

**CASE STUDIES OF ECONOMICS TEACHING**  
**IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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## *ABSTRACT*

The purpose of this research study was to establish the perceptions of economics teaching of two teachers of economics who were functioning in two contrasting contexts. The intention was to examine their practice and to ascertain the extent to which the relationship between their beliefs and their practice was constrained or facilitated by the context in which they taught.

The study made use of interviews and classroom observations to address these issues. The research confirmed that there was a disjunction between the teachers' theories of economics teaching and their actual practice and that their practice was mediated by the context in which they functioned. Both teachers shared very similar epistemologies. They concurred on assessment techniques and teaching methodology in economics. They also agreed that the goal of economics teaching was to engender a love of the subject. However, the vastly different contexts in which they taught spawned unique coping strategies to deal with their peculiar teaching environments.

The 'macro' constraints which they faced emanated from external institutions that imposed overt and hidden rules and expectations upon them. Internal constraints were derived from the peculiar context of each school. The study revealed that the teacher operating in the more repressive context displayed a greater degree of dissonance between beliefs and practice as compared to the teacher in the more favourable context. The teacher in the favourable context was better able to implement her beliefs about economics teaching. However, she was faced with new challenges created by the information explosion as a result of the school's access to the Internet.

Though the nature of the discipline urges a problem-solving approach to economics teaching and even though both teachers concurred with this view, the constraints of the context were compelling factors that hindered teachers' educational ideals. Of note, was the fact that the more repressive the context, the greater were the constraints facing the teacher, and the more complex were the strategies employed by the teacher in order to cope. The more complex the coping strategy, the greater was the disjunction between teachers' theories about economics teaching and their practice.

DEDICATION

TO MY WIFE, LOSH, FOR HER LOVE, SUPPORT AND  
INSPIRATION

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. TO MY WIFE, LOSH AND MY TWO GIRLS, DINESHA AND REANTHA, FOR THEIR PATIENCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT
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## DECLARATION

I, SURIAMURTHEE MOONSAMY MAISTRY, DECLARE THAT THIS DISSERTATION IS MY OWN WORK, AND HAS NOT BEEN SUBMITTED PREVIOUSLY FOR ANY DEGREE AT ANY UNIVERSITY.



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RESEARCHER

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SUPERVISOR

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## CHAPTER ONE

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Whitehead (1983:144) states that:

... traditional pedagogy may *not* be inefficient, if your only objective is success in a final examination.... we do not have a school system or an educational system; we have an examination system. But should our objectives be constrained by what is practicable to assess objectively? ... I do not doubt that school develops pupils' feelings, attitudes and interests, but it principally does so unconsciously and by default.... It is particularly important to develop pupils' awareness, empathy, attitudes, values and other personal qualities. It is unlikely that any of these will be aided by traditional teaching techniques.

This quotation aptly describes the context of economics education in South African schools. This ethos has its roots in the educational ideology that influenced our educational system. A characteristic feature of the apartheid era in South Africa was the fragmentation of the different ethnic departments of education. However, the thread that appeared to bind the different departments was a common examination system, controlled by the different ethnic departments. In 1996, two years after democratic elections, the different ex-departments finally merged (in most respects) and for the first time in this country's history, pupils of the different provinces wrote their respective provincial examinations set by their respective provincial education departments.

The Department of National Education provided what was termed the 'interim core syllabus' and each province was expected to work within the confines of the national requirements. With regard to economics education in particular, apart from a few minor cosmetic changes, the economics syllabus of the past remained fairly intact. The main reason for this was that the state was not in a position to provide funding for textbooks that would support sweeping changes in the different syllabuses.

The merging of the different education departments into one was not without conflict, tensions and difficulties. The government set up PTGs (Provincial Task Groups) in each province for each of the different subject disciplines. Like other task groups, the provincial task group for economics was made up of representatives from former education departments and teacher organisations. I was fortunate to have been invited to work on the Economics committee. Committee members included subject advisors, examiners, sub-examiners and school teachers. As was to be expected, this heterogeneous group of individuals, who had been functioning separately for many years, had to begin to learn to work as members of the same team to develop a common ideology about economics teaching. This was much easier said than done.

Sub-committees were set up to tackle different issues. The committee had to grapple with the problem of differing ideologies and work ethics of the different members. While some members worked conscientiously at their tasks, the contributions of others were virtually non-existent. I was charged with the task of convening a panel that was responsible for preparing the first pilot economics examination for standard ten (grade twelve). This experience proved to be a startling revelation of the extent to which the doctrine of Fundamental Pedagogics had been internalised by the different committee members. It revealed an archaic notion of teaching, learning and assessment that prevailed amongst experienced teachers, examiners and subject advisors. Rote learning was a strong part of their epistemologies. A strong argument was made for setting an examination that had as its emphasis the testing of rote learning so as to accommodate the 'disadvantaged' pupils in the Black ex-departments. This argument is essentially flawed as revealed by the literature on economics education (Jeffreys 1987, Wall 1991, Ryba 1987, Burkhardt, 1976, Whitehead 1979) and the literature on second language acquisition theory (Cummins 1983, Krashen, 1982). The pre-eminence of seniority, however, dictated the course of events. This ideology still prevails up to the present time and is manifest in the examination that matriculants write at the end of each year. While matric economics is not specially designed to facilitate a smooth transition into a first level university economics course, students who emerge from this type of system are bound to experience difficulty with first level university economics that tests critical thinking, logic, analysis and interpretation.

Of direct significance to this study was the extent to which the ideology of examiners and

curriculum developers has had an effect on teachers' classroom behaviour. It was against this backdrop that this research study was conceived.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The thrust of this research study was to ascertain teachers' personal epistemologies of economics teaching and to examine how these beliefs translated into practice in different teaching contexts. Two case studies will provide insight into each teachers' beliefs, their practice and the extent to which contextual factors influenced the kinds of strategies that they employed. Of specific interest to the study was the effect of the context on teachers' practice and it was for this reason that teachers from contrasting resource contexts were selected for the study. **Stated succinctly, the purpose of this study was to examine two teachers' perceptions of economics teaching and how these perceptions were translated into practice.**

## **1.3 CRITICAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1. What are teachers' perceptions of Economics teaching?**
- 2. How do teachers teach Economics?**
- 3. To what extent is the relationship between teacher perceptions and practice facilitated or constrained by the context?**

## **1.4 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study was limited to two teachers of economics teaching in secondary schools in the Durban-South region of KwaZulu-Natal. The teachers chosen were similar in many respects (teaching experience, resourcefulness, commitment). Of significance to this study was that they functioned in starkly contrasting contexts. The first teacher, an articulate, English first language speaker, taught at a well resourced Ex-model C school, while the second teacher, an English second language speaker, taught at an under-resourced African township school.

## 1.5 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

I have been a teacher of economics for seven years. My teacher training (at a local university) helped me develop my epistemology of economics teaching. Throughout my teaching career it had always been a struggle for me to put into practice my beliefs about effective economics teaching. Several factors seemed to systematically neutralise my economics teaching endeavours. During my teaching experience, I had opportunity to serve on several economics curriculum development committees and was a sub-examiner in economics for five years. During my interactions with teachers of economics it occurred to me that there appeared to be a dissonance between teachers' thinking on economics teaching and their actual practice. The present research, as mentioned earlier, aims to examine teachers' beliefs about economics teaching and their practice of economics teaching. It also aims to gain insights into reasons for the tensions between teachers' beliefs and their practice and to establish the extent to which contextual factors influence teachers' choice of strategies.

Secondly, this research will inform my present practice as a teacher educator involved in the pre-service training of teachers of commercial subjects. The literature on teacher education reveals that teacher trainees and teachers involved in whatever form of INSET do generally concur (at the end of the programme) on the need to employ 'progressive' teaching methods in their practice but become systematically disempowered by the context in which they function and almost always revert to their traditional teaching approaches. It is hoped that this research will inform the programme that I design in terms of attempting to better prepare teachers of economics for the various constraints that they could experience in the different teaching contexts and help them to critically reflect on the tensions that may emerge between theory and practice.

Thirdly, my eagerness to initiate debate in the area of economics education research stems from the gaping void that exists in classroom-based economics education research in South Africa. As mentioned earlier, traditional thinking still dominates South African school economics education. While countries like the UK, USA and Australia have adapted and refined their approaches to economics teaching, South African school economics education has not shifted its position. It is hoped that this research will trigger a debate in this area that will begin to interrogate the state of school economics education in South Africa.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative research study aimed to examine how the phenomena occurred in their natural setting. It made use of the case study method to develop an understanding of reality. The research instrument used to collect data to address the first research question was a semi-structured interview. This interview helped establish the teachers' beliefs about economics teaching. To answer the second question which was concerned with how the teachers actually taught, a structured observation schedule was developed. Each teacher was to be observed over a period of twelve consecutive economics lessons. The third research question sought to understand the tension between teachers' beliefs about economics teaching and their actual practice and how their practice was influenced by the context in which they taught. Data for the third research question were generated from a post-observation interview with each teacher. Data were also obtained from each teacher's record books (mark books, lesson preparation files, and test record books) and from pupils' notebooks and test books.

## **1.7 PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS TO FOLLOW**

Chapter Two will briefly outline the relevant research on teaching carried out over the past four decades and attempt to locate the present research in a particular research arena. It will provide an exposition of the associated concepts under study, present a disciplinary focus and reflect on the implications of the literature review.

The focal points of discussion in Chapter Three are the methodological orientation of the research, procedures for attaining access and acceptance to the different sites, the method of sampling employed, the data collection instruments used, and the issue of triangulation.

In Chapter Four, the biographies of both teachers and a detailed description of their teaching contexts will be provided. Each teacher's theories of economics teaching will then be explicated and compared with the selected inductively-determined categories, and each teacher's practice will be examined with the view to analysing the constraints and strategies that emerged in each context.

The final chapter will provide a synthesis of the arguments developed throughout the report and

outline a set of recommendations that have been derived from the study. It will also highlight areas of research that might need investigation in the future and document the limitations of the study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will:

- 2.2) briefly outline the relevant research on teaching carried out over the past four decades and attempt to locate this research in a particular research arena;
- 2.3) provide an exposition of the associated concepts under study;
- 2.4) present a disciplinary focus by providing an exposition of the work of key writers in the field of economics education and
- 2.5) reflect on the implications of the literature review.

#### 2.2 BROAD TRENDS IN CLASSROOM RESEARCH SINCE THE 1960S

The brief discussion that follows will attempt to reflect the broad trends in classroom research over the last four decades. The intention is to describe the dominant trends as they emerged historically during each era.

A prominent feature in the 1960s was a preoccupation with implementation strategies. Researchers did not go into classrooms to conduct research. The focus was on developing teacher-proof materials that were intended to improve the effectiveness of schools. The school was seen as an institution where, if the right quality and mix of inputs were selected, then this would translate into desirable outputs. This approach was commonly referred to as the input-output analyses of schools that evolved from the Tyler rationale for curriculum development (Schubert 1986). According to Goodson (1992:3) "...teachers were shadowy figures on the educational landscape mainly known ... through large scale surveys .... of their position in society. Teachers .... were present in aggregate through imprecise statistics..." This era portrayed teachers as 'villains' who were responsible for the underachievement of school pupils. Writers like Coleman (1966) and Ralph Tyler (cited in Schubert 1986) were most influential during this period. The dominant research paradigm during this period was the product-process research paradigm (Freeman 1996).

The work of Dan Clement Lortie (1975) strongly influenced research in the 1970s. His renowned book *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* highlighted the dearth of empirical research on actual classroom teaching (Lortie 1975:vii). The late 1970s saw a shift in focus to a concentration on the constraints within which teachers worked. 'Teachers were transformed from villains to victims ... of the system within which they were required to operate' (Ball and Goodson 1985:7). The work of researchers like Delamont (1976), Woods (1979), Hargreaves (1978), and Shulman and Elstein (1975) were prominent during this period.

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the scene set for the commencement of contextually sensitive research focussing on the study of teachers' lives and careers. The early 1980s was, however, a somewhat turbulent period in educational research in both Britain and America. Goodson (1992:4) and Calderhead (1993:12) reflect on the negative effect of Thatcherism on 'socially curious' educational research in Britain and the conservative patterns of educational reform that emerged during the Reagan administration. They argued that the emergence of conservative politics rapidly affected the context of educational research. The direct effect was the marginalisation of studies on the context of the teacher's work because of the withdrawal of funding opportunities for this type of research. Research during this period viewed teachers as individual thinkers and as researchers. The research emphases were on life history research, teacher thinking and decision making, action research, and collaborative research. Prominent researchers during this era included Zeichner (1987), Alrichter (1986), Elliot (1985), Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Calderhead (1987).

In the 1990s teachers began to be framed as complex, contradictory individuals. Educational research illuminated the complexity of postmodern society, knowledge, and the rapidly changing social context. Prominent researchers in this field included Kennedy (1991), Goodson (1992), Knowles (1992), Freeman (1996) and Johnson (1996).

A reflection of the research on teaching since the 1960s reveals a constant change in the perspectives on the role and identity of the teacher. The 1960s viewed the teacher as a villain, accountable for pupil underachievement. This view was altered in the 1970s with teachers being regarded as victims of the context in which they operate. The 1980s witnessed teachers being elevated to the status of individual thinkers and researchers, and in the 1990s, researchers started

to acknowledge teachers as complex and contradictory individuals.

The purpose of presenting this very brief overview of the research patterns and trends is to locate the present study within this broad frame. The nature of this study has much in common with research carried out by researchers during the late 1970s and the early 1980s, and it is for this reason that the exposition of key concepts used in this study will be drawn from research carried out during that period. The popular research paradigm at this time was symbolic interactionism.

Symbolic interactionism offered a 'demanding and extensive' programme of work for sociologists yet it seemed to have been eclipsed before much of the programme could be realised (Hargreaves 1993:135). He cites the movement of mainstream sociology (at the time) towards Marxist perspectives (which shifted the focus of educational research towards 'macro' approaches), the development of phenomenology and ethnomethodology and the influence of conservative political undercurrents as key reasons for symbolic interactionism going 'out of fashion'. "If it can realise its own potential, symbolic interactionism has an assured future in the vast sociological enterprise, whatever changes in fashion it may encounter" (Hargreaves 1993:150).

### **2.3 ASSOCIATED CONCEPTS UNDER STUDY**

The following discourse provides an exposition of the research concept (symbolic interactionism) and a discussion of related concepts such as context, perspectives, culture and strategies that have direct relevance for this study. Symbolic interactionist research entails conducting research by observation and participation and not by testing, measuring and experimenting. It is a study of face to face interaction as opposed to developing theories about society in general. Symbolic interactionists share a theory or a set of theories that derives in the main from the work of G.H. Mead (Delamont 1976:13). Human action is largely symbolic which means it involves interpretation. When people interact, each person is constantly interpreting his own and other acts, reacting, and interpreting and redefining the situation. The human being is a constructor of his own action and though guided by culturally influenced perspectives, still carries the essence of individuality. W. I. Thomas's often quoted phrase cited in Woods (1980:20) states that: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences". What this means is that it is the interpretation that is important because of its effect on thoughts and

evaluations of situations. People interact through symbols, that is, stimuli that have learned meaning and value for them (Woods 1983:1). The shared meaning of many of these symbols facilitates interaction between people. Often, the different individuals interpret situations differently and in the school context, while school may be a 'joyful and liberating arena' to some people, to others it may appear 'dull and restrictive'. One possible reason for this is that some participants have more power and may be able to enforce their definition of the situation on others (Delamont 1976:24).

A central interactionist construct is 'context'. A context is a situation that is constructed as a result of people's interactions and interpretations of the symbols around them (Woods 1983:1). He notes that irrespective of the 'prevailing official definition' of what the context is or what the circumstances are, an individual's definition of the context derives from her personal interpretation of what appears to be real to her. Schools may have a range of different contexts and people's interpretations have been shown to differ among them. Because contexts are constructed, it is the task of the interactionists to discover how they were constructed, and not to take them for granted.

A related interactionist construct is the concept of 'perspective'. Becker (cited in Woods 1983:7) explains the concept perspective as follows:

We use the term 'perspective' to refer to a coordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation, to refer to a person's ordinary way of thinking and feeling about and acting in such a situation. ... Perspectives arise when people face choice points ... If a particular kind of situation recurs frequently, the perspective will probably become an established part of a person's way of dealing with the world.

Perspectives are ordered sets of beliefs and orientations within which, or by reference to which, situations are defined and construed by teachers and pupils (Delamont 1976:52). They refer to the frameworks through which people construct their realities and define situations and make sense of the world. People have an existing cognitive schema that they use to understand the world. Janesick (cited in Clark & Peterson 1986:287) states that a teacher's perspective combines beliefs, intentions, interpretations, and behaviour that interact continually and are modified by interaction. A teacher's perspective serves as a frame of reference within which they make sense and interpret experience and act rationally. Perspectives refer to the 'structure of the mind' from

which thought processes flow. They are based on assumptions that are ‘culturally specific and context bound’ (Woods 1983:8). People’s reactions to different situations may result in different perspectives being adopted. He asserts that perspectives do not exist in a vacuum. They are in fact derived from cultures. He explains that cultures develop when people consciously or unconsciously share a common purpose. They evolve distinctive ‘ways of doing things’, ‘speech patterns’, ‘subjects of conversation, rules and codes of conduct and behaviour, values and beliefs, arguments and understandings’. People are inducted into certain cultures through the ordinary processes of socialisation. Hargreaves (1994:166) identifies two dimensions to culture, namely, content and form. Substantive attitudes, values, beliefs, habits, assumptions and ways of doing things that are shared within a particular teacher group comprise the content of teacher culture and can be seen in what teachers think, say and do. Patterns of relationship and types of association between members of a culture comprise the form of teacher culture. He argues that the form of teacher culture may change over time and it is through the form of teacher culture that the content of teacher culture is realised, reproduced and redefined. He further states that to understand the limits to and possibilities of teacher development and educational change, the form of teacher culture is to be fully understood.

The concept of most significance to this study is the one of **strategies** and it is therefore that a more elaborate discussion of this concept will be provided. The germinal work of Jackson (1968), Lortie (1975) and Delamont (1976) triggered an overwhelming interest in classroom-based research and significantly influenced the work of researchers like Woods (1979, 1980, 1983), Lacey (1977) and Pollard (1982) who specifically investigated the area of teacher strategies.

The concept of ‘strategy’ is derived from interactionist theory (Woods 1980:10). Strategies are ways of achieving goals. They are pedagogical mechanisms or devices formulated by teachers to deal with the difficulties under which they work. They are patterns of ‘repeatable acts’ designed to serve ‘long term’ rather than ‘short term’ objectives, and are linked to broad general aims (Woods 1980:18). “It has been shown that there is a big disjunction between what people say and what people do ... because of an inevitable distinction between ideals and practice...” (ibid.) Increasing pressures on teachers frequently completely frustrate educational aims to the extent that teachers are forced to adopt certain strategies that masquerade as teaching.

Educational goals are almost always impeded by obstructions that might arise from “inadequate resources, a high teacher-pupil ratio, the recalcitrant nature of some pupils, and the organization of the school” (Woods 1983:10).

Teachers develop a range of strategies that constantly change depending on the nature of the situation. “Developing and maintaining strategies is not a simple matter. The more complicated the goal, the more complex the strategy ... It is the problems that intervene between intention and risk that give strategies their character. Schools are places that invite complex strategies, for (teachers’) ideals are strong, yet the gap between ideals and practice is large” (Woods 1983:10). Beginning teachers whose ideals are more pronounced have to deal with the disjunction between their theories and practice. In his study of student teachers, Lacey (1977:97) identified three types of social strategy for dealing with difficulties. First, ‘strategic compliance’ which refers to a situation where an individual merely complies with the demands of a situation to survive; secondly, ‘internalized adjustment’ is when an individual makes a change in his thinking or modifies his thinking about a situation to deal with the demands of it, and thirdly, ‘strategic redefinition’ is when an individual interprets the conditions of a situation so that the problem is perceived as something that can be dealt with at another appropriate level.

