good chance of

getting information from the library, and everything is going all right.

Nevertheless, to speculate on whether students would actually base their practice on their new understandings is to move beyond the scope of what is possible on the basis of these five interviews. What is clear is that students had acquired a new perspective on curriculum, on teaching, and on their professional responsibility. In current jargon, they felt empowered to generate understandings and to act on the basis of these:

RESP. And I was interested that I myself, I am free, to place on my idea of the curriculum.



Ken Harley
29/7/96

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