A complex theoretical model for understanding teachers’ coping strategies was developed by Pollard (1982). He argues that there are three ‘analytical layers’ for understanding the interactive process of teachers’ coping strategies. The first two layers, those of ‘social structure and organisational leadership’ and ‘institutional bias’ are ‘macro layers’ while the third, that of ‘classroom social structure’, is a micro layer concern (Pollard 1982:32). He also points to the physical and material structure of the classroom setting, biographical factors (social status, and cultural perspectives) of both pupils and teachers as important variables in the analysis of teachers’ coping strategies. He refers to the concept of ‘accommodation’ and intimates that the classroom provides a context for negotiation between teachers and pupils where each establishes a “set of understandings that allow for mutual survival” (Pollard 1982:35). Coping strategies represented responses by teachers to situations caused by the contexts of the classroom and school. Hargreaves’s (cited in Woods 1980:11) notion of the concept of strategies emphasises the authoritative nature of the teacher’s role when he suggests that “strategies are constructed responses to institutionally mediated constraints but within the framework predicated on the

tacitly accepted understanding of the teacher's dominance". He further states that the imposition of 'situational constraints' can be seen as the products of various macro-structured factors such as teacher-pupil ratio, resource levels and compulsory attendance. He views coping strategies as linking structural questions to interactionist concerns. Woods (1980:12) summarises the effect of 'macro' policy on the 'micro' context by stating that coping strategies "... are answers to problems generated by constraints which are inextricably bound up with wider society. Teachers ... are wrestling with educational goals in current capitalist society that are fundamentally contradictory ..., operating under material conditions which are a product of planning and politics; and assailed by a number of differing educational ideologies". As long as coping strategies are seen to be working, they become taken for granted as legitimate and even unavoidable constituents of teaching.

In his study of teachers teaching in a given situation, (Woods 1979:149-173) identified eight survival strategies that teachers adopted: socialization (where pupils are socialized into the existing school culture); domination (referring to punishment or admonishment); negotiation (entailing exchange, bribes, flattery, promises, apologies and threats); fraternization (working for good relations and increasing pupils' sense of obligation); absence or removal (off loading troublesome pupils, teacher absenteeism, absconding); ritual and routine (following set patterns, expressive order and imposed structure); occupational therapy ( the purporting of busyness, time wasting); and morale boosting (mentally neutralizing the survival problem by laughter and rhetoric). He states that a feature of successful survival strategies is their 'permanence and ongoing refinement'. They often persevere beyond their usefulness thus creating further problems for which more survival strategies have to be developed. In his 'parasite' analogy of strategies, Woods (1979:146) explains that: "They expand into teaching and around it like a parasite plant, and eventually in some cases the host might be completely killed off. Like parasites, if they kill off the host, they are a failure and they must die too; for they stand starkly revealed for what they are". However Woods (1980:12) clarifies that because strategies are products of constructive and creative activity, they are also 'adaptive'. They are answers to dilemmas spawned by constraints and contradictions that have their origins in wider society. Teachers in a rapidly changing environment have constantly to generate new strategies to deal with new situations that arise.

The number and complexity of the unknowns in teaching does prove to be problematic (Woods

1980:18). This gives rise to negotiation and the formulation of strategies that usually create a dissonance between theory and practice. “Individual teachers are faced by the harsh realities of the classroom that impede and often frustrate the practice of teachers’ expertise”, forcing them to employ an ‘educationist’ perspective in the staffroom and a ‘pragmatic’ teacher role in the classroom (Woods 1980:19). The work of Keddie supports this argument (1983). She introduced the concepts of ‘educationist context’ and ‘teacher context’ and asserts that there is a disjuncture between the two contexts. She further argues that teachers in their position of power (in classrooms) perpetuate and maintain the social order by dictating what counts as acceptable knowledge. Pupils who can master subject knowledge as prescribed by societal structures and presented by teachers can attain success in such a system. Hammersley (cited in Woods 1983:112) states that knowledge and ability are firmly related to the school framework and are not qualities that are universally acceptable.

It becomes clear that the constraints of the context under which teachers work create a dissonance between their ideals and their practice. A “complete understanding of teaching is not possible without an understanding of the constraints and opportunities that impinge upon the teaching process” (Clark & Peterson 1986:258). External influences such as the curriculum, the community and internal constraints such as the physical setting, and resource availability significantly affect teachers’ actions. They maintain that teachers’ thought processes may be similarly constrained because of reduced flexibility in their planning arising from curriculum decisions that may have already been made by education authorities. Teachers’ thought processes are affected profoundly by teachers’ task demands and the teachers’ perception of the task. They further argue that there is a reciprocal relationship between teacher thought and actions. Teachers’ actions are in a large part caused by teacher thought processes which in turn affect teachers’ actions. The dissonance between teachers’ theories and practice is not unusual (Giroux 1983:21). He describes theory and practice as ‘representing a particular alliance, not a unity in which one dissolves into the other’.

In the South African research context, the polarity between theory and practice has been well documented. In her study of teachers’ personal epistemologies and practices Wickham (1998) also cites the context as a mediating factor between theory and practice. A study of a cohort of teachers undergoing an in-service teacher development programme, (Wedekind 1995) revealed



how teachers, having 'internalised' and articulated the educational principles as conceived by the programme, reverted to their traditional teaching styles once they returned to their work situations. Their commitment to transformation was impeded by their own historical educational heritage and the contexts of their schools and the education environment. He explains (1995:iv) that:

The programme's effectiveness was limited by a number of contextual factors. These included the legacy of deliberate under-resourcing during the *apartheid* period, the direct impact of the violence in KwaZulu-Natal, the highly hierarchical organisational structure of the schools, as well as the willingness and commitment of the teachers to change. These factors all impeded the development of a teacher-led action research cycle within the schools. The appropriateness of action research as a strategy for teacher development within the South African context is questioned.

An analysis of the impact of a transformative action reflection INSET model on teachers' understanding and classroom behaviour was undertaken by Reeves (1997). In the correlation of the data obtained, she concludes that teachers provide an understanding of what they say which is not congruent with their classroom behaviour. She also cites the repressive educational context as hindering educational progress. Flanagan (1997:31) declares:

It is common knowledge in South Africa that no matter how keen teachers may be to improve the education system of this country, and how keen they may be to replace the rote-content based curriculum in their schools, teachers have been skilled and deformed (or de-skilled and de-formed) by the present curriculum and the way in which they themselves have been schooled and trained. Teachers are well researched in rote-type pedagogy and in this sense, over-prepared to implement only a certain style and methods in their classrooms.

Approximately eighty percent of South African teachers are inculcated into Fundamental Pedagogics (Deacon & Parker 1983). Fundamental pedagogics has been so deeply embedded in teacher education programmes, especially in historically Black teacher education colleges, that its doctrine of rationality, truth, knowledge and authority have been refined and entrenched in South African education. It comes as no surprise that in reports from schools that featured in the top one hundred schools in South Africa in the Sunday Times Top 100 Schools Survey (The Sunday Times, 1997), a large proportion of schools openly attributed their success to 'authoritarian discipline', 'corporal punishment', 'traditional education' and 'going by the book'. It provides a lucid picture of what schools and the wider society value as pedagogically sound.

## 2.4 THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS EDUCATION

The discussion that ensues provides an exposition of the literature in the area of economics education. Research in economics education is divided into research on economics teaching and learning at school level and post-school level. A fair amount of research on economics education has been carried out in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. Poor student performance in introductory, tertiary economics courses triggered numerous studies such as (Crawley and Wilton 1974; Bonello, Swartz & Davisson 1984; Lumsden & Scott 1987; Myatt & Waddle 1990; Tay 1994; Lopus 1997).

In South Africa, research in economics education at post-school level has been confined to mainly quantitative research, measuring rates of student 'through-put' from one level to the next. Most recent research in the KwaZulu-Natal region was conducted at the University of Natal, Durban (Hesketh, Mbali & Mkhize 1994) and the University of Durban-Westville (CEREP 1998). While the scope and research methodology was quite different in these studies, both were a direct response to alarming failure rates among first year students. Because of the difference in the research focus, scope and methodology, the research findings and recommendations illuminated different emphases.

School-based economics research is basically non-existent in the South African context. Academic writing in the area of economics teaching and learning is few and far between. Journals that carried articles of economic education interest, namely *Educamus* and an occasional publication called *The Commerce Teacher*, provided very superficial insights into economics teaching and were in the main edited by writers who had firm roots in the doctrine of Fundamental Pedagogics (Suransky-Dekker 1997). Oliver's comment (1975:13) still holds true for the present South African economic education research context. He states that:

There has been an embarrassing difference between the rigour and elegance with which economists have written about economics and that which they have thought and written about the teaching of economics. There is much to be proud of in modern professional economics but much less in what is known and published about either economics teaching methods, or the educational role of economics. One particular facet which has had little attention is the nature of economics and how that might affect both teaching methods and the educational functions that the subject is expected to perform.

Of direct significance to this study is economics education in secondary schools. The ensuing discussion will provide a synthesis of the central issues in economics education by key proponents in this field. Lee and Entwistle (1975:37) recognize the following purposes that an economics education might serve: first, it provides an intellectual training; secondly, it prepares individuals for citizenship; and thirdly, it provides vocational training for business.

A discussion of the nature of economics is an important point of departure for the study of economics education. Oliver (1975:13) remarks that the nature of economics "...is far from self-evident to the layman, and so many headmasters may introduce it as a school subject without any real knowledge of the subject and what it has to offer". "When we teach economics, we teach more than just another set of techniques. We teach a unique perspective, a way of thinking" (Jeffreys 1987:11). For effective economics teaching, this perspective must forcefully penetrate through particular detail so that students emerge possessing that perspective.

In the definition of economics, it is necessary to focus both on the content (its core and associated concepts) and method of the subject. This view is supported by Jeffreys (1987:13). The content of economics is the allocation of scarce resources between alternate ends. Keynes (cited in Oliver 1975:14) states that: "The theory of economics is a method rather than a doctrine, an apparatus of the mind, a technique of thinking, which helps its possessor to draw correct conclusions". He elucidates the dual nature of economic knowledge, that is, to specify both the key concepts and methodology as follows:

It seems to me that economics is a branch of logic, a way of thinking ... one can make some quite worthwhile progress merely by using axioms and maxims. But one cannot get very far except by devising new and improved models ... But it is the essence of a model that one does not fill in the real values for the variable functions. To do so would make it useless as a model. For as soon as this is done, the model loses its generality and its value as a mode of thought (cited in Jeffreys 1987:13).

To determine the nature of a particular form of knowledge is to determine the assumptions that define the form's core. This entails determining the form's key concepts. The vehicle involved in the transition from the core vision to the complex events of the real world is essentially the methodology of the discipline. According to Jeffreys (1987), economics science methodology is essentially a matter of deductive analysis and that determinants of the success of the

deductions made are the laws of rationality and the logic of choice. The concept of rationality in economics implies the law that individuals always choose that option that is best, given the available knowledge. Any individual in her economic life will never undertake action that adds more to her losses than her gains. Choice behaviour is an essential characteristic of economics and is mediated by the effects of scarcity and the need to act rationally. The discipline economics has a distinctive mode of thinking and these distinctive modes are embodied in the discipline's models. The mode of thinking in economics is deductive rationality in constrained environments (Jeffreys 1987:21). Each key economic concept must have some element of deductive rationality in constrained environments.

The key concepts (opportunity cost, efficiency and marginality) that make up the core of economics will be briefly discussed:

Opportunity cost is the prime example of a deductive concept that organises other concepts. It helps determine a set of subordinate concepts. The central assumption of opportunity cost is that each act excludes other possible acts at any given moment of action. It is a necessary condition for the concept of economic rationality. There is no economic problem that does not involve the perspective that each alternative has a cost and that one of these alternatives will have the least cost. The search method for the least cost is essentially deductive.

The concept marginality derives its importance from the fact that the appropriate unit of appraisal in relation to maximising economic behaviour is that of the increment. The mathematics of maximisation are a question of marginal analysis (where total revenue can be equal to or exceed total costs without profits being maximised). Marginal analysis allows the concept of rationality "... to function dynamically in models. Marginal thinking characterizes the psychology of a rational maximising agent" (Jeffreys 1987:23).

Efficiency in economics functions as a limiting concept. It is a way of assessing the operation of other key concepts (marginal decisions must produce efficient results and the cost of different opportunities is assessed through relative efficiencies). The concept is directive in that it guides choices. Decisions can be rational but inefficient. The most efficient agent will be one with perfect information and perfect mobility. Jeffreys (1987:26) articulates the relationship between the key economic concepts as follows:

Rationality and opportunity cost are the key philosophical concepts with greatest power in defining the economic perspective. Marginality and efficiency are the key operational concepts with the greatest power in permitting the perspective to function predicatively. Taken together, marginality and efficiency form the cutting edge of the discipline. Thus we see the world through the perspective of concepts while we perform and create in the world through the operational concepts.

To summarise, the nature of economic knowledge is determined by the economic perspective, which itself is determined by the use of deductive analysis combined with an agent-specific concept of rationality and an act-specific concept of opportunity cost.

The deductive method in economics has many implications for the teacher. Oliver (1975:20) argues that classroom teaching should take into account the nature of economics reasoning. If students are simply presented with the results of economists' deductions as 'received doctrine' it would conflict with the view of the nature of economics as a method leading to 'tentative' conclusions. He further impresses that teaching economics in this way might successfully reach various educational goals such as an examination pass but it cannot successfully achieve the goal of imparting an economics training. Pupils are more likely to remember economic theory, realise its significance, have confidence in it and be able to make use of it if they are presented with situations in which they have to make deductions for themselves.

Reflecting on economics education in the United Kingdom, Ryba (1987:216) accurately summarises the traditional approach to economics teaching as follows:

The traditional approach to economics teaching was of a systematic formal unidirectional kind in which the teacher aimed to structure verbal presentation of material in a way that encouraged its comprehension and either contributed to its memorization or made possible the compilation of notes and summaries from which the content could be learnt... In schools it can still be found in formal teacher-dominated lessons. At its best, and in the right circumstances, such formal teaching can be remarkably successful and still has its place in the teacher's armoury of techniques. But, not infrequently, it degenerates to the dull, boring and educationally unproductive business of filling passive learners' minds by the strenuous efforts of the teacher. Fortunately, despite the pressures of examination syllabuses and the temptations that teachers feel to follow this easy course, such teaching is on the wane.

He goes on to say that in the case of economics, change from a teacher-dominated approach to learner-centred approaches seem to be much slower than in other subjects. A similar scenario appears to be prevalent in the South African context where the challenge facing economics education is to transform the traditional content-based approach to teaching and learning to a learner-centred, outcomes-based approach (Maistry 1998:1).

Because teachers of economics persist in using traditional teaching methods, "... one can be forgiven for believing that secondary school students succeed in understanding economic issues and principles despite their teachers rather than because of them" (Burkhardt 1976:1). The task of the economics teacher centres on the creation and organisation of a stimulating and rewarding learning environment for pupils which seeks to ensure their active and willing participation in learning experiences. Students should encounter theory and issues in the most practical way possible. Teachers should select curriculum materials and activities that will enable pupils to analyse and interpret their economic environment, to make value judgements and develop attitudes. "It involves much more than the acquisition of economic facts" (Burkhardt 1976:7). As a result of constantly changing economic theory, pupils ought to be taught the processes of problem solving through using current theory. Walstad (1991:61) states that problem-solving or decision-making lies at the heart of economics. The discipline developed from the need to solve the economic problem of scarcity facing individuals and societies. Economic problems are the reason for the existence of economics because they give rise to attempts to solve them. The problem for the economics teacher is to facilitate the process by which students develop an appreciation of and ability to participate in the economics way of working (Thomas 1987:56). She further emphasises that what is crucial to economics education is that pupils are expected to analyse and discuss problems 'in an economics way' (ibid.:57). This entails an understanding and appreciation of the purpose, procedures and rules of economic discourse, the economics perspective, and methodology. Economic knowledge is more a matter of 'knowing how' as opposed to simply 'knowing that'. "No amount of listening to the teacher can ensure the internalization by the learner of the 'knowing how' side of what he needs to learn in economics" (Ryba 1987:219).

Good economics teaching has always involved learner-centred learning activities that might include case studies, data analysis, theoretical exercises and industrial visits. Brainstorming,

debate, investigations, decision-taking exercises, group work and presentations also have a valuable part to play in economics teaching and learning (Wall 1991:17). It is noted however that the heavily-loaded syllabus hampers the innovative teacher. Wall further argues that it would take some skill and experience to use these sometimes time-consuming approaches, *and* prepare pupils for a very demanding terminal examination.

Walstad (1991:61) remarks that an important decision facing an economics teacher is the selection of the type of classroom test that will be used for assessing achievement in economics. He argues that if economics decision-making and problem-solving were the *modus operandi* for the teaching of economics, then assessment ought to take on the same approach. In his reflection on economics teaching in secondary schools, Maistry (1998) highlights the fragmented and disjointed nature of teaching, learning and assessment in economics. "There exists an artificial separation of teaching and learning on the one hand and assessment on the other. For years, the matric examination (a traditional content-based rote learning instrument) determined the way teachers structured their learning programmes" (ibid.:1). He further states that teachers are acutely aware of how overloaded the economics syllabus is and are under constant pressure to teach traditional content. A consequence of this overloading is that too many students emerge with pass grades based on a quite limited understanding of the subject matter (Wall 1991).

The Department of National Education's perspective on economics education in South Africa accentuates the need for 'analytic-theoretic' approach to the teaching of the subject economics. It underscores the notion that economics should not be treated as an abstract subject. It discourages the mere memorising of definitions and laws and regards this as unsound. Economics should be regarded as a dynamic, futuristic subject. According to the Department of Education (1995), the teaching of economics should:

- \*\* have a universal character;
- \*\* promote critical appreciation of and insight into the South African economy;
- \*\* promote the ability to apply an analytical approach;
- \*\* promote logical, abstract and objective thinking.

Although the school syllabus does not specify teaching methodology, a clear progressive theme pervades the preamble to the syllabus.

## **2.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE LITERATURE FOR THIS STUDY**

The implications of the literature review will be briefly addressed. The review of the literature afforded the basis for exploring, illuminating, clarifying and interpreting the various concepts and principles involved in this research on economics teaching. Emerging from the literature were several issues that were of relevance to this study. The literature review:

- \*\* drew attention to the scope and range of problems experienced by teachers in their daily practice,
- \*\* revealed the disjuncture that exists between teachers' theories and practice and furnished explanations for this,
- \*\* highlighted the dearth of research in economics education both at school level and post-school level in South Africa,
- \*\* stressed the pedagogical soundness of the learner-centred, problem-solving approach to economics teaching,
- \*\* exposed the complete absence of classroom-based research in economics education in South Africa.

This research study will investigate the South African school economics context by attempting to ascertain economics teachers' epistemologies and their practices and explore reasons for the disjuncture (if any) between teachers' theories of economics teaching and their actual practice.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

This chapter created the context for this study by presenting an outline of classroom research since the 1960s. It identified the research era which was congruent with this type of study, presented the theoretical underpinnings of the dominant research paradigm (symbolic interactionism) during this period, and provided an exposition of the relevant concepts under study. An explication of the relevant research in economics education was then advanced. Finally, the chapter concluded with the implications of the literature review for this study.

Focussing on the research design and procedures used in the research study, the next chapter will present a detailed account of how the process of data collection unfolded.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

The focal points of discussion in this chapter are the methodological orientation, procedures for attaining access and acceptance, the method of sampling employed, the data collection instruments used, and the issue of triangulation.

#### 3.2 METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

This qualitative research uses the tenets of symbolic interactionism (refer chapter two) to address the following three critical questions:

- \*\* What are teachers' perceptions of economics teaching?
- \*\* How do teachers teach economics?
- \*\* To what extent is the relationship between teacher perceptions and practice facilitated or constrained by the context?

The central questions of qualitative research concern issues that are 'neither obvious nor trivial'. They concern issues of human choice and meaning and every assumption about meaning ought to be subjected to critical scrutiny (Erickson 1986:121). Jessop (1997:40) states that:

Arguably, qualitative methods are more sensitive to the nuances and texture of complex social realities than the scientific method. This is linked to their reliance on textual sources of data, which are more inclined to open up shades of meaning than numbers. Qualitative methods are also particularist in intent rather than universally generalisable to other contexts, as is the case with most quantitative research.

Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning, that is, how people make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they experience, how they interpret their experiences and how they structure their social world (Merriam 1988).

Qualitative research, and in particular, the case study method, examines phenomena in their natural setting. Research in this type of study is viewed as a process that informs views on how

things occur in reality. It is used to understand the meaning of an experience. In case study research, the intention is not to find the 'true' or 'correct' interpretation of the facts, but rather to eliminate erroneous conclusions so that the researcher can generate the most convincing interpretation. It facilitates an 'intensive, holistic' description and analysis of phenomena (ibid.). The study of particular incidents and events and the selective collection of information on biography, personality, intentions and values, allows the case study worker to capture and portray those elements of a situation that give it meaning (Walker 1993).

The following list of advantages of case studies is an adaptation from Cohen and Manion (1997:122):

- \*\* Case study data, paradoxically, is strong in reality but difficult to organise. In contrast, other research data are often weak in reality but susceptible to ready organization;
- \*\* Case studies allow generalisations either about an instance or from an instance to a class. Their peculiar strength lies in their attention to subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right;
- \*\* Case studies recognize the complexity and embeddedness of social truths. The best case studies are capable of offering some support to alternative interpretations;
- \*\* Case studies are a step to action. They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use;
- \*\* Case studies present research data in a more publicly accessible form than other kinds of research reports.

Case study research is not without deficiencies as pointed out by Cohen and Manion (1997) who argue that the weakness in case study research is the difficulty of validating case study data and the subjective and unquantifiable nature of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that the problem with case studies is that readers may interpret them as versions of the whole when in fact they are only a part of reality and as such are not generalisable.

Walker (1993:167) summarises the 'methodological' difficulties that case study researchers have encountered:

- \*\* Problems of the researcher becoming involved in the issues, events or situations under study;
- \*\* Problems over confidentiality of data;
- \*\* Problems stemming from different interest groups with respect to access to, and control over,

the data;

- \*\* Problems concerning publication, such as the need to preserve anonymity of subjects;
- \*\* Problems arising from the audience being unable to distinguish data from the researcher's interpretation of the data.

While case studies provide insight into specific contexts, the common objection to case study research is the generalisation problem.

### **3.3 ACCESS AND ACCEPTANCE**

One often hears stories of principals' and teachers' scepticism of researchers and their surreptitious intentions. Researchers are consequently treated as if they have the plague. Fortunately, my experiences with the research participants and their principals were cordial and professional. Access to both schools was facilitated by the research participants with whom I had established contact early in 1997. Both teachers had sought verbal agreement in principle from their respective principals. I did, however, formalise the arrangement with a letter to each principal requesting permission for me to conduct research in their schools. The letter indicated the purpose of the study, the confidentiality and anonymity which the schools and the teachers would enjoy and an undertaking that my presence would cause minimum disruption to the schools' programmes ( see Appendix A). Each teacher was subsequently apprised of the details of the research (date of commencement, duration, interview procedures and classroom observations).

### **3.4 SAMPLE**

The process of selecting research participants is generally known as sampling. In quantitative research, the validity of the research depends on how rigorous the sampling procedures are. This qualitative research employed the system of 'purposive' sampling, a term coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The researcher targets the sample to subjects likely to yield the richest data for the research questions under study. 'Contextual and tacit knowledge combines to assist the researcher to direct the sampling accordingly' (Jessop 1997:64). Similarly, Patton (1980) advises that in sampling, we must ensure that 'informants' are 'information rich'.

In this research study, the criteria for the selection of the teachers included their economics teaching experience, commitment to the teaching of economics and resourcefulness. I had

occasion to have interacted with both teachers in the past and had gained sufficient insight into their professional teaching roles. As a former teacher of economics, I had worked with the first teacher (Rita) on economics curriculum development committees and had been a sub-examiner with her for two years. My contact with the second teacher (Vusi) came about as a result of my present occupation as a teacher educator supervising teacher trainees on teaching practice at his school.

At the conception of this study, I was fortunate to have had at least sixteen experienced economics teachers who were willing to participate in this classroom-based research. For the purposes of this research study, I chose two teachers whom I perceived to be similar in many respects but who taught economics in two strikingly contrasting contexts: one, a well resourced, financially sound ex-model C school in a plush, elite suburb on the outskirts of Durban; and the other an under-resourced school situated in an African township just outside Durban.

### **3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND TRIANGULATION**

Jessop (1997:54) states that, “Arguably the primary research instrument in any qualitative endeavour which is seeking to interpret and make meaning within a particular context, is the researcher herself”. My intention in this study was to understand and make meaning of the experience of the research participants. This study required the careful development of the research instruments to assist the process of making meaning. It made use of three data collection instruments. To answer the first research question, a semi-structured interview was conducted (Appendix B). Data to address the second research question were obtained through the use of a structured classroom observation schedule (Appendix C). The third research question was addressed through data gleaned from a second semi-structured interview. A careful study of each teacher’s personal records (lesson preparation files, mark books, assessment files and general resource files) and pupils’ notebooks and test files was also carried out.

The use of these multiple data collection methods has merit. Denzin (1978) cited in Mouton (1996) coined the term ‘triangulation’ to refer to multiple methods of data collection where various methods complement each other, thereby balancing out their respective shortcomings. Merriam (1988:69) argues that “... the rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strength of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of

each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies”. However, Patton (1980:330) asserts that there is ‘no magic in triangulation’, that is, the researcher using different methods should not expect findings generated by different methods to fall into a coherent picture. A similar criticism of the romanticism associated with the concept of triangulation is presented by Mcfee (1992:330). He argues that while triangulation between methods compares two research solutions to a single problem in an effort to validate outcomes, it is premised on the claim that both methods are investigating the same thing. “... there is an intimate connection between methods and issues, so one cannot triangulate between methods unless one can be sure that both (or all) of the methods address the same issue” (ibid.: 217).

### **3.5.1 The initial research interview**

Cannell and Kahn (1968) cited in Cohen and Manion (1997:271) define the research interview as ‘a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by her on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation’. The interview is a short term relationship that must be carefully constructed. Seidman (1991) cited in Jessop (1997:71) sees the interview as “ ... a social relationship that must be nurtured, sustained and then ended gracefully.... The rapport ... needs to be controlled.... The interviewing relationship must be marked by respect, interest, attention, and good manners on the part of the interviewer”.

This study made use of interview questions that were open-ended. Kerlinger (1970) cited in Cohen and Manion (1997:277) refers to open-ended questions as those that “supply a frame of reference for respondents’ answers and their expressions”. Apart from the subject of the question, which is determined by the nature of the problem under investigation, there are no other restrictions on either the content or the manner of the interviewee’s reply. Cohen and Manion (1997:277) summarise the advantages of open-ended questions as follows:

Open-ended questions ... are flexible; they allow the interviewer to probe; so that she may go into more depth if she chooses, or clear up any misunderstandings; they enable the researcher to test the limits of the respondents’ knowledge; they encourage co-operation and help to establish rapport; and they help the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes. Open-ended questions can also result in unexpected or unanticipated answers which may suggest hitherto unthought-of relationships or hypothesis.

The problems with interviews include the fact that the interview is a source of 'indirect' information filtered through the views of the interviewee, relies on how articulate the respondents are, and has inherent 'researcher effects', 'participant effects' and 'context effects' (Mouton 1996). While this may be so, Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) argue that the interview is the most important data collection instrument that a qualitative researcher possesses.

The initial interview used to ascertain teachers' perceptions of economics teaching was a semi-structured interview which made use of an interview schedule. In order to enhance the validity of the interview schedule, it was piloted with two experienced teachers of economics (both had taught economics for more than ten years). In this way, the instrument was checked for clarity and meaningfulness of questions. It was also commented on by my supervisor. This was in keeping with Wragg's suggestion for the enhancement of instrument validity (Wragg 1984). The interview schedule was divided into three sections. The first section elicited biographical information on the respondent; the second section concerned the profile of the school and the third, the respondent's experiences as an economics teacher. The interview schedule which was presented to each teacher one week prior to the interview so that they could think about the issues raised and provide some depth in their answers as opposed to simply providing superficial answers 'off the cuff'. The teachers were at liberty to refrain from answering any question they deemed 'sensitive'. Both teachers, however, were happy to answer all the questions posed. Both interviews took place at the respective schools and lasted for approximately seventy minutes. During the interview I used a series of prompts and probes in order to make the meaning of the responses clearer. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. A preliminary interview report was compiled and presented to each teacher for verification. Creswell (1994) states that such a strategy enhances the 'internal validity' and accuracy of the data. Apart from a few minor changes, both teachers were satisfied that the interview report was an accurate reflection of their biography, their schools and their views on economics teaching.

### **3.5.2 Lesson Observations**

Although this research study did not adopt a systematic observation orientation, I feel it important to outline the nature of early classroom observation research. In the late 1960s, systematic observation was the dominant method of research on classrooms. Systematic observation

involved the observation of large samples of teachers and pupils. Observers systematically coded activities that took place at regular intervals (for example every three seconds or every twenty-five seconds) according to a coding scheme. The most popular coding system of this kind was developed by Ned Flanders. He developed the FIAC (Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories) which was designed to measure variations in the level of control of the teacher over classroom events (Flanders 1970). Numerous researchers have since critiqued the FIAC. Hammersley (1993:45) summarises these criticisms as follows:

- \*\* Systematic observation provides data only about average or typical classrooms, teachers and pupils;
- \*\* It typically ignores the temporal and spatial context in which the data are collected;
- \*\* It is usually only concerned with overt behaviour, observable behaviour and neglects features that are possible more meaningful;
- \*\* Being concerned with what can be categorised or measured it may distort, obscure or ignore qualitative features through crude measurement techniques or by using categories with ill-defined boundaries;
- \*\* It focuses on small bits of action rather than global concepts. This leads to a lack of potential to generate fresh insights;
- \*\* The pre-specification of categories determines what is discovered by the research;
- \*\* Placing arbitrary boundaries on continuous phenomena obscures the flux of social interaction.

While the Flanders schedule was able to provide rapid feedback about how authoritarian or child-centred teachers were, Furlong and Edwards (1993) argue that it does not contribute towards our understanding of classroom research and produces 'dangerous illusions' that we already understand how classrooms work.

Hammersley (1993) states that recent research in the field of classroom research seems to share a fundamental orientation that is 'non-behaviourist'. The central aim has been to discover the assumptions, rules and strategies which underlie and produce classroom interaction. The classroom observations in this research study adopted a similar orientation. In order to establish how the teachers actually taught, a series of consecutive economics lessons was to be observed according to a structured observation schedule. The observation schedule was an *adaptation of*

the new Teacher Development Appraisal Document (Department of National Education 1998). The emphasis is on 'adaptation' because it was essentially a selection of categories used for teacher appraisal such as the classroom resource profile, lesson planning, the learning environment created, lesson presentation and methodology, assessment practices and teaching resources. The intention was not to carry out an appraisal, but to undertake an observation of the two teachers' practices. This was actually much easier said than done. My nine years of economics teaching experience and my present occupation as a teacher educator preparing trainee economics teachers demanded that I be conscious of not evaluating the decisions and actions that the teachers made during their lessons so as to avoid what Eisner (1991) refers to as the danger of 'connoisseurship'. I realised that my observations and descriptions were in fact affected by my prior knowledge and personal teaching style. Wickham (1998:43) writes "that observation is neither objective or value-free and ... an observer's vision is skewed by her own subjectivities, ... descriptive writing language contains evaluative elements and ... it is difficult to divorce the two".

Observations are the primary source of data collection in doing case study research (Fraenkel & Wallen 1993). Cohen and Manion (1997:107) distinguish between participant and non-participant observation. Participant observation entails a situation where the observer gets involved in the very activity she sets out to observe. Non-participant observation is a situation where the observer uses a structured observation schedule to guide the observations and does not take part in the activity she is observing. This research study was confined to non-participant observation which was in keeping with the nature of the study and the data required to address the second research question.

During the lesson observations, careful concentration and rapid shorthand enabled me to obtain as much valuable information as possible so as to create a 'thick description' (Geertz :1973:3). Of particular importance was the need to immediately compile a report. On this issue, Cohen and Manion (1997:112) assert that one should:

... never resume your observations until the notes from the preceding observation are complete.... Until your observations and impressions from one visit are a matter of record, there is little point in returning to the classroom ... and reducing the impact of one set of events by superimposing another and more recent set.



The initial interviews and classroom observation process unfolded very differently at each school. In Rita's school, (the ex-model C school), arrangements for the interview were made via the Internet. The interview with Rita took place punctually and the subsequent classroom observations were carried according to our planned schedule. Rita had apprised the pupils of my research and had introduced me to her pupils prior to the commencement of the actual observations. On the day of the first observation, Rita's pupils ushered me to the seat that they had specially vacated for me. I generally arrived at the school at least five minutes prior to the commencement of the economics lessons. I would enter the class and take my seat before Rita could arrive. By the end of the second and third days I got the distinct impression that the pupils were becoming quite comfortable with my presence in their classroom. I knew that they were resorting to 'normal' behaviour when (prior to Rita's arrival), and in my presence, they would engage in rowdy horseplay in the class, bicker with one another, and use obscene language and gestures on each other. While Rita was in the class, pupils, concealed from her view (but well aware that I could see them), would eat their lunch, exchange musical paraphernalia and mischievously provoke one another. It became obvious that my credentials were of little significance to the pupils as this kind of behaviour persisted throughout the observation period.

Data collection at Vusi's school presented numerous problems. The original plan was to conduct the interview with Vusi at the school at a time and place that was most convenient to him. He agreed to have the interview take place at school on a Friday, just after midday because he was free for the rest of the afternoon. The appointment was postponed on three different occasions for reasons ranging from the need to attend union meetings to the early closure of school because of a concert in the local stadium. The last time it was postponed was because Vusi's wife had just given birth one hour prior to our interview. The classroom observations were scheduled to take place over a two-week period. The plan was to observe twelve consecutive lessons in one class over this two-week period. While this data collection plan worked efficiently at Rita's school, it presented several problems at Vusi's school. Vusi's school was fraught with numerous inconsistencies and was susceptible to unpredictable events. Disorganization appeared to be the norm at this school. There were numerous disruptions to the school programme, such as, early closure of the school for union meetings, early closure of school for sometimes 'unknown' reasons and general disruption as a result of sport and choir related activities. On Fridays, the

school simply degenerated into total disorganization very early in the day with teachers and pupils leaving school at random. The classroom observation programme became a disjointed effort. Vusi apologised profusely for the disruptions and the general disorganization of the school. The school operated in alternating spurts of order and disorder. There were the 'good' days when I would go in and observe the lessons (according to the pre-arranged observation programme that we had decided on). Then there would be a series of two and three days when no teaching took place at all (for reasons cited earlier).

Vusi's school comprised Black African pupils and staff. Although the pupils and staff were familiar with me as a result of the time I spent at the school supervising my trainee economics teachers (six weeks in 1997 and two weeks early in 1998), I still stuck out like a sore thumb as an 'Indian' in a Black African township school. While both pupils and staff were very polite and courteous towards me, my position as an Indian researcher and university lecturer was a distortion to the 'natural' setting of the school. After the first day's observations, I was concerned that my presence had severely inhibited the pupils' responses because pupil participation in the lesson was almost non-existent. On conferring with Vusi, he indicated that their response was typical. During the course of the four and a half weeks that I spent at this school, Vusi's comments began to make sense. Pupil participation in lessons was limited and had little to do with my presence in the classroom. Economics lessons were few and far between (because of the problems cited earlier), and when they did occur, they generally entailed a packed programme with Vusi trying to cover as much work as possible so as to make up for lost time. The kinds of strategies adopted are documented in the next chapter.

After four and a half weeks, I realised that there was nothing new of significance that I could observe from Vusi's practice. At that point I decided to curtail the lesson observations. I learnt that while the data collection plan may look impressive on paper, data collection does not always unfold as we expect it to.

### **3.5.3 The post-observation interview**

As the lesson observations proceeded, it was 'natural' that data analysis and interpretation were taking place simultaneously. I began to identify discrepancies between teacher theories and practice. After the lesson observation reports were compiled and analysed, the disjuncture

between the teachers' epistemologies and their actual practice became more evident. This disjuncture formed the basis for eliciting data for addressing the third research question which seeks to understand the reasons for the tension between the teachers' beliefs about teaching and their practice. A second interview was conducted with each teacher. The interview dealt specifically with the conflict between the teachers' thinking and their practice. This was arguably the most difficult and awkward part of the data collection process. Both teachers, having taught for many years, had 'refined' their teaching practice and had internalised the merit of their practice in dealing with the context in which they operated. The extent to which they had shifted their practice from their beliefs was indeed a revelation to both teachers. Although they were somewhat 'disturbed' by the findings of the observations, they did confirm that the observations were in fact an accurate reflection of how they taught in class and were able to 'justify' the choices that they made in their daily teaching. It became apparent that the context in which the teachers taught significantly affected their practice and mediated the theory/practice incongruence.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided an account of how the process of data collection unfolded. It presented the methodological orientation of the research study, sampling procedures employed, research instruments and associated problems and addressed the issues of triangulation and validation.

The next chapter will present a detailed description and analysis of the data.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide biographies of both teachers and a detailed description of the contexts in which they worked. Rita and Vusi's theories of economics teaching will then be explicated and compared according to the selected inductively-determined categories. Each teacher's practice will then be examined with the view to analysing the constraints and the strategies that emerged in each context.

#### 4.2. A DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

The aims of this section are, firstly, to provide biographical information on both teachers and, secondly, to provide a detailed description of the actual school contexts in terms of their locality, daily routines, environments and the communities that they served. Although the schools were within twenty-five kilometres of each other and under the control of the same regional education authority in KwaZulu-Natal, they were strikingly different in many ways.

##### 4.2.1 A profile of Vusi/ Who was Vusi?

Vusi, a Black African teacher in his mid-thirties, was born and raised in a rural community in KwaZulu-Natal. Like many rural families affected by political violence, Vusi's family was forced to flee their home and seek refuge in a peri-urban African township. His primary schooling took place in a typical rural African school, with class sizes of more than seventy pupils, unqualified teachers and minimal resources. He regarded himself as fortunate to have attended a private secondary school where he specialised in commerce.

Vusi obtained a secondary teaching diploma at a local teacher training college and had been teaching for nine years. Teaching did not rank high up on his original list of career choices. He had in fact wanted to become an accountant but for financial reasons could not pursue that option. He had chosen teaching as a means of survival but very quickly grew to enjoy the challenges that the job presented.

#### **4.2.2 A profile of Rita/Who was Rita?**

Rita, a White teacher, in her mid-forties, was born in North Africa where she completed almost all of her schooling. Having attended private schools throughout her school life, Rita felt that she had been exposed to a good education. Although she had spent the last twenty-five years in South Africa, she did not regard herself as a South African. She had been teaching for more than twenty years and had taught Economics in particular for fifteen years.

She held a Bachelor of Commerce degree, a Higher Diploma in Education and an Honours degree in Business Economics, all of which were obtained at South African institutions. Having originally started as a teacher of Accounting, she was requested by her former school principal to begin a commerce course at the school. That signalled the beginning of her career as a commerce teacher of Economics, Accounting and Business Economics.

#### **4.2.3 Vusi's school**

The school was situated in an African township near Durban in KwaZulu Natal. It was a secondary school that belonged to the former KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture. It was located within a very poor socio-economic area where unemployment and crime rates were high. As one drove through the township, the neglect of the past was clearly visible everywhere. The township lacked a regular refuse removal service. Streets were without lighting and were littered with all forms of garbage. Random dumping sites existed at almost every street corner. Sewer systems were nonfunctional or in need of repair and maintenance. Burst sewer pipes were a common sight with effluent flowing onto roads and verges. As one moved deeper into the township, the roads deteriorated and because of large potholes, driving required skilful manoeuvring.

During school hours, one often found children of school going age loitering in the streets of the township. Most houses were old, dilapidated and poorly maintained. Bordering the school was an informal settlement of shack dwellers. The school having been in existence for approximately twenty-two years, serviced children from an informal settlement and from the formal housing settlement. It was situated below road level and had an untarred parking space for a maximum of five vehicles. The entire school was completely fenced with two-metre high razor wire fencing.

A pupil enrolment of eight hundred and forty pupils was served by a staff of forty teachers. All classrooms were without electricity and in almost every class, the light fittings and electrical wall sockets had been ripped out. Classrooms were dark and gloomy even on sunny days mainly because the situation of the school well below ground level meant that it was shaded from the sun for most of the day. On dull, cloudy days, reading and writing under such conditions were quite a challenge to both teachers and pupils. Broken classroom doors, cupboard doors and windows were a common sight as one moved through the school. Evidence of vandalism and neglect was everywhere.

The administration block, the only block that had electricity, comprised the principal's office, the secretary's office, a library and a staffroom. After twenty-two years, the school library was still not yet in use. Vusi estimated that there were between one thousand five hundred and two thousand books available in the library. He remarked that the school was working hard at making the library functional. No specialist rooms were available.

As for sporting facilities, only a single dusty netball field was available. During intervals, many pupils remained in class or occupied the corridors or sat on the staircases. Cleaning and maintenance staff were nonexistent at the school. In each class, the pupils, were required to sweep and keep the classroom neat. None of the classes had waste collection containers. Dirt was collected in the front corner of the class. Opening the classroom door on a windy day meant extra work for the girls, who were the designated cleaners of the class. Classroom floors had bare cement that over the years had become a loose, powdery and dusty surface. Classrooms were built to accommodate a maximum of fifty pupils seated in rows. The number of pupils in the Economics class totalled twenty-seven. Double desks with attached seats were provided for thirty pupils. All desks were clustered towards the back of the class. A dusty table was situated in the front corner of the class. No chair was available for the teacher.

The classrooms had a damp, musty smell. Although there were windows on both sides of the class, many of them had been sealed shut. Once the classroom door was shut, there was minimal ventilation in this class. Windows, cupboard doors, the classroom door and floors were damaged and in need of maintenance. Graffiti written over the years could be found on the walls, ceilings, desks and seats. The school was in dire need of painting. Apart from a torn timetable dangling

from the front wall, absolutely no other form of a chart, or display or any other form of educational stimulus could be found in the class. It represented a very deprived learning environment. A walk past the toilet yielded a strong, unpleasant stench that pervaded the adjacent classrooms. To compound matters, blocked or burst sewer pipes had caused sewer effluent to overflow down banks and into gutters that ran along the corridors.

All classrooms had chalkboards available but the ready availability of chalk and dusters always presented a problem. Many teachers preferred to keep their own duster and chalk that they carried from class to class. According to Vusi, most pupils were Zulu mother-tongue speakers. He estimated that about five percent of all pupils had all the basic requisites (pens, rulers, erasers). It presented a major problem and restricted the teaching and learning process in class. In my interaction with the school principal, she revealed that the school was understaffed by three teachers and that the absentee rate of teachers was around seven per day. On any particular day it was possible to see the consequences of unmanned classrooms. Pupils played around in the corridors, loitered around the school, often engaged in violent behaviour and presented a constant source of disturbance to other teachers and pupils in other classes. To compound matters, many teachers (who were present at schools) did not report to class timeously. Some did not report at all.

Corporal punishment was rife at this school, with teachers boasting their own canes to mete out corporal punishment. Some teachers who had moved away from corporal punishment often resorted to sending pupils out of the class to kneel on display on the banks adjacent to the classrooms for full view of the school population. Often between sixty and seventy percent of the class were ousted for committing some misdemeanour. On questioning Vusi as to the value of such practice, he stated that since corporal punishment was not acceptable, they needed some other action to “teach them a lesson”. There was a serious lack of discipline amongst pupils. The school was also faced with the problem of dealing with drug pedlars who had infiltrated the school. He felt that there ought to be a closer relationship between the school and the local community in order to steer the school onto the correct track. The fact that more than ninety percent of the pupils originated from backgrounds of immense poverty and hardship meant that they came to school with social problems typical of that type of environment. The organisation and administration of the school was very poor. Vusi was of the opinion that many of the

problems experienced at the school stemmed from the lack of firm and judicious leadership. Many children often absconded from school and on Fridays, the organisation of the school tended to slide into chaos well before midday.

According to Vusi, a very frustrating aspect of teaching at this school was that while he tried to instil discipline and dedication to school work, other members of staff systematically counteracted the progress that he made with the students. Most of the staff tended to ignore discipline and behaviour related problems. They also overlooked the drug problem. There were many members of staff who were quite demotivated themselves.

The context in which the research was to be conducted was fraught with inconsistencies and was susceptible to unpredictable events. There were numerous disruptions to the school programme. These included inter-school related activities that would disrupt the proceedings for the whole day, early closure of school because of union meetings, early closure of school for reasons known only by management and Fridays seemed to be a day that started to draw to a close by midday. On Fridays, pupils and teachers just seemed to leave the school at random and eventually, the entire school degenerated into total disorganisation. The classroom observations became a disjointed effort and it became difficult to find some continuity with the work that Vusi was doing. It took approximately four and a half weeks to gather the data that were needed. During the two-month period visiting the school, Vusi would constantly apologise for the disruptions and would regularly articulate his disapproval with the way the school was being run.

#### **4.2.4 Rita's school**

The school was located in an affluent suburb in the Durban area in KwaZulu-Natal. The residential area was characterised by large, modern houses with immaculately maintained gardens, well-serviced infrastructure and a large modern shopping complex.

The school was an ex-model C school, which had belonged to the ex-Natal Education Department. It had a pupil enrolment of approximately one thousand three hundred and fifty male pupils. It was established on a large expanse of land and was divided into what was known as the upper campus and the lower campus with each campus having its own staffroom and middle management offices. There were approximately forty-two classrooms, various specialist rooms,



an administration block, a library and a school hall. The school library was well-resourced and a specialist librarian was employed to facilitate its functions. Sports facilities included a hockey field, a rugby field, netball and basketball fields, and a swimming pool. The school buildings, sports facilities and gardens were impeccably maintained.

In terms of the school's communication system, the school was very well resourced. It had a telephone, fax machine and computer systems that were linked to the Internet with E-mail facilities. Communication between classroom and the administration block was facilitated by an intercommunication system. In terms of teaching resources, the school had an adequate number of overhead projectors, software, television and video machines. Classes had large chalkboards that were in good condition. The classrooms were constructed to accommodate approximately thirty pupils seated in rows. The number of pupils in the Economics class was twenty-three which suggested that there was always adequate seating place and personal room space for each pupil. Pupils had ample writing surfaces as well as room for additional resources such as additional reference books and files that were used during the lesson. Desks were arranged in rows of four on either side of a centre aisle. Desks and chairs were in good condition. In terms of space for movement between desks, pupils manoeuvred into and out of their seating places with minimum effort. Each class had a table and chair for the teacher. Overhead projectors were permanently located in classes. In respect of lighting, the classroom was properly lit with all bulbs in functioning condition. Each class had large windows and two ceiling fans which allowed for more than adequate ventilation. Walls were painted, clean and well maintained. The classrooms were very neat, and clean. Apart from a calendar, no charts or visual displays were evident in Rita's classroom.

All pupils were neatly attired in full school uniform. Rita believed that the home language of most of the pupils in the school was English. The language of instruction of the school was also English. In Rita's opinion, almost all (ninety-eight percent) of pupils had all the necessary requisites for school (pens, rulers, erasers, stationery, special mathematics equipment, study-aids).

The school operated a nine-day cycle. Teachers were classroom based. Each period was fifty minutes long with five minutes in between periods for pupils to make their way to the different

venues. A walk through the school during lesson time and an observation of pupil movement between lessons revealed the highly organized context in which the school operated. There was efficient movement between rooms with teachers waiting outside classrooms to receive pupils.

### **4.3 TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT ECONOMICS TEACHING**

This section presents an account of each teacher's beliefs about teaching in general and their understanding of the way economics should be taught. The data were obtained by means of a semi-structured interview.

#### **4.3.1 What were Vusi's perceptions about Economics teaching?**

Vusi felt that teachers had to be good role models for their pupils. Teachers had to be a source of inspiration and motivation to their pupils. They ought to be encouraging and supportive of their students. In his opinion, good teachers were teachers who did not create the impression that they were the only source of expert knowledge in the class, but instead, developed a tentative, experimental approach to teaching and learning. Teachers should not create a distinct knowledge barrier between themselves and the pupils. He expressed the view that a barrier of that kind often made pupils feel inadequate and might cause them to lose interest in their work.

An important aspect of teaching for Vusi was the need to help pupils realise the value of education. He was of the opinion that many parents, pupils and teachers did not take education seriously. Teachers ought to instil in pupils a desire to learn, to progress and to be successful. He felt that it was particularly important especially since his pupils came from disadvantaged backgrounds and needed to look to education to break the shackles of poverty. Vusi indicated that teaching in a context where poverty, unemployment, crime, repressive teaching and learning conditions, and a highly problematic medium of instruction, required a teacher who had to be sympathetic to the needs of the students, while creating a stimulating and challenging learning environment. Although he was faced with a school that badly lacked teaching resources and was without electricity, he stated that in such a context, teachers ought to improvise to teach effectively. Teachers had to develop suitable ways of teaching that would match the needs of the context. Although it could be quite a frustrating experience, teachers ought to persevere in their efforts. Cooperative learning experiences were important to Vusi. He felt that mixed ability

groupings provided the opportunity for pupils to learn from each other, to take risks, and would be more inclined to articulate their ideas in a small group than in a large class group.

According to Vusi, a teacher's competence did not depend entirely on academic and professional qualifications. Teachers had to be hard working and committed to be productive. He quoted from his experience several teachers who were under qualified, but who were very good teachers. He conceded that he himself did not feel competent to teach certain abstract aspects of Economics and certain topics that were foreign to the pupils' experiences.

To teach effectively in the context in which he found himself, he relied heavily on his ability to switch from English into the mother tongue (Zulu). Teaching using only English as the medium of instruction, would result in a serious communication problem with more than ninety-five percent of the pupils excluded from any form of discussion. In that particular context, the teacher had to be bilingual. He had to have the ability to help children make meaning using their mother tongue yet create opportunities for pupils to feel safe to articulate their understandings in English.

While Vusi acknowledged the need to create a warm nurturing and 'friendly' environment, he felt that pupils often misconstrued his intentions. Being a friendly teacher could lead to pupils becoming troublesome and disruptive. As the teacher, he felt the need to be in control of the situation. The nature of the students and the manner in which they behaved determined the type of approach he adopted. After a while, pupils would come to realise what was expected of them. He felt that in his own school, there was a need for strict discipline and authority because it was easy for pupils to get out of control. "Because you are the driver, you must be in control." He stated that he was firm when it came to self discipline, and he frowned on irresponsible behaviour.

Vusi argued that in the planning of Economics lessons, the teacher had to take cognisance of establishing a link between economic theory and its application to real practical economic problems. Equipping pupils with the ability to apply economic theory was central to good economics teaching. Pupils must be able to engage in economics discourse in a knowledgeable way. Teachers had to be well informed about daily economic phenomena. They had to keep pace with recent economic events by actively following press, radio and television reports. The

economics teacher must have insight into the subject of Economics. He had to be knowledgeable. His knowledge must go beyond textbook knowledge. Knowledge of recent economic events had practical value in that it could be made available to students whereby pupils could use economic theory that they had learnt and apply it to real relevant economic issues.

One of his key goals in teaching was to encourage and develop a love for the subject. He felt that it was critical that pupils enjoyed what they were learning. Teachers must be able to stimulate an interest in pupils. Teaching and learning must be a meaningful experience. Once pupils had developed a love for the subject then they would naturally want to develop insight into the subject.

According to Vusi, teachers should not work in isolation. There should be constant collaboration between teachers in the same discipline and with teachers of other disciplines. Teachers should use other teachers as resources, as sounding boards and as yardsticks to measure their own competence.

He noted that having a term plan and a weekly plan of the lessons that he intended to teach was essential for a teacher. Vusi argued that economics lessons should be planned using information from a variety of sources that might include, the prescribed textbook, newspapers, radio and television reports, and other references. A range of teaching resources could be used to make economics teaching and learning enjoyable and effective. To make economic theory meaningful, teachers must plan regular excursions to places of economic interest.

Vusi believed that every pupil was inherently capable of success. He felt that since the general elections in 1994, many opportunities had become available to Black people. Previously Black people succeeded in a limited number of fields. Pupils could now pursue many career paths. He did not want to see his pupils moving into mediocre occupations. He felt that opportunities existed for all pupils despite their abilities. He felt proud when some of his ex-students went on to have successful careers. His greatest concern was for those pupils who lacked motivation and interest in their work.

He felt that having the learners involved in decision making was important as this would help them to be good decision makers in the future. He stated that with decision making came the added responsibility of being accountable. Teaching went far beyond simply teaching subject matter. He felt that a teacher should also play a part in preparing pupils for their roles in adult life.

Vusi saw assessment as a key component of teaching and learning. It was a form of feedback to the teacher and the pupil. It was a means of measuring how well both the teacher and the pupils had performed and would give a good indication of the need to adjust the teaching method. He felt that there was much value in using different methods to assess pupils' abilities.

Vusi taught at least four different subjects. He argued that teaching had broad pedagogical principles and that every teacher had to evaluate the context in which he found himself and develop a strategy that best suited the context. Economics in particular was a problem-solving discipline and ought to be taught in a way that would develop pupils' critical reasoning and problem-solving skills. They should be able to readily apply economic theory to explain current economic issues. One of the demands of a good economics teacher was to keep abreast of current economic occurrences and be able to incorporate that information into his daily lessons.

#### **4.3.2 What were Rita's perceptions of Economics teaching?**

Rita felt that good teachers inspired, enlightened and motivated pupils. To be effective, they organized learning experiences by drawing on real life examples. Relating the syllabus to the real world was important as it created the context in which the concepts to be learned could be embedded. She argued that that type of approach was central to good economics teaching because Economics was a real, dynamic and alive science and had to be taught in this fashion. Economics teachers had to constantly quote economic phenomena to make economic concepts genuine in the minds of pupils. She believed that excursions to places of economic interest were crucial. The role of visiting speakers was also very highly valued by Rita.

The aspect of Economics teaching that she particularly enjoyed was the active discussions in economics lessons. Pupils needed to be actively engaged in debates around economic issues as it was an important way in which pupils could develop skills as economists. Economic

knowledge and skills could then be applied to real, current economic problems. Debates and discussions gave a good indication of pupils' understanding of economic concepts and principles. Pupils brought to the lesson a whole range of their own experiences. Teachers should be able to tap into pupils' experiences by adopting a provocative approach and by introducing provocative issues that would stimulate discussion and help pupils make meaning of economic issues.

Rita felt that effective teachers were dynamic and enthusiastic about their work. They had a genuine interest in their pupils' development. Being committed and enthusiastic about the task of teaching were fundamental to good teaching. Equally important to her, was the need to have a sound knowledge of the subject and be well read with regard to latest developments on the national and international economic scene. Having a sound knowledge of economics and being committed to and enthusiastic about economics teaching were prerequisites for organizing stimulating learning activities. She was of the firm view that teachers who were enthusiastic about teaching and learning were able to transmit that enthusiasm to their pupils and generally enjoyed the co-operation of the pupils. To generate and maintain that enthusiasm required the planning and presentation of lessons in an interesting manner using a range of teaching methods and teaching resources.

To Rita, the central role of the teacher was to engender a love for the subject economics. She argued that once pupils had developed a love for the subject, they became self-motivated to read around economic issues and developed a positive attitude towards their work. Disciplinary problems became a non-issue.

Having taught Economics for fifteen years, she felt quite confident and competent teaching the different aspects of the economics syllabus. She firmly believed that a better qualified teacher would have a greater in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, and that university graduates when compared to college graduates were inclined to think 'more laterally'. She argued that although some teachers had honours and masters degrees, they did not necessarily make good teachers. Having an honours or masters degree however, did give a teacher a distinct advantage if her teaching was informed by her higher qualifications.

For Rita, the nature of the relationship in the class situation had to be based on distinct teacher and pupil roles. The traditional teacher-pupil relationship was important. She stated that, “You can’t be their friend. There has to be an age gap and an authority gap.” She firmly believed that the gap had to be maintained. From her experience she saw the need to be firm with pupils. While it was important to be firm, she had to develop a disposition that would also make her approachable. She conceded that she had to constantly deal with the tension between being strict (thereby maintaining discipline), and being approachable (that would facilitate teaching and learning). Rita acknowledged that being remote, hostile and distant always proved to be counter-productive. She felt that relationships developed over time with trust and sincerity. Teachers and pupils had to develop and earn mutual respect. She believed that teachers had to create an affective, receptive environment in class that gave pupils the opportunity to articulate their points of view, to argue, to motivate and substantiate their points of view. Apart from the distinct teacher role, a teacher had to function as advisor, counsellor and confidant. She did concede that as a teacher one had to maintain authority in class otherwise pupils got out of control and became disruptive.

Rita recognised the necessity for advanced planning. Teachers ought to have a year plan divided into term plans that should eventually translate into daily lesson plans. Pupils must be informed of the programme of work for the term and should be provided with a detailed guide of how the work planned for the term would be covered. The programme should be flexibly structured so that the needs of all the pupils were catered for. It should be designed in a manner that would allow for pupils of varying abilities to work through timeously and at the same time be organised in a way that allowed all pupils to work through the programme at their own pace. The programme must have a system of controls whereby the teacher would be able to closely monitor the progress of each student.

Consulting a wide range of resources, such as a range of textbooks, newspapers, commercial periodicals, Internet data and other references as well as developing effective teaching resources were essential to good teaching. Rita declared that lessons must be such that pupils were directed to the relationship between economic theory and real economic practice. Economics involved problem solving and should be taught in that manner.

Rita placed a high value on pupils' achievement. She expected a high standard of work from pupils. Most of her students went on to do a Bachelor of Commerce degree at a university. She hoped that she could adequately prepare them to achieve that. Her fundamental concern was for pupils to "make something of themselves". She wanted her pupils to have successful careers and declared that school education laid the foundation for future success.

She felt that it was important for pupils to be involved in the decision making process in economics teaching and learning. From her experience, she found that when pupils were party to a decision, they were less likely to flout the decisions that were taken. Pupils regularly made requests around economics teaching and learning issues for example, test dates, assignment due dates, the nature of assignments and assessment criteria. If there was merit in what pupils advocated and if the class was amenable to the suggestion then she remarked that she would rarely overturn their requests so long as the decision was in keeping with the existing school policy. She said that she was keen to have regular pupil involvement in decision making especially if pupils were eager to engage in learning.

Rita felt that having class discussions, group work, and independent research had much educational value. She indicated that her biggest problem was that of time. The problem with time had two dimensions. Firstly, the personal time that she had available to plan lessons was limited and it was often time-consuming to plan learner-centred lessons. She was keen to plan excursions and organise for guest speakers to visit the school but just did not find sufficient time to do this. Secondly, she had limited contact time with the students. The economics syllabus was voluminous. From her experience she had found that she was always under pressure to complete the syllabus. Very often, much of her teaching took the form of formal instruction, using the lecture method supplemented by the overhead projector. Given the existing syllabus constraints, if she were to make every lesson pupil centred, focussing on group work and independent research, then she was sure that she would not complete the syllabus and have the pupils ready for the final examination.

Rita attached great significance to assessment. She regarded the formal tests and examinations as the most important indicators of pupils' competence. Rita argued that from her experience, the



more regularly one tested, the greater was the benefit to the pupil. Apart from the formal test, she recognised the value of using the essay technique, project work and assignments. Peer evaluation was considered of merit with mutual agreement on the set of criteria for assessment.

#### **4.4 A COMPARISON OF RITA AND VUSI'S BELIEFS ABOUT ECONOMICS TEACHING**

Rita and Vusi's perceptions of teaching are compared in terms of the following inductively determined categories: -

- \*\* Developing a love of the subject
- \*\* Knowledgeable about current economic phenomena
- \*\* Pastoral responsibility
- \*\* Classroom control
- \*\* Teaching methods/approaches
- \*\* Assessment
- \*\* Economics as a discipline

It was interesting to note that while Rita and Vusi presented significant differences with regard to their personal life history, they were very similar in their beliefs about teaching. They were different in the sense that they had very different early childhood experiences, grew up in vastly different contexts, studied at very different institutions, had a ten-year age differential between them, and were of different race and sex. Their fundamental epistemology of teaching, however, was very similar. This was evident in that they shared similar views on several key issues about teaching. The only aspect of their lives that they had in common that could be a reason for their similarity in their teaching epistemology was that they both attended private schools.

##### **4.4.1 Developing a love for the subject**

Rita and Vusi considered the aspect of developing and engendering a love for the subject economics as a primary goal of their teaching. They felt that it was critical that children enjoyed what they learnt. Once pupils had developed this love for the subject, they would have a natural, positive attitude towards the subject and would be self-motivated to read around economics issues and develop insight. Learning about economics had to be an enriching experience to their pupils. As economics teachers, they felt that they had to adopt strategies that would stimulate

interest and develop positive attitudes towards the subject. They also felt that this would also stem discipline related problems.

#### **4.4.2 Knowledge about current economic phenomena**

Both teachers shared a common understanding of economics teaching. They specifically emphasised the importance of being well read and knowledgeable about current national and international economics phenomena. Good economics teaching involved incorporating debates around current economic phenomena into their daily teaching. Bridging the gap between economic theory and practice was deemed important by them. Both regarded Economics as a discipline that evolved out of the desire to solve problems (that arise out of the basic economic problem of the allocation of scarce resources to satisfy unlimited wants). In this light they acknowledged the need to teach economics in an inductive way as opposed to a heavy reliance on the deductive approach to economics teaching. The inductive method ensured that pupils developed a good understanding of economic decision making and prepared them to be learned decision makers.

#### **4.4.3 Classroom control**

On the issue of classroom management and control, Vusi and Rita firmly believed that teachers had to be in full control of the teaching and learning situation all the time. They emphasised the importance of the teacher-pupil authority relationship in controlling pupil behaviour and maintaining discipline, but agreed that every class represented a different context that required a unique approach. Firm discipline and good classroom management skills were necessary for teaching and learning to take place. Democratic decision making (within limits) was beneficial in their classrooms. Issues dealing with test dates, assignment topics and due dates, assessment criteria and examination dates, could be negotiated. Decisions taken in that way were more likely to be adhered to since pupils would have been party to the decision making process. Plausible suggestions and requests would be accommodated as long as they complied with the existing school policy.

#### **4.4.4 Pastoral responsibility**

Vusi and Rita presumed that their roles as teachers superseded simply teaching economics in the classroom. They regarded themselves as counsellors and confidants and ‘social workers’ to their pupils. The well being and success of their pupils were important to them and both hoped that they could adequately prepare pupils to make strategic career choices. They regarded their pupils as inherently capable of success in careers that suited their abilities. Both Vusi and Rita expressed grave concern for those students who were uninterested in their work and lacked the motivation to develop and progress. They felt that to compete in the labour market, pupils had to work very hard. The nature of teaching and learning should be such that it extended every pupil to his or her maximum capability. Rita and Vusi expounded the belief that the teacher had to be a source of inspiration to pupils. Good teachers were good role models. They were highly motivated, committed to the job of teaching and were genuinely interested in the development and progress of their pupils. Both concurred on the creation of an affective, nurturing environment in which teaching and learning should take place

#### **4.4.5 Teaching methods**

Vusi and Rita attested to the need to use a range of teaching methods and teaching resources to create meaningful teaching and learning experiences. They intimated that Economics teachers in particular had to consult different sources of economic information to make economics teaching effective. They explicated the desire for effective and efficient planning for teaching and learning. They recognised the value of formulating a year plan, term programmes and weekly lesson plans for economics teaching.

#### **4.4.6 Assessment**

Assessment was avouched to be an integral part of teaching and learning. Formal, conventional testing was considered to be the most important assessment technique. They assented on the need for regular assessment. Both teachers expressed the desire to test pupils’ competence in applying economic theory to economic problems and to develop critical reasoning skills. The final senior certificate examination was the only recognised measure of pupil competence and it was important to both teachers that they prepared their pupils well to succeed in this examination.

#### **4.4.7 The discipline economics**

Probably the most significant difference between Vusi and Rita emerged in their beliefs about the subject economics. The theoretical economic models as presented in the school syllabus were based on the principles of Neo-Keynesian economic theory. This theory as a vehicle for analysing current economic issues in economic policy, had been proven to be both misleading and deficient. It was inadequate to address the major problems of modern capitalism and national economic policy which are debated in the real world (Green 1979). In 1995, the formulation of the national core syllabus by the department of national education simply represented cosmetic changes designed mainly to ensure that the 'new' syllabus did not necessitate the purchase of new economics text books. The theoretical economic model remained unchanged although numerous developments in economic theory had been made. The teaching models of economics text books were unable to cast much light on the effect of economic activity on changes in various monetary variables, the relative effectiveness of fiscal policy and monetary policy and South Africa's position in the global economy.

Vusi appeared to have an ambivalent attitude towards the use of economic theory as presented by prescribed school text books. He often emphasised the limitations of the model and regularly questioned the validity of economic arguments as presented. While the text book explained reasons for inflation, unemployment and inequality in a neutral way, Vusi questioned the fundamental assumptions underlying this theory. While Rita was in a favourable position to consult and research widely, she did not explore other theories for explanations of economic phenomena. She appeared to have internalised the models as presented and had taken for granted key assumptions of the model.

#### **4.5 TEACHERS' PRACTICE, CONSTRAINTS AND STRATEGIES**

In this section we discuss the teachers' practice of economics teaching. It was clear that there was a disjuncture between their beliefs and practice. The key situational constraints (as explained in chapter two) that emerged as principal contributors/conditions that accounted for the gap between their beliefs about economics teaching and their actual practice were the organization of the school, the socio-economic background of the pupils, the medium of instruction, lack of resources, work load and time constraints, syllabus constraints and an assessment-driven school-

policy. It will become evident from the analysis that follows that the disjunction between theory and practice was more pronounced in Vusi's case than in Rita's case.

#### **4.5.1 How did Vusi teach economics?**

An examination of Vusi's practice in terms of selected, inductively-determined categories revealed notable tensions and conflict between his perceptions of economics and his practice. These tensions and conflicts appeared to be mediated to different degrees by the situational constraints indicated above. This section will also explain the strategies that he adopted to deal with these constraints and how such strategies created these contradictions.

##### **4.5.1.1 Lesson planning**

Vusi identified topics which he expected to complete with his class during the term. He drafted a term plan. Lessons were planned on a weekly basis. But weekly lesson plans seldom went according to the planned schedule because of the numerous disruptions to the school's programme. Vusi adopted the following procedure. He designed a set of questions on the topic to be taught and presented it to the pupils in advance of the section. Pupils were expected to read through the text book and answer the questions. That would have constituted a draft form of notes. The questions set were drawn from past senior certificate examination question papers. The intention was that pupils would develop some understanding of the issues to be covered, would make note of the problems that they encountered and would contribute to the class discussions that would take place when the new concepts/materials were discussed. The reality was that at least eighty percent of the pupils did not answer the questions. Of the pupils who did answer, many answers were simply copied directly from the textbook while others had made superficial attempts at answering the questions. Vusi cited several reasons for this and these will be explained later. While the lessons were designed to be active, pupil non-participation was a major problem that he experienced.

Over the years that he had been teaching economics, he had developed a comprehensive set of notes on the different topics. Every year, he updated the notes, added the latest available statistics and made copies for every pupil. Pupils had come to realise that they would receive the notes anyway and desisted from exerting any effort in trying to prepare for the lessons. He was also faced with a situation where many pupils in grade twelve (almost seventy percent), had

actually failed grade eleven the previous year, and had been promoted to Grade 12 because of their ages or because they had spent the maximum period allowed in grade eleven (school policy allowed for this). These pupils did not have a solid foundation and had not mastered work that they should have. They had immense difficulty trying to cope with the demands of the Grade twelve syllabus. He felt that because many pupils had been creeping through the system in that manner, they had not changed their attitudes towards their work and had as yet failed to realise that the final grade twelve examination was an external examination, not controlled by the school. He felt that although he had not enjoyed significant successes with all students, he had achieved marginal successes with some students.

Vusi's rationale for his approach was that from his experience of teaching economics at that school, he had learnt that it became a frustrating and stressful experience trying to get pupils involved in preparing for lessons. He had found that in the past, much of the lesson time had been lost admonishing pupils. He stated that the grade twelve syllabus was very extensive and every year, it was a struggle to complete the syllabus on time for the examination. He argued that if he did not plan in this fashion, he was quite sure that the failure rate amongst pupils would be even higher than it presently was. He stated that many pupils were victims of the context in which they lived. When pupils were given a set of homework on any particular day, he knew for a fact that for most of his pupils, the homework that was set for them did not get first priority amongst the activities that the pupils had to complete after school. For those female students who had their own children, and for other students, doing homework was not a priority. Other survival-related activities including household chores, child-minding and part-time jobs took precedence over doing school-related activities. Pupils whose homes formed part of the informal settlement, had limited time in which to complete homework after school. Poor lighting due to the absence of electricity, was a taken for granted reason for not attempting homework. Vusi attributed this attitude to an absence of a supportive home environment. Many parents were illiterate. Many children lived with grandparents and other relatives, while others came from single parent families.

According to Vusi, many pupils had never travelled more than twenty kilometres beyond the township. Those pupils had a limited experience of economic issues. Their experiences had largely been third world experiences of economics in action and were restricted mainly to the

informal sector. Many pupils were not exposed to radio, television and newspapers. A visit to the municipal library entailed a costly trip to the central business district approximately fifteen kilometres away. Such use for meagre financial resources was not high up on the list of priorities of most parents living in that area.

It was evident that Vusi had attempted to engage pupils in some degree of autonomous learning. He wanted them to prepare in advance for lessons so that they could develop their reading, and writing skills, and would be able to articulate their ideas in class. Unfortunately the nature of the home and school context in which pupils found themselves and which they had experienced all their lives had become so embedded and internalised that it became extremely difficult for pupils to embrace the kind of learning that Vusi had planned, especially when faced with compelling factors that made the status quo more easily acceptable. From his experience, he had learned that trying to compete with and manage variables that were beyond his control proved to be a stressful and traumatic undertaking. To assist pupils whom he regarded as victims of a complex, repressive environment, Vusi had employed a strategy that would make his pupils more adept at tackling the final external examination. He carefully analysed previous examination questions, identified questioning styles and patterns, mark allocations and repeated questions for each topic in the economics syllabus. He then compiled comprehensive answers to those questions which he copied and made available to each pupil. He argued that since the examination was very content-orientated and mainly tested pupils' ability to recall information, the 'notes' that he compiled were more than adequate for pupils to answer the examination. He remarked that several of his former economics pupils had performed very well in their grade twelve external examination by studying the notes that he had compiled.

There was certainly a clear disjuncture between what Vusi felt were important principles for good economics teaching and the practice that he applied. It was also clear that his practice was in fact a direct result of the constraints that he faced as a teacher in this context. It was important to Vusi that his pupils performed well in economics. Doing well in economics was measured by their ability to pass the final examination. That was what Vusi in fact prepared them for.

#### **4.5.1.2 Lesson presentation and methodology**

An analysis of Vusi's thinking about lesson presentation and methodology revealed a firm belief in teaching economics using a problem solving approach. He also indicated that ideally a range of teaching methods ought to be used. A comparison of his thinking on this issue and his practice exposed significant inconsistencies. Vusi's practice was in direct contrast with his beliefs about economics teaching. From the discussion that follows it will become evident that his attempt to teach economics in the way he believed it should be taught was inhibited by the constraints of the context in which he found himself. The teaching method employed was strongly influenced by the adverse circumstances that mediated the teaching and learning context in his school. He was constrained by the minimum quality contact time, English as a medium of instruction, the incompetence of the pupils with regard to basic economic concepts and the very limited, restricted third world experiences of his pupils.

Frequently, economics lessons began with Vusi ushering a group of offenders out of the class. Reasons included the failure of pupils to complete work, the non-attendance of parents at a recent parent's meeting and pupil absenteeism. Such students were excluded from current lessons. Vusi's rationale was that it was the only effective way of punishing pupils as those pupils had chosen not to be co-operative and deserved the punishment they received. On some occasions there were only seven pupils left in the class after all transgressors had been removed from the class. Work continued as normal. Vusi appeared to be grappling with the tension between forcing pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and administering some form of punishment.

Lessons generally commenced with Vusi and the pupils trying to figure out where they had stopped at in the previous lesson. It often proved to be quite a task. The reason for that was that the unpredictable nature of the school programme meant that in any particular week, at least two economics lessons may have been disrupted or lost for some reason or the other. Moreover, the erratic school attendance patterns of students, often meant that they found themselves being present for one or maybe two lessons per week. With pupils and the teacher not having seen each other consistently, and being at different points in the syllabus, there was quite some confusion. When it was eventually established where to continue from, for the benefit of those pupils who had missed out and for those who had forgotten, a very cursory recap of the completed sections



was done. Vusi had great difficulty trying to keep track of the different pupils. In the available contact time, he felt that it was important to complete as much of the syllabus as possible.

Lesson presentations generally took a set format. Vusi would systematically take students through the notes that he had given out. Every new concept would be explained in some detail by him. Very often, he would read through a paragraph aloud and highlight key points or terms that he would want the pupils to focus on. Key definitions were read out aloud in chorus by the entire class. This lecture method was punctuated by regular questions requiring simple 'yes' or 'no' answers, or situations where pupils completed the teacher's sentence. Vusi's exposition was filled with an array of rich examples that he used to explain certain concepts. He was well read, and knowledgeable about recent economic phenomena and regularly drew on his readings or his experiences to create a context in which to develop the economic concepts that he taught.

When pupils had difficulty understanding certain abstract economic concepts, he would often switch to the mother-tongue to try to explain the concepts. The introduction of mother-tongue stimulated more responses. Pupils appeared much more at ease providing answers to complex questions using their mother-tongue. He constantly reminded pupils of the need to articulate and write in English as that was the medium through which they would be examined. Although he tried to create and stimulate some discussion on economic issues and tried to show how economic theory could be applied to real situations, pupil responses to problems and current economic affairs were very few and far between. Almost all of the information was provided by the teacher. Pupils appeared to experience a complex problem. They did not feel sufficiently competent to use English and therefore avoided risking responses to questions. The language of instruction appeared to be a major barrier to the teaching and learning. Abstract economic concepts in particular proved to be problematic for English second language students. Vusi explained that he often found it difficult to find the Zulu equivalent of many economic concepts. To compound matters, pupils brought with them a very limited experience of the first world economy. They had limited exposure to newspapers, television and other information sources. On the odd occasion, pupils would raise questions around current economic issues. It was at these times that real economics teaching and learning began to take place. There was an exchange of ideas and experiences. However, these exchanges were infrequent and were almost always checked by his need to forge ahead with the syllabus.

A feature of the teacher's approach to the curriculum was that he raised several development issues in his daily teaching of economics and constantly contested the neutrality of economic knowledge as presented in the textbook and as prescribed by the syllabus. He challenged pupils to question the viability and success of the government's macro-economic policies. He tried to make pupils critical of development initiatives and to analyse the extent to which economic development had reached their own communities. He also tried to make pupils aware of South Africa's place in the global economy and tried to develop in pupils an understanding of the implications of being a world player in the international monetary system. He made regular comments about the plight of LDC's (less developed countries) in the world economy as well as the implications of borrowing from institutions like the World bank and the International Monetary Fund. The main difficulties he faced as a teacher in attempting to deal with economics in this manner, was the time constraint that he had with the syllabus, and the issue of relating national and international economic concerns to the very limited experiences of pupils.

Vusi adopted a strategy of lecturing, using a dual medium of instruction, and presenting experiences to pupils. In doing so, he was in full control of the teaching and learning situation. He could pace himself and make most efficient use of the time to complete the syllabus. He could highlight key economics concepts and could switch to mother tongue instruction when the need arose. Furthermore he was in an ideal position to influence the way pupils viewed the nature of economic knowledge by creating an awareness amongst them of the inability of theories presented by the syllabus to adequately explain the occurrence of certain economic phenomena. He was able to detect and critique the prescribed economic theory as presented in the school syllabus.

#### **4.5.1.3 Classroom Environment**

As a result of his belief in the need for a problem-solving approach to economics teaching, using a range of teaching methods, it naturally followed that he wanted the nature of the learning environment to be such that it was compatible with that approach to teaching and learning. However, his practice suggested a contradiction with his thinking. The classroom environment that evolved was strongly influenced by compelling repressive factors, as will become evident from the ensuing discussion.

Economics lessons almost always commenced in a context where disorder was the norm. Many other classes were unattended and very noisy. Vusi often encountered situations where he needed to settle his class down because there was no teacher present during the previous lesson. It entailed reprimanding pupils and removing pupils who had absconded from other lessons and had sought refuge in the Economics class. Between five and eight minutes of the period was usually taken up bringing the class to order so that the lesson could commence. Lessons that commenced immediately after the interval always began late. Both teachers and pupils were guilty of not reporting timeously to the class. It was not some phenomena that occurred on the odd day, but a norm that seemed to have developed over time.

Almost every lesson began in the above context. It necessitated a firm and authoritarian stance right at the beginning of the lesson. Once the lesson got started, latecomers would drift into the class. Depending on the quality of the excuse they presented, they might have either been asked to remain outside or be admitted to class. Continuous loud disturbances emanated from all quarters of the school. During the lesson presentation, Vusi was in full control. He commanded the type of authority that none of the pupils would have liked to challenge. There was a distinct teacher-pupil authority relationship. This was evident in the manner in which he presented his lessons. When a pupil wished to respond to a question, he would raise his hand, be acknowledged by the teacher, stand up in his place, present his answers and then sit down again. All communication with the teacher followed the same procedure. The role of most pupils in the economics class was to follow the explanations that the teacher provided as he guided them through the photocopied notes.

That particular economics class had a core group of eight pupils who, being present most often, generally had their notes in order and took part in class discussions. The economics lessons tended to revolve around those pupils. Vusi had a very cordial attitude towards those pupils. He regularly made it explicitly clear that the degree of interest that pupils showed in their own work determined the level of interest that he would show in their work. That attitude played itself out, in that uninterested students, who were absent quite frequently, had work that was incomplete and were regularly in trouble with the teacher. Those students were sent out of the class quite frequently. All of this impacted directly on the nature of the learning environment. While it was supportive, nurturing for some, it was quite repressive for others.

In that class all learners and the teacher were English second language speakers, trying to come to terms with an economics curriculum that was foreign to their experiences, and that was driven by an external examination. That made for an extremely demanding and challenging teaching and learning environment. Both teacher and pupils had been exposed to that type of context throughout their careers. Vusi had developed his own strategy to deal with that context. He argued that from his experience he had learned to keep the teaching and learning environment quite controlled. He knew that ultimately his students would be measured by their ability to competently answer the external examination. His primary concern then was to best prepare his pupils for that examination by making them competent to answer the examination questions.

He acknowledged that the subject economics was derived from the need to solve problems and make decisions as to the best use of resources to satisfy competing ends, and that pupils ought to be taught in that fashion. He argued that while that might be the case, he found that his main obligation to his pupils was to get them through the syllabus and to prepare them for the senior certificate examination. He stated that if one studied the six most recent examination question papers, it would be a simple task to find identical or similar questions being set. He further argued that almost the entire paper assessed pupils' ability to memorise information.

Vusi declared that while he really enjoyed teaching economics using discussions, problem solving and engaging in case studies, he had to be constantly aware of how much time he could actually spend teaching in that manner. The pressure of meeting with the examination requirements, the time constraint which was worsened by a disorganized school programme, the problem of teaching in English and Zulu but only assessing in English, and the socio-economic context of his pupils forced him to teach in the manner that he did. He stated that there was a fixed amount of content that he had to teach and the only way he could get through it timeously was to 'deliver' the lessons. He mentioned that he did try co-operative learning strategies occasionally and found that there was more pupil participation. The problem was that it required careful planning and took up much lesson time. Furthermore, he felt that pupils did not have the necessary reading, writing and analysis skills for co-operative learning. There was not enough time to develop those skills. Pupils responded negatively when not 'taught' or when not given notes. They felt that being 'taught' was what they had been accustomed to throughout their school lives and could not understand why he wanted to change, especially when all their other

teachers had not changed.

In the time spent observing Vusi, it became clear that the exchange of ideas, questions and experiences took place on a limited scale. Although he attempted to facilitate discussion by relating experiences, asking questions, being deliberately provocative in trying to elicit responses, real lengthy discourse between the teacher and pupils occurred infrequently. The teacher had adapted a narrative style to relate experiences and to create suitable contexts in which to elaborate on economic concepts that he wanted pupils to learn. He had marginal successes especially when he introduced development issues into his teaching and when he challenged them to critique the status quo in present economic power relations in SA. He drew on many examples and experiences which he illustrated in order to make his pupils see the application of economic theory to real economic issues. It was largely done through his verbal expositions. It was evident that Vusi had an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and had developed insights into economic problems. He was knowledgeable and in tune with current economic issues.

Vusi accounted for the above approach by indicating that pupils were certainly handicapped by the language of instruction; they did not feel confident enough about the subject matter to even respond in their mother tongue, and, many students were just not sufficiently motivated to take their studies seriously. He stated that it was most frustrating and depressing. The majority of the pupils did not co-operate with regard to completion of tasks such as assignments, note making, reading the newspaper and bringing in relevant articles. He found it most frustrating when pupils had a negative attitude towards their work. He indicated that he was well aware of the financial dilemma facing most students and tried to be reasonable with regard to the demands that he made on them.

The indifferent attitude of both parents and pupils placed a huge burden on teachers. It was difficult to set assignments or independent research activities. Only ten percent of all pupils made an effort to do any work. Vusi felt that the remaining pupils came to school for other reasons not linked directly to learning. Teachers were expected to do all the work. He explained that he tried his best while teaching, but was really disappointed to find that on questioning pupils at the end of the lesson, very few pupils showed an understanding of what was taught. It was very

discouraging to him when after trying quite hard to get pupils interested in their work, his efforts had not been successful. He felt that the problem was a complex one. Pupils lacked a genuine support base at home. Most of their parents were unskilled working class people (many were also unemployed). Some lived with relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles). He felt that the disjointed family relations were the cause of most of the problems associated with being demotivated. Probably the greatest contributor to poor performance was the high rate of absenteeism amongst pupils. He estimated that in his Grade twelve economics class, more than half of the female pupils had their own children whom they had to take care of. Those pupils were frequently absent as a result of their own personal crises.

Vusi was faced with a dilemma. He believed in the need to create a learning environment that was conducive to autonomous and co-operative learning, would facilitate a free flow of ideas, encourage ongoing learning and, needed the teacher to have some control of the learning experience. The reality was that pupils had been socialised into being 'spoon fed' and were very reluctant to participate in lessons ( as a result of just not being competent in basic economics). Vusi was cornered into following existing patterns (although he did concede that his actions perpetuated the same cycle). He was in a predicament. He could either attempt to break the patterns that were so firmly entrenched, or choose to fall in line with the rest of the school. According to Vusi, his decision to work within the existing norms (although they conflicted with his own beliefs) was far less stressful and traumatic than attempting to change a system that had 'refined' itself over a period of twenty years. While he did not favour repressive admonishment tactics, he found himself using them more often as they appeared to be the only successful way of making pupils responsible for their learning.

#### **4.5.1.4 Assessment practices**

Assessment was an important aspect of teaching for Vusi. This was evident in the meticulous record books and test preparation file that he kept. He indicated his willingness to use a range of assessment techniques but found that he was restricted by a school policy that strongly favoured formal tests and devalued any other methods of assessment. The school had a policy on assessment that each department has to abide by. It had a structured testing programme. The first hour of every Tuesday and Thursday was set aside for formal class tests for the entire school. Every subject was expected to be tested at least three times per term. It was in keeping with the

school's interpretation of a continuous assessment programme. Formal class tests were the form of assessment that was used in economics. Vusi stated that it was the school policy and he had to abide by it. He indicated that he occasionally set independent research assignments, but found that the quality of work received from pupils was very poor. Pupils were not familiar with this type of activity and many just did not have the means to acquire information over and above what they could access in their textbooks. He remarked that following the school's assessment programme was a far less demanding option. The type of tests set closely mirrored the type of questions that were set in past examination papers. An analysis of class tests revealed that questions set were predominantly in the category that Bloom would term 'lower order' questions that required simple recall of information. The teacher's response to that was that it was exactly the way testing occurred in the external examination and referred to actual past senior certificate examination papers to verify his point. While Vusi supported the idea of teaching and assessing that struck some balance between content, and skills and values, his practice reflected his concentration on teaching and assessing content. Vusi's explanation for this disjunction was that he had adopted a strategy that would facilitate pupil success in the examination.

#### **4.5.1.5 Teaching and Learning Resources**

The resources employed by Vusi were confined to the chalkboard and the school text book. While Vusi believed that teachers ought to use a variety of resources that would stimulate teaching and learning, he did not in fact implement that idea. He indicated that he did try to use charts, displays and other visual resources in the past and they were quite useful in his lessons. He cited instances where he had organised for charts to be displayed on the walls of the class. He had also initiated an economics bulletin board by renovating the damaged school notice board located in the corridor. The purpose of the bulletin board was to display clippings of current economic issues and to display novel pieces of work that his students had produced. He expressed immense disappointment in the attitude of many pupils who elected to vandalise the charts and the displays. He was frustrated with the levels of vandalism, pilfering and blatant disregard for property. Vusi indicated that he had reached a stage where he was just not prepared to expend his time and effort developing resources only to find it destroyed a few days later.

#### **4.5.2 How did Rita teach Economics?**

An examination of Rita's practice in terms of the selected, inductively-determined categories revealed similar tensions and conflict between her theory of economics teaching and her practice. These tensions and conflicts appeared to be created by the constraints peculiar to her context. This section will also explain the strategies that she adopted to deal with these constraints and how such strategies created these contradictions.

As noted earlier, the theory/practice incongruence for Rita was not as pronounced as it was in Vusi's case.

##### **4.5.2.1 Lesson planning**

Rita's belief in the need for a well structured, rigorous term plan generally played itself out as she envisaged it would. In accordance with her belief in good planning, she was able to design and put in place a programme that ensured that she was able to complete the syllabus on time. She was of the opinion that enthusiastic and dynamic teachers were able to transmit their enthusiasm to their pupils. However, the context in which Rita found herself actually made her quite frustrated and discouraged largely because of the uninterested attitude of some of her pupils. She was determined that her pupils do well in the examination. She adopted a strategy of policing pupils by devising a set of control measures which allowed her to closely monitor her pupils' progress with regard to the compilation of notes. It was quite a time-consuming process. Almost all of the control procedures were carried out during lesson time. The net result of that approach was that considerably less time was available to engage pupils in extensive debates and discussions about economic issues which she felt was important to good economics teaching. Furthermore, she regarded good economics teachers as those who read and consulted widely. She felt severely constrained by her immense work load as head of a department and the demands of the school's extra curricula programme.

Work was planned on a term basis. At the beginning of each term, Rita presented to pupils a list of topics that would be covered during the term. A detailed scheme of work was provided. Each topic was carefully broken down into their respective components, with sub-headings and specific new terms and concepts which pupils needed to focus on, in the drawing up of their notes. Details as to the depth to which each concept was to be studied were also pointed out.



Each section was supplemented by references to specific pages in the different text books and other additional resources (for example the Old Mutual Publications that the teacher had picked up on the Internet). Rita determined in advance which textbooks provided the most comprehensive accounts of the various concepts. The scheme of work served as a guide to compile a set of notes on the different topics. Pupils were required to draw up their own notes in either a notebook or a file. She conceded that there was an enormous amount of stimulating material that could be brought into the economics lesson, but because of the 'pressures of being a teacher', she was unable to do justice to the subject. She stated that, "At the moment, I don't do enough." She mentioned that in the past she had often had pupils come back to her and thank her for making economics so interesting. She used to regularly organise field trips and arrange for guest speakers to visit the economics class in order to stimulate an interest in the subject. Recently the school had been experiencing a rising teacher-pupil ratio. It had increased the workload on teachers. Being a teacher of commercial subjects entailed teaching two or three commercial subjects (Economics, Accounting, Business Economics). She was faced with the task of dividing her time between the different subjects and standards that she taught. In addition to that, she had to fulfill her role as head of a department of commerce. It entailed the overall administration of the department of commerce, acting as mentor to new teachers and overseeing the quality and standards of test and examination papers in the department. She also served as secretary of the school management committee. Finally, she also had to fulfill her extra-curricular duties that the school demanded of her. She remarked that the school had the reputation of regarding sport as the first 'academic' subject. It often impinged on her personal time. While she saw the need to be the best economics teacher possible, other school related issues made demands on her limited human resources.

Individual lessons were approached differently depending on the topic and the level of complexity of the concepts. While some lessons were characterised by active teacher and pupil involvement, other lessons involved largely individual pupil activity with initial teacher direction at the beginning of the lesson. The planning and design of lessons, although not explicitly designed to be collective and co-operative, did take on a co-operative nature that became evident when pupils actively consulted with one another as to the relative importance of certain points that they picked up in their readings. Although pupils were required to compile their notes on their own, they regularly concurred on points, sought clarity from one another and argued

amongst each other as to the validity of the points that the other saw fit to include in his notes.

The nature of the teaching approach that Rita adopted was such that it necessitated active student engagement with the different text books, study guides and other references that she made available to them. Certain lessons were confined to individual interaction with pupils. While the rest of the class was busy compiling notes, the teacher engaged individual students on the progress that they had made with regard to the set of notes that ought to have been completed. The teacher provided continuous feedback to pupils. She checked through individual pupil's notebooks and files and often made detailed comments as to the comprehensiveness or lack thereof in pupils' note making. Detailed cues and hints were provided with regard to strengths and shortcomings in pupils' work. Rita kept a detailed roster for each pupil with information containing the different topics, and their break down. Each pupil's progress with regard to the compilation of notes was strictly controlled. Pupils who fell short of the requirements were required to reflect on the comments made and re-submit the notes to the teacher. Very often, she made reference to individual pupils who had dealt with a particular concept in a unique or interesting or outstanding manner. Other pupils were encouraged to read through those pieces of work. Rita, being a senior sub-examiner for economics at the senior certificate level, made constant reference to the quality of the response expected by the examiner of the matric economics paper. She regularly indicated the types of questions that each section lent itself to and the depth of the response that was expected.

The rationale for this type of approach to teaching was that from her experience she had realised that there was a need to have pupils actively engaged with the subject matter through a detailed guide and constant whole group, as well as individual supervision which had to eventually culminate in a set of well structured, sufficiently detailed notes. If pupils were simply asked to draw up their own notes, then, according to Rita, almost always, there were pupils with inadequate notes, pupils who fell behind with their notes and pupils who simply copied notes from other pupils. She indicated that the system that she operated allowed pupils to progress at their own pace. It was evident in that certain pupils were well in advance with their notes and were given past examination question papers to work out. Rita was able to provide feedback to pupils who had completed sections of past papers. Photocopied solutions of objective-type questions were presented to pupils who had completed those sections of the paper.

During her explanation of the type of records that she kept of individual pupil's progress, Rita expressed her concern at the uninterested and demotivated manner in which certain pupils approached their work. She pointed out dates on which she had meetings with individuals who were falling behind with their work. Parents were summoned to school but the problem with certain pupils persisted. The most challenging and discouraging aspect of teaching was trying to motivate the uninterested student. No matter how much she tried to make the lesson interesting, some students just did not seem to be sufficiently motivated to work. She indicated that there were other factors that seemed to affect pupils' performance and they appeared to emanate from home. She quoted an incident of a pupil who was not performing according to his ability. Parents were requested to visit the school to discuss the pupil's progress. Instead of the parent reporting at school to discuss the problem, the driver working at the parent's business was sent to represent the parent. She felt that problematic family relationships severely affected pupils' attitude towards their work. She was most discouraged and disconcerted when she tried her best but still encountered problems with pupils' negative attitude towards their work. She was of the opinion that almost all the pupils that attended the school were not wanting for anything in the material sense. Other social factors appeared to hinder pupils' achievement and motivation. The consequence of that was a negative attitude towards their work, and poor discipline.

The planning of lessons had a cumulative, well-ordered pattern. While there was no deliberate effort to integrate economics lessons with other subjects, much knowledge was drawn from other subjects like Accounting, Business Economics, Geography, History and Mathematics. In the teaching of certain calculations in National Income accounting, pupils had to have a knowledge of the use and application of formulae to calculate national income figures. In the teaching of International economics, knowledge of the location of key countries of the world, their scarce natural resources, their political affiliations etcetera had a bearing on the teaching of economic relations between South Africa and the rest of the world.

Some lessons took the form of Rita allowing individual work to take place, while she worked with individuals. Most lessons involved whole class discussions of concepts. Rita would ask leading questions on particular issues and formulated a summary based on pupils' input and her own key points of the relevant section. Often spontaneous discussions took place. Rita allowed these spontaneous interactions and deliberations to take place and regularly quoted examples

from her own personal experience as well as from readings and newspaper and periodical articles. In a sense, lessons were planned and designed to be active, though the nature of the activity was not predetermined or pre-planned by the teacher. It often came up as a result of the pupils raising issues from their experiences or the teacher flagging her own experiences or relating the economic theory to real world examples.

Rita appeared to have developed a pre-occupation with compiling the 'right quality notes'. Her in-depth knowledge of the examination (marking) procedures and processes and her close association with the examining authority strongly influenced the degree of comprehensiveness of each topic in the economics lessons. It constrained her willingness to explore areas which the prescribed syllabus did not cover as she was quite certain that these would not be examined. On several occasions, pupils wished to pursue certain topics that interested them. Rita would check the discussion and proceed with the lesson as she had planned. This practice created a disjunction between her views on good economics teaching and how she in fact taught the subject.

#### **4.5.2.2 Lesson presentation and methodology**

During the interview, Rita made it quite clear that while she favoured class discussions, co-operative activities and independent research, she was not in a position to effectively use these methods. From the following discussion it is evident that the lesson presentation and teaching methodology suggested a dominant teacher role in the economics class.

As mentioned earlier, a comprehensive term plan was drawn up for economics. Each pupil knew the topics, had the resources and the detailed guides, to work autonomously throughout the term. Details as to the depth, length and level of comprehensiveness were clearly indicated for each section and its associated concepts. Relevant page references were provided from the different textbooks as well as supplementary resources that the teacher acquired from the Internet as well as newspapers and periodicals and other resource material. Pupils had the choice of working at the pace which Rita was operating or working ahead. Using the term plan, each pupil was required to read the relevant material and compile a set of notes. The term plan was designed so that there was a clear link between lessons. Pupils had the 'big picture' and could clearly see at which stage they were located. In the introduction of lessons, Rita made deliberate attempts to link the new work with previous work and provided pointers for new work that would be

covered. She often highlighted the connection between current topics and previous topics covered.

Because each pupil was required to read the relevant sections in the textbooks and other references, and to then compile a draft set of notes, it meant that pupils were very much involved in their own preparation for the lesson. Rita drew on their acquired knowledge through questioning and clarification and helped pupils to develop coherent explanations of the concepts under discussion. The nature of that teaching approach demanded pupil involvement. A constant flow of rich illustrations by the teacher made for interesting dialogue between the teacher and pupils. Rita had a comprehensive store of examples which she constantly drew on to explain the new economics concepts in a real world context. Real examples drawn from real personal experiences as well as from readings were brought into the economics classroom. Many students appeared to be well read and well travelled and regularly quoted their personal experiences. Rita allowed deliberations on certain points in order to adequately establish the concepts taught.

Lessons generally commenced with the teacher performing regulatory functions such as making announcements, setting test dates and clarifying administrative issues raised by pupils. Individual lessons took on several forms. The prominent method that Rita used was the large group discussion method. That method was generally supplemented by the use of the overhead projector. Rita posed questions related to the concepts that she wished to develop. Pupils, having already read the information from at least three sources, and having already compiled a draft set of notes, were able to readily respond to the questions raised by the teacher. Using pupil responses as well as the key points that she had summarised, Rita developed a summary on transparencies.

Some economics lessons involved minimal direct contact with the entire class group. Instead, pupils were set a task for the lesson and each pupil was required to work at the task. A large degree of unplanned collaboration occurred between pupils during this time. During such sessions Rita devoted her attention to individual students. She had a system where she was able to monitor the work of individuals. The selected individuals for the lesson were called to her table and their work was interrogated. The rationale for that approach as indicated by Rita was that it helped develop the learner's ability to master the new subject matter, to read critically and

to be able to develop comprehensive summaries of the necessary work to be covered. It was also a very effective means of control.

The learning activities set up by Rita were developmental and built learner confidence. Pupils had the opportunity to work independently. Completed work was submitted to her on a regular basis. She monitored the work, made the necessary comments and provided immediate feedback to pupils. Pupils had the opportunity to rectify, adjust and adapt their work in order to bring it up to the required standard.

During the course of the discussion oriented lessons, Rita used lucid illustrations extracted from her own rich experiences as well as drawing on the experiences of the pupils. Newspaper articles, Internet data, periodicals as well as television material were used extensively to develop insight into national and international economic issues. There was a deliberate attempt to link economic theory to real economic phenomena. Current economic occurrences were incorporated into economics lessons and pupils were given the opportunity to contemplate the issues and their impact on their own personal households, neighbourhoods right up to national and international levels. Rita's love of the subject was almost infectious. She deliberately provoked pupils to want to find out more. While Rita wished to foster a love for the subject by bringing in experiences that went beyond the textbook, she had to contend with the fact that she had limited time to complete the syllabus and prepare pupils for the examination. She often apologised to pupils for terminating worthwhile, productive discussions in favour of completing required syllabus prerequisites.

The problem with her approach was that although she valued individual pupil development and active engagement of all pupils, her preoccupation with note compilation and her limited class discussions resulted in the neglect of the passive pupils as well as the English second language speakers. That aspect stood out as a significant disjunction between her beliefs and her practice. Her practice was a direct result of the time constraints, syllabus requirements and her work load that severely inhibited her ability to plan learning experiences that involved maximum pupil participation. Furthermore, her strong bias for note compilation that would facilitate examination success created a preoccupation with content-based note making that stifled the practice of her belief in the value of teaching economics as a problem solving, inductive discipline.

### **4.5.2.3 Learning environment**

The nature of the learning environment that she created was congruent with her beliefs about how teachers and pupils ought to interact with one another. She was firm and assertive and carefully regulated the amount of time spent on the different aspects of her teaching.

Rita was based permanently in her classroom. The school operated a system where class groups moved from one specialist room to another. Pupils were given five minutes between lessons to reach their new venue. They generally reported timeously for their economics lessons. On one occasion a pupil who had arrived late for the economics lesson was sent on a “non-errand” around the school. When he returned, he was informed that it was a deliberate attempt to punish him for not reporting promptly. At the commencement of each lesson, pupils were expected to stand and greet the teacher. Rita took this ritual seriously and argued that it was important to get the attention of all the pupils at the outset as it helped to set the tone for the rest of the lesson. Pupils were socialised into this type of behaviour and obliged without dissent.

The learning environment created was goal oriented. Work was planned for each lesson. Pupils were aware of the term programme and the time constraints. The efforts of each lesson were geared towards preparation for the final examination. Lessons were such that there was a continuous focus on the coverage of the syllabus content. Elements of Rita’s wish to encourage the development of skills could be seen in certain learning activities she planned for pupils. Independent research activity entailed a response to open-ended questions that required interpretation and analysis. However these were few and far between.

Rita had established a cordial relationship with the pupils. There was unlimited and unrestricted communication between them. Pupils spontaneously responded to questions raised by the teacher. They voluntarily contributed to the development of concepts. Pupils added to, refined and supported points made by other pupils. They also regularly challenged inputs made by Rita and their colleagues. She allowed that type of argumentative discourse to take place. Pupils were given the opportunity to articulate their points of view. It must be noted though, that many pupils simply remained silent and opted to play a listening role. Economics discussion lessons were characterised by the active exchange of ideas, questions and experiences. Rita also challenged pupils’ inputs and forced them to justify and substantiate the comments they made. Although

discussions were allowed to take place, Rita found herself trying to strike a balance between entertaining discussion of issues pertaining to relevant economic problems and completing the necessary syllabus content in the limited time available. The non-participation of certain students did not really trouble Rita as she was fully aware of their progress with their notes and their performances in tests.

The physical classroom arrangement, that is, the arrangement of the desks and the location of the teacher during all her lessons suggested a definite authority relationship. She was very much in control of the lesson. In discussion sessions, although Rita allowed for spontaneous responses, all comments were made through her. Pupils felt safe and confident to deliberate on economic issues. On occasions Rita's point of view was contested and proven to be incorrect or inappropriate. She unashamedly accepted the situation and felt proud of pupils' efforts. At times when she erred, she readily admitted to mistakes. She stated that pupils looked for honesty, sincerity and the human qualities in a teacher. Rita showed enthusiasm and interest in the pupils' other activities (sport). She praised pupils who had participated in school sporting activities. Pupils concerned enjoyed this acknowledgement from their economics teacher.

She was very clear as to her expectations of pupils. She maintained detailed records of individual pupil's progress and was firm and decisive with pupils who did not meet with the requirements. Rita addressed pupils in a pleasant and courteous manner. She showed a genuine interest in her pupils' work. The tasks set and constant words of encouragement and motivation were an indication of her sincere interest in her pupils' welfare. Pupils reciprocated by engaging with the teacher in a courteous and non-aggressive manner. No sign of antagonism or disrespect was shown to Rita on any occasion during the observation period.

Rita's approach served her needs well in that it created space for her to implement her control mechanisms (that ensured that each pupil had a comprehensive set of notes that would facilitate his success in the examination). She attempted to balance that control with a pleasant, cordial disposition that encouraged pupil participation in discussion lessons. Her sincerity and genuine interest in pupils' success earned her the respect and co-operation of her pupils. While there were several pupils that did not fully co-operate at all times, Rita firmly believed that the reluctance of pupils to show an interest in their work was a result of factors that originated in their home



environment.

#### **4.5.2.4 Assessment Practices**

It was in the area of assessment that Rita experienced much anxiety and contradiction. Rita perceived economics as a discipline that evolved from the need to solve problems. She held the view that competent economists should be equipped with research and analysis skills. Teachers of economics had to develop learning experiences that facilitated the development of such skills. Rita's capacity to develop such learning experiences was hampered by the time and syllabus constraints that existed. Her willingness to assess the development of higher order skills was strangled by her close involvement with senior certificate marking and control. Rita had been a senior sub-examiner in economics at the senior certificate level for several years. She had acquired relevant experience in setting of tests and examinations that were pitched at the appropriate standard in terms of senior certificate requirements. She had a thorough knowledge of how the different sections had been tested over the years and the type of answers that the examiner expected. The consequence of her close following of the matric examination standards was that her tests and examinations closely resembled that of past examination papers. An analysis of past matric examination papers revealed that more than ninety-five percent of the questions set required simple recall of information. Her tests reflected a similar pattern. She argued that in previous years, essay questions in particular would test pupils' in-depth knowledge of subject matter as well as their critical thinking skills. More recent papers had shifted the focus. The nature of the questions tested content rather than some balance between content, skills and application. She argued that the type of test that she set had to be appropriate for the context in which she operated. Apart from formal tests and examinations, no other form of assessment was used.

Rita's adopted approach was compatible with the existing school policy on assessment. The school had a stringent assessment policy. There was an emphasis on formal tests and examinations. Every subject was to be tested at least three times per term. A formal midterm examination as well as a trial examination was also a requirement of the school management. Rita was of the opinion that regular testing was beneficial to the student and felt that pupils of teachers who tested more than the required number of tests were certainly at an advantage. She felt that her type of testing had a definite purpose in that it gave a clear indication of the learner's

ability to answer questions as they would have appeared in the examination. Although the approach conflicted with her beliefs about the inductive nature of economics teaching, she was not prepared to jeopardise her students' chances of success.

#### **4.5.2.5 Teaching and Learning Resources**

Rita was in a situation where she had the potential to access vast amounts of information through the well-resourced school library that operated on a more than liberal budget to purchase newspapers and other commercial periodicals. Pupils could thus be exposed to information from a variety of sources. Rita made use of at least two economics textbooks, a range of reference books, newspapers, commercial publications, government gazettes as well as computer printouts of information from the Internet. She accessed current data on economic issues and exposed them to pupils. She had ready access to a photocopying machine. The whole process of accessing information from the Internet, obtaining a printout and disseminating the data was done very efficiently. Several pupils had personal computers at home that were linked to the Internet and had developed advanced computer skills. They regularly conducted their own searches and made that information available to their peers.

Rita conceded that she did not have sufficient time to research information. She acknowledged that there was plenty of information available. She also had to consider the amount and variety of information that she exposed her pupils to. She indicated that she had to limit the quantity of information that pupils used from sources other than the textbooks. Her argument was that it could be quite dangerous to detract from the textbook too much. From her experiences as a senior sub-examiner she had come to realise that many of the markers at senior certificate level were not exposed to current information on economic issues and had in the past not credited students for the new information that they presented.

Rita was in a predicament. She had difficulty coping with the vast amount of information that was at her disposal. She just did not have the time to read and process information. She conceded that very often she had to overlook certain articles although they were relevant and pertinent to the topics she was dealing with. She declared that although it would have been ideal to have pupils research certain topics in detail by planning research assignments, she was very

unwilling to burden pupils who were already straining with the existing work load. A source of great concern to her was that pupils would be penalised for valid, researched knowledge that they might present in the examination because many examination markers might not recognise the validity of pupils' answers. Her strategy to deal with that constraint was to limit the amount of new information and to comply with textbook knowledge as prescribed by the syllabus and as required by the examiner.

#### **4.6. Summary**

This chapter presented biographical information on both teachers and highlighted the difference between both teaching contexts through a detailed description of each context. An exposition of each teacher's epistemology and a comparison of their beliefs about teaching was advanced. Finally, a critical analysis of each teacher's practice was provided. It described the practice, its incongruence with the theory and the strategies that evolved as a response to the constraints that existed.

The next chapter will present a synthesis of the arguments developed thus far and make recommendations that may inform economics curriculum developers and economics teachers. Limitations of the research study and pointers to future research areas in economics education will also be indicated.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SYNTHESIS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will provide a synthesis of the arguments developed thus far and outline a set of recommendations that have been derived from the study. It will also document the limitations of the study and highlight the areas of research that might need investigation in the future.

#### **5.2 A SYNTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

The review of the literature on classroom research identified the tension that exists in theory practice/relationships. It revealed that this disjunction between teachers' beliefs and their practice was strongly influenced by the context in which teachers operated. The types of coping strategies that teachers employed were strongly influenced by this context. The revelation of pedagogical importance, was the extent to which strategies became 'refined' over time, outlived their usefulness and developed into unsound educational practice. With regard to economics teaching in particular, the literature accentuated the pedagogical soundness of the problem-solving, decision making approach in keeping with the nature of economics as a discipline. The literature review was of particular significance to the present research study because it revealed the absence of any form of significant research in economics education in South African schools. Unlike disciplines like mathematics education, science education or language education, economics education research is essentially 'unchartered waters' in the South African educational research scenario.

The present research was intended to ascertain the perceptions of economics teachers' about economics teaching and to establish the nature of their actual classroom practice. While the literature showed that an incongruent relationship between teachers' perceptions and practice generally exists, this research study also attempted to understand how the contrasting contexts in which the two teachers operated mediated the strategies that were adopted in order to cope.

The data analysis revealed that both teachers shared very similar epistemologies. Both teachers concurred that the goal of economics teaching was to develop and engender a love of the subject.

Strong discipline, traditional assessment techniques and learner-centred teaching methodology were key areas in which they shared much commonality. However, the vastly different contexts in which they taught spawned unique coping strategies to deal with their peculiar teaching environments. The constraints experienced by the teachers can be viewed as emanating from two separate but equally coercive and influential sources. These constraints could be categorised as internal and external.

The external constraints are similar to what Hargreaves (see chapter two) describes as ‘macro constraints’. These are constraints that derive from external institutions and agents that impose overt and hidden rules and expectations upon teachers. Both teachers had to deal with a lengthy syllabus (prescribed by the department of education) and expressed anxiety at having to work at a swift pace so as to adequately prepare pupils. Pupils’ future aspirations were determined by their ability to succeed in a ‘one-off’ external examination (set by agents of the department of education). As indicated earlier, this examination authority has a history of designing examination papers that are dominated by questions that test learners’ rote learning skills. Both teachers had over the years developed strategies to cope with these external constraints. The data analysis showed that both teachers had shifted from their beliefs about teaching and assessment and had adopted strategies that would ensure the examination success of their students. Both teachers, driven by the need to complete the requisite content, became very authoritarian, were in full control of the lessons, and employed assessment techniques that were in keeping with the way pupils were to be examined by the external examiner. The literature confirms that increasing pressures on teachers frequently completely frustrate educational aims to the extent that teachers are forced to adopt strategies that masquerade as teaching (see Chapter Two).

Internal constraints are constraints that are generally peculiar to the school. In the well-resourced school, (Rita’s school), there were many pressures on the teacher that impeded her willingness to teach in the manner which she believed to be pedagogically sound. Her position as head of a department, the demands of the school’s co-curricula activities, and general student apathy were significant obstacles around which she had to negotiate. The survival strategy of ‘negotiation’ that Woods identified and Pollard’s coping strategy of ‘accommodation’ were similar to the strategies that the teacher had developed.

Ironically, Rita's problems did not stem from a lack of resources. In fact, her school's favourable resource position created new challenges which she had to deal with. A significant difficulty for her was trying to cope with the information explosion which she was faced with (as a result of access to the Internet by herself and her pupils). Rita had limited time available to process new information. Furthermore, she did not want to jeopardise her pupils' chances of success in the examination especially since her experience as a senior sub-examiner had taught her that many markers at the senior certificate level were not exposed to most recent national and international economic data and had in the past not credited pupils for the new information they presented.

The most significant difference between the schools was the chasm in resources created by historical inequalities. The second school, (Vusi's school) was still bearing the brunt of the vestiges of apartheid. The set of constraining dynamics were quite different. The teacher was faced with disciplinary problems, language difficulties that pupils experienced, inefficient school management, a severe erosion of the culture of teaching and learning, pupils who came from a poor socio-economic environment and the task of functioning with minimal resources. It was apparent that to survive under such circumstances meant the abandonment of personal positions on teaching effectiveness and the employment of strategies to cope with the complex problems that existed. Woods (see Chapter Two) argues that educational goals are almost always impeded by the obstructions that might arise from inadequate resources, a high teacher-pupil ratio, the recalcitrant nature of some pupils and the (dis)organization of the school. There is much similarity between the findings of the present research and the research findings of Woods (see Chapter Two).

It becomes clear that though the nature of the discipline urges that economics teaching ought to take on the form explained earlier, and though both teachers acknowledge and concur on this issue, the constraints of the context (both internal and external) are far more compelling factors that hinder the teaching process by cornering teachers into strategies that systematically frustrate their educational ideals. The more repressive the context, the greater was the dissonance between beliefs and practice. The theory/practice relationship for Rita was not as incongruent as it was for Vusi. Vusi taught in a more repressive context that made the disjuncture between his beliefs and his practice more distinct. Because Rita's teaching context was more favourable, she was able to implement many of her beliefs about economics teaching.

### **5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This research study was confined to case studies of two secondary school economics teachers. Case studies as pointed out by the literature (see chapter three) are ‘flawed’ in that the findings of the research cannot be generalised. The data are limited in that they originate from only two research subjects. Furthermore, the data collection instruments (the interview schedule and the observation schedule) have their shortcomings (noted in chapter three). The interview data relied on the verbal responses of both the teachers. The respondents in this study were different in that one was an articulate English first language speaker and the second respondent was an English second language speaker. The lesson observations had an element of subjectivity. Although a ‘structured’ observation schedule was used, the data collected were influenced by my personal epistemology as a former economics teacher and as an economics teacher trainer. Although the interview report and the observation report were taken back to each teacher in order to ascertain their authenticity, there certainly was an unequal power relation between myself (the interviewer) and the subjects.

There were numerous difficulties encountered in the data collection. The lesson observation programme was to last for twelve consecutive lessons. In the case of the under-resourced school, the data collection became ‘disjointed’ and took four and a half weeks (see Chapter Three).

These case studies represent a small slice of reality. They are nevertheless ‘real’ accounts of the phenomena under observation and it is hoped that the small sample does not detract the reader from the important essence of what has been studied.

### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of this research have important implications for the different stakeholders. The limited scope of this study does not warrant the making of grandiose recommendations. However, in recognition of the inevitability of the examination system and in order to mitigate its effects, a set of pragmatic recommendations are offered for consideration by teachers of economics, economics subject advisors and the Department of Education. The recommendations are that:

- \*\* there be a closer relationship between economics teachers, subject advisors and examiners to establish common ground on which to base economics teaching, learning and assessment;
- \*\* economics sub-examiners (markers) are selected using stringent criteria and be given an orientation prior to actual marking;
- \*\* the economics syllabus is shortened by removing certain topics or allowing a choice of topics thereby enabling teachers to teach fewer topics but in greater depth; .
- \*\* the economics syllabus makes provision for incorporating development issues into economics teaching and learning;
- \*\* the examination panel be apprised of the need to change from simply testing rote-learning towards testing knowledge skills and values;
- \*\* teachers are sensitized to the principles of second language acquisition;
- \*\* a networking of economics teachers is established via functional economics subject committees;
- \*\* development appraisal is sensitive to the peculiarity of each school context.

## **5.5 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES**

As mentioned earlier, this research has only covered one very small aspect of the entire economic education agenda. The following broad areas still need to be investigated:

- \*\* What kinds of INSET programmes need to be designed for teachers teaching in different resource contexts?
- \*\* How do economics teachers teach First World economic concepts to learners who experience



a Third World living context?

\*\* What are the types of questions set in the economics examination? What is the rationale for the questioning pattern?

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

This research study set out to address three critical questions. The first two questions were concerned with establishing teachers' beliefs about economics teaching and their practice of economics teaching. The third research question entailed identifying points of disjunction between beliefs and practice and sought to understand the reasons for the tension between beliefs and practice. The research confirmed that there is a disjunction between teachers' theories of economics teaching and their actual practice and that their practice was mediated by the context in which they functioned. Of particular significance, was fact that the more repressive the context, the greater were the constraints facing the teachers, and the more complex were the strategies employed by the teachers in order to cope. The more complex the coping strategy, the greater was the disjunction between teachers' theories about economics teaching and their practice. Coping strategies are like a wedge between theory and practice. The more pronounced the wedge, the more pedagogically unsound becomes the practice.

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The Principal  
Secondary School

Sir,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN ECONOMICS TEACHING AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am a lecturer at the University of Durban-Westville, currently involved in the training of pre-service teachers of commercial subjects. I am enroled at the University of Natal for a Masters degree in Education, with Economics teaching as my research area. Your school has been identified as a valuable source of information for this study. The findings of this research will certainly be of value to your school, curriculum developers as well as other teachers of Economics in KZN.

I humbly request your permission to conduct the research at your school and assure you that the data will be used for research purposes only and neither the school nor the principal and teacher will be named. The research will take the form of Economics lesson observations over a two week period.

You have my assurance that the research will not infringe on your normal school programme.

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

Yours faithfully

MURTHI MAISTRY

DR G. KISTAN

DEPUTY DEAN:

Faculty of Education

FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
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1998 -04- 2 3

## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ECONOMICS TEACHING**

#### **Background**

I am a lecturer at the University of Durban-Westville currently involved in the training of pre-service Economics teachers. I am conducting a study for degree purposes on how teachers think about Economics teaching and how this translates into their classroom practice. Part of the study involves interviewing Economics teachers from two schools in some depth about their experiences in teaching and learning Economics.

#### **Ethics of the Interview**

After writing up the data, I would like to discuss it with you to check that it accurately reflects your viewpoint. If you are willing, I would like to tape the interview and erase the tape once it has been transcribed. The interview data will be treated with strict confidentiality. The data will be used for research purposes only and neither the school nor the principal and teachers will be named.

#### **Format of the Interview**

The interview will take about 75 minutes. Before the interview, I will arrange a time and place for the interview which is convenient to you. During the interview, I will ask questions and make some notes on your responses. With your permission I would like to tape the interview to help me remember what was said. I will send you the interview questions before the interview so that you can think about your responses.

I thank you for your willingness to assist me and am indeed grateful for your time and effort.

Murthi Maistry

Tel: 2044007 (work)

722844 (home)

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## SECTION A

The questions in this section concern the profile of the school.

1. Name the Ex-department of your school.
2. How is your school classified?
3. Which grades operate in your school?
4. What is the roll of your school in terms of staff and pupils?
5. What would you say is the home language of most of the pupils at your school?
6. What is the language of instruction at your school?
7. How would you rate the condition of your school buildings?
8. What percentage of students do you think generally have all the required learning materials in all the subjects in your school?
9. Does your school have the following items :  
If yes, would you describe their condition as being poor or good?
  - \*\* Telephone
  - \*\* Fax machine
  - \*\* Sportsfield
  - \*\* Swimming pool
  - \*\* Library
  - \*\* library
  - \*\* Overhead Projector

## **SECTION B**

In this section, the questions are about 'factual' biographical information as well as your own early history as a person and as a teacher.

1. Describe your family background as you were growing up.
2. In what year were you born?
3. Can you describe your own schooling experience as a pupil?
4. How would you describe the good / bad teachers that taught you?
5. Do you think your own experience of schooling has influenced how you teach?  
In what ways?
6. What initially attracted you to the job of teaching Economics?
7. Where did you train to become an Economics teacher?
8. What formal qualifications do you hold?
9. Do you think better qualifications generally make someone better at teaching?
10. How many years of Economics teaching experience do you have?
11. How would you describe your grasp of the subject matter in Economics teaching?

## SECTION C

The questions in this section concern your experiences as an economics teacher.

1. What aspects of the job of teaching Economics do you enjoy the most?
2. What do think are the most important qualities for an Economics teacher to have?
3. What do you think are the best ways for Economics teachers to relate to their pupils?  
What sort of 'distance' should the teacher set? How friendly can a good teacher be without losing authority? What is your experience of a good tone in the classroom?
4. What do you see as the central role of the economics teacher?
5. To what extent do you feel you are able to fulfill this role?  
What factors seem to stand in your way?
6. What do you find least satisfying about your job as an Economics teacher?
7. How would you describe the planning of Economics lessons?
8. What would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of the KZN Economics syllabus?
9. How would you describe the learning environment/atmosphere in which teaching and learning should take place in an Economics classroom?
10. What are your academic expectations of your pupils?
11. Do you think it is important to have learners involved in decision making with regard to the teaching and learning activities in the Economics lessons?  
Is it possible to achieve this?
12. What are your views on the level of learner involvement in Economics lessons?
13. Can you describe the teaching methods that should be used to promote the needs and expectations of learners in Economics lessons?
14. Would you regard assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning?
15. How would you describe the assessment procedures that ought to be used in Economics teaching and learning?
16. Would you say that Economics teaching is different from say the teaching of subjects like Geography, English or Mathematics?
17. What would you say are the major problems you experience as an Economics teacher in this school?

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## **CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

### **1. CLASSROOM RESOURCE PROFILE**

**Provide a qualitative comment on each of the following aspects.**

- 1.1. Pupils have adequate seating places/space
- 1.2. Adequate writing surface for pupils
- 1.3. Chair for teacher
- 1.4. Table for teacher
- 1.5. Adequate lighting
- 1.6. Adequate space for movement between desks
- 1.7. Charts displayed in the class
- 1.8. Walls are painted and well maintained
- 1.9. Ventilation
- 1.10. Chalkboard available













## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT : VUSI

INT : I want to thank you for allowing me to interview you. You're an experienced teacher and I'm sure that you'll provide me with valuable information.

T : Yes, I've been teaching for 11 years.

INT : Eleven years

T : Yes eleven years

INT : I'm going to go through the questionnaire with you. You mentioned that you have been through the questions already.

T : Yes, I have.

INT : I will go through the questions as they are here and you can answer to the best of your ability. If you're unsure about any question, I will try to explain what is required.

T : Okay

INT : The first few questions are about your school. Which ex-dept did your school belong to?

T : Kwa-Zulu department of education, training and culture.

INT : Was it ex-DET?

T : No, before it was Kwa-Zulu, and now it is the new Kwa-Zulu Natal dept.

INT : How is your school classified?

T : It is a secondary school, from standards six to standard 10, both boys and girls.

INT : What is the role of the school?

T : About 840 this year

INT : 840

T : Ya

INT : And the staff?

T : Eh , there are 40, but six of them are from Dabeka No. 7,

INT : On secondment?

T : Displaced teachers, they call them displaced teachers. So they were displaced and we accommodated them.

INT : Your school needed them?

T : Yes

INT : The home language of the children, what would you say is the home language of the children?

T : Most of them are Zulus

INT : What is the language of instruction in this school?

T : English, except when teaching Afrikaans or Zulu.

INT : Would you say that you code switch, that is you switch from English to Zulu to explain concepts?

T : Yes, mother tongue is always important.

INT : How would you rate the conditions of the buildings of this school? Would you say that the school needs complete rebuilding, or some classrooms need major repairs, or some classrooms need minor repairs

T : No, we only need minor repairs

INT : All classrooms?

T : No not all classrooms, most of them, but some only need painting.

INT : Of all the requirements that pupils need for school, like maths sets, rulers, erasers- the basic things that children need, what percentage of the pupils do you think generally have all of the requirements?

T : 5%

INT : Does your school have the following items, and in what condition are they ?

A telephone

T : Yes

INT : And the telephone is working?

T : Yes its working.

INT : Do you have a fax machine?

T : Yes

INT : Is it working?

T : Yes its working

INT : A sports field?

T : No only a girls netball field.

INT : Swimming pool?

T : Nothing

INT : Library?

T : Yes this one

INT :This is the library

T : Yes this one

INT : How would you describe the condition?

T : Well its not yet ready for use, but we are still trying to develop it and fill it up.

INT : About how many books do you think you have here?

T : About 1000, no 2000.

INT : Overhead projectors, does your school have them?

T : Yes we got but we don't use them because we don't have electricity. It needs to be repaired.

INT : Is it just the administration block that has electricity?

T : Yes , that is functional. The classrooms have got electricity but is non functional.

INT : How old is the school.

T : It was rebuilt in 1976.

INT : The next lot of questions concern your personal background. How would you describe your family when you were growing up?

T : I grew up in Mpumalanga township, just outside Cato Ridge. It was a farm community. Then we had to move because of the violence between ANC and IFP. There are six children , I'm the eldest. My father is dead and my mother does not have a job.

INT : In what year were you born?

T : 1963

INT : If you were to describe your own schooling experience as a pupil, how would you describe it?

T : Our classrooms used to be packed, full capacity, all above sixty, that was my primary.

INT :Your high school experience, what was it like?

T : It was a private school, about twenty in class, commercial class, no class was more than twenty.

INT : What about your favourite teacher?

T : The teacher that taught us had to teach all the subjects, everything- in primary . In Amanzimtoti, my favourite teacher was the Accounting teacher . The bad one, he was too brilliant so everything seemed to be easy and yet we couldn't catch up with him. Then we hated mathematics.

INT : What was good about the other teacher, the Accounting teacher?

T : He was a sort of inspiration. In standard eight, we had to choose whether to do maths, or

science or commercial subjects. So he encouraged me to do commercial subjects so I wanted to go into standard nine. I did very well so I had a good choice so I chose commerce. I hated the one in maths.

INT : Do you think your own experiences as a pupil influences the way you teach now?

T : Yes a lot. During my schooling days it was not like these days. We cared a lot about our education, unlike these children, they don't like to learn. They don't like to do the best, like competition. These don't like to compete.

INT : The way you've been taught, do you think that it has influenced the way you teach now?

T : Yes, the Accounting teacher has made a good impression on me, but you have to go with times. As times change you have to be flexible. These days it depends on the type of children that you teach and the resources that are there for you to use. Lacking resources means improvisations.

INT : I see. Tell me what initially attracted you to the job of being an Economics teacher? Why did you choose teaching and not say something else?

T : No I didn't choose teaching just because I liked it. I hated to be a teacher. I wanted to do Accountant. I worked for two years but I couldn't afford it. But I didn't like it, I just chose it because I wanted to get employment. As the time goes I'm getting to be interested. Now I like it.

INT : Where did you train to become a teacher?

T : Indumiso College of education

INT : And what formal qualifications do you have?

T : A secondary teachers diploma.

INT : how many years of Economics Teaching experience do you have?

T : 8 years. I've ben teaching standards eight nine and ten.

INT : Do you think that better qualifications generally make people better teachers/

T : No I don't think so.

INT : Why would you say that?

T : A person can be better qualified and yet may not be a hard worker or he cannot be a person whose prepared to work. The are teachers who are good in nature but lack the qualifications - not that attractive. So I think that better qualifications does not mean a better teacher. So everything depends upon the person as teacher. Lot of things, confidence and ability. Some people have got good qualifications but are not productive.

INT : Are you confident with regard to the different parts of the Economics syllabus?

T : No I'm not confident with all the parts. There are those parts which I'm interested to teach because I know them best and there are those parts that are difficult to explain to pupils. Our pupils are disadvantaged. They are not exposed to things like news and tv. They don't listen to the radio. They are not taught from when they grow up. Unlike us who went to boarding schools. Those things we are used to. They don't even read newspapers and they don't even go to the library.

INT : What aspects of the job of Economics would you say you enjoy the most/

T : Eh what do you mean by that?

INT : Would you say you like working with the knowledge, working with pupils, pupil relationships?

T : Oh okay, I enjoy group work. Grouping them because you find out that in a class there are a few good students and there are those average students and there are those who are nowhere. So if you group them, you will find that no-one doesn't want to contribute. Everyone contributes even if they contribute something that is out of the topic. If he is not involved he will not be able to learn. So group work is very much important. When testing them, then they are individuals, you know, they are themselves.

INT : What do you think are the most important qualities that an Economics teacher should have?

T : I think that he should be well informed

INT : About?

T : About the present situations , to be informed as an Economics teacher. It means that he watches the news. Some pupils read newspapers . So if they ask you something, you must have the knowledge. You must have read about it. So you must always seek for help because economics is a broad subject and you must seek insight.

INT : What is the best way for an Economics teacher to relate to his pupils? What sort of distance do you think there should be between the teacher and pupils? What sort of environment should there be in the class?

T : A friendly environment. There will be tense moments which is when controlling. If you are always friendly, it seems that the class gets out of control because you are a driver, you must be able to control.

INT : What is the central role or the main role of an economics teacher?

T : The main role is not only to inform and teach the pupils but also to test knowledge.

INT : Could you explain what this means to you?

T : It means that he must prepare himself well before he goes to class. He has to make them understand. He must be teach them to be observant, make them see the things that you are talking about. Encourage them to be observant.

INT : Is this in the environment?

T : Ya, because they think they don't know and yet they pass things without seeing them because they don't know how to observe them. I always tell myself when I go places, I sort of learn something that I remember that place about. So they must also observe. They mustn't tell themselves that it is something out of their experience. Things that we learn about are things that are always there. Everyday daily bread.

INT : You mean to bring the environment into the classroom.

T : Yes, use examples from their daily lives.

INT : What would you say are the goals of Economics teaching.

T : To encourage them to like the subject. To be more interested in learning. To try to make learning easy, make their studies easier. To help them develop insights into the subject and to develop their knowledge. . So I say it is to prepare to teach and inform and to test their knowledge.

INT : To what extent do you feel you are able to meet these goals? What factors seem to stand in your way.

T : The class is made up of children with different ability. Some are above average, some are below average and the rest are nowhere. Like I said, I try to use group work so some communication is happening. English language is a big problem. So when I mark, I don't mark spelling and grammar, I mark for facts and meaning. When you ask questions in class, there is a problem because the children can't answer in English.

INT : What do you find least satisfying about your job as an Economics teacher?

T : When I ask them to bring newspaper articles, you find that they just rush and cut anything in the morning because they didn't worry. Because you don't ask for it overnight, you give them a few days. Firstly, they don't have money to buy newspapers, so they battle to get them. It's better for those who doesn't bring anything rather than a person bringing something that is irrelevant.

INT : So are you saying that it is not their ability but their background that is the problem - the fact that they are poor?

T : They can even come to the library . The newspaper is always there. The photostating machine is always there because if you give them an assignment, it's up to them where

they get resources. You don't tell them where the resources are or where the information is found. You want them to work, independent work. So they don't do it. They even know where to get the resources but most of them are demotivated as I told you some of them only come to school to pass their time. Only 10% do their work. As the teacher you are supposed to do all the work. Some children are lazy to speak. Others are nervous, but you try to encourage them. If you teach them, then five minutes later you ask them, they don't want to answer. If you don't say wrong things, then how will you know that you are right. Then there is the problem of children getting absent. They are absent very often. Many of them have their own children, so sometimes they don't come to school.

INT : How would you describe the planning of your lessons?

T : I plan for the week, one week at a time. I draw up the notes and we go over the notes.

INT : Do the pupils have textbooks? Do you draw notes from the textbook.

T : There are textbooks, but to me those textbooks are not everything. That is why you can see some of the other references we are using. We use all of these references and the core syllabus. Because the core syllabus has got everything. And I also use the news, the T.V. news and newspapers. I always watch T.V. News and I ask the pupils.

INT : Would you say that your Economics lessons are integrated with other subjects?

T : Yes, its integrated like geography. Yes because Economics is a science so its integrated with all other sciences.

INT : When it comes to the syllabus, what would you say are the strength and weaknesses of the KZN syllabus? You can comment on any standard, 8,9 or 10.

T : The KZN syllabus isn't planned very well so I don't use it.

INT : I'm talking about the department syllabus.

T : Ya, the department syllabus. It is not syllabus, it's a book. It's just some textbook and they broke it down. So I don't think that in teaching you must teach the whole book. I don't think so. So the core syllabus is very helpful. The KZN syllabus as you find it are talking about homelands.and we have got no homelands anymore.

INT : Are you saying that there are parts of the economics syllabus that are redundant?

T : Ya its redundant. You cannot talk about homelands, Transkei, Siskei and Venda. They are no more there. That should be in History not Economics. It's taught as if its's still existing. There is one example that I got about the syllabus so you can see why I don't use it. Because when I compared it with one textbook, it was almost the same thing

INT : What are your academic expectations of your pupils? What do you want from them? What do you want them to achieve?

T : I don't want them to be admin clerks and so on. I just want to see them in higher positions because chances are open to them now. We didn't know about technikons when I grew up. So there are technikons, technical schools, universities and business colleges. So they got all the chances to improve and develop themselves. Even the slow learners they got a chance to go somewhere where they can learn.

INT : At the classroom level, what is the level of achievement that you expect from your pupils?

T : I cannot say that they are all achievers. They are mixed but you see here in this school we got a policy that is very bad but we can't avoid it. Our pupils are demotivated so we find out that last year only ten pupils passed in standard nine. So we had to make a class in standard 10. So maybe only Ten got more than 40% and failed one subject out of six. Then there are those that have passed without any problems. Then there are those who failed about two subjects and they had to be pushed. Then there are those who failed standard nine more than two times and more than one time. They had to be promoted. So those are the problems. There are maybe seventy percent of the pupils who do not qualify to be in standard ten. So you can expect achievement from say 30% and they are not hard

workers. At least if they were hard workers, then they could make it. They are still lazy. They think that they are going to be pushed. No-one can push you from standard ten to university - because it's an external exam.

INT : Do you find that you push your pupils to do their best?

T : Yes I push very hard.

INT : Are you winning with any pupils?

T : I'm winning with some of them. Some of them have changed. Some of them have got future plans. Now just because you are a teacher you must also be a role model. You must encourage them to have their own role models like politicians or professional people. They must know what do after standard ten. So I always encourage them that they must still pass tests. It is not only the exam that they must work hard for because if you pass tests then your record will be good then you will be able to secure bursaries because they haven't got finance to go to these tertiary institutions. In order to secure bursaries, you must work very hard and have a good report.

INT : Do you think it is important for learners to be involved in decision making in your Economics class?

T : Yes, because that is teaching them for the future because they are still going to be decision makers. Its better to start now than later. Its not only... I don't only teach subject matter, but I also try to build them to become something. I know I express discipline because they should be disciplined. There is no late coming at work. Nobody perseveres for that so there are all the things that they must learn now because then they will get it right later.

INT : How would you describe some of the teaching methods that you use - a wide range etc?

T : No I don't use a wide range of methods because some other methods needs resources. If you remember, I talked about improvisation. Some of the things I do like making charts, making aids I need. Aids that are not aids. So there are not many methods you can use without resources. You cannot even bring a T.V. here or a video because there are some things that are discussed on television and radio that I can bring in here. They teach Accounting, Economics and maths there. They talk about money matters- things like the budget I pupils should have watched. I should have made a worksheet for pupils to answer questions later.

INT : Do you make worksheets for every lesson?

T : I only make worksheets when we got an excursion. Maybe we go to companies like Illovo where they make sugar.

INT : Do you take your pupils on regular excursions?

T : Yes

INT : What are some of the places you have visited?

T : Toyota South Africa, Ilovo.

INT : You say that group work is an important teaching strategy to you because of the difference in the language ability of the pupils.

T : Yes there are those who may be better, may be able to help those who are not better. If I am working alone, talking to individuals, then that would be an overload.

INT : Would you regard assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning?

T : Yes its a feedback. You always know. You always measure yourself. You are able to measure if your teaching was effective or not. Then you need to adjust your teaching.

INT : How would you describe the assessment procedure that you use in Economics?

T : I think that the only one that we use is test writing and examination writing. We write tests monthly and exams at the end of the year. We also trials in September for the matrics. Trial examinations. Trials is to prepare them because trials are controlled as if it is the main exam, so its preparation for the examination. I cannot say that the assignments that

I give them are always not difficult because I always try to make it cheaper for them. I will give you one copy of them so that you can see what they are like. Like during the holidays I should have given them an assignment. But these children do not have money to go to the library to do research.

INT : Would you say that Economics teaching is say different from teaching other subjects like say Geography, English or Maths?

T : No it's just the same. It depends on the methods and the pupils. But with Economics it's a little bit different. As I said you have to go with current news, current issues. You must make pupils know what is happening in the economy. For example if mandela gets sick, what happens to the economy, exchange rates, interest rates, currency, international economics- It's all linked. They must know the names of politicians.

INT : What would you say are the major problems you experience as an Economics teacher in this school.

T : Lack of resources. I also get discouraged by the type of pupils I teach. The interest is dropping day by day, year by year. There are no incentives, working conditions. I'm talking about the working conditions at the school itself. I've got good ideas for the school but we are not given a chance to prove your ability. The saying is that if you do not live in Clermont, you cannot run a school in Clermont. You are treated like foreigners. I was invited for an interview. I was short listed for principal and DP. The governing body can see that I got ability. They short listed me for two posts. In this school we had four applications. I was the only one short listed for two positions. They said my CV is good. I went for interviews and they seem to be very much interested. They were always praising the way I handled questions that they were asking and the ideas that I gave about the school. If I were to summarise the problems, I 'll say, lack of resources, communication, standard of living of pupils makes them de-motivated, High absentees- like I said some of our pupils have children in primary school, disorganization of the school- poor administration, poor leadership, lax attitude, no discipline with children. I'm losing interest. But it does not mean that I am not doing my job to the best of my ability. When it comes to discipline, I seem to be the only one concerned. The other teachers just ignore pupils loitering outside the classroom. Pupils abscond after ten 'o clock. On Fridays, its even worse. There's high absenteeism amongst teachers and pupils. Then there's also a big drug problem amongst pupils. When you try to talk to pupils about it, then you are looked at as being the bad one because other teachers are just ignoring the problem. So you can see there are many problems in this school.

INT : I must thank you for your time and helping me with my research. Thank you.

T : No problem.



## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT : RITA

INT : Once again thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to work with you on this research.

T : It's no problem. I did honours in Business Economics. I had to do a research project so I know what it is like.

INT : Yes you probably have a good idea as to what it entails.

T : Yes

INT : What ex-department did your school fall under?

T : It was the ex-NED, model C.

INT : How is your school classified?

T : In terms of...

INT : Is it a secondary school, a combined school.

T : Its a secondary school, boys only from grade eight to twelve.

INT : Can you estimate the role of your school?

T : 1341 at the moment.

INT : That's a good estimate.

T : I know that because I write the minutes of the management meetings. It varies between 1340 and 1360.

INT : What would you say is the home language of most of the students of the school?

T : English.

INT : What is the language of instruction?

T : English.

INT : How would you rate the conditions of the school buildings? Would you say that the school needs complete rebuilding, or some classrooms need minor or major repairs?

T : No buildings are absolutely perfect but I would say that the classrooms are in very good condition.

INT : What percentage of pupils would you say generally have all required learning materials, for example, maths sets, text books etc.

T : Of the whole school?

INT : Yes

T : I'd say 98% generally have everything.

INT : Does your school have the following items? A telephone?

T : Yes

INT : And is it working?

T : Yes

INT : A fax machine

T : Yes and its working.

INT : A sports field and is it well maintained?

T : Yes they are very well maintained.

INT : A library?

T : Yes

INT : Would you say that it is well resourced?

T : Yes, we employ a special person who is in charge of it.

INT : Overhead projectors?

T : Yes, all working.

INT : Is there anything else in addition to this list that your school has that you think is worth mentioning?

T : Well if you wanted to be going in the future of technology, there should be more

computers in the classroom for each child.

INT : At the moment, does the school have computers?

T : Yes we have a computer centre and we're linked to the Internet and everything, e-mail and the lot. The thing is that in England and Australia, they are even more technologically based., All the schools and all the classes have computers. Actually they are virtually one on one. Pupil and teacher and computer.

INT : So you see this as something you would want for your school?

T : Well I think that , you know, if you're striving for excellence, we'll have to get it. Whether we 'll get them or not I don't know. Lap Tops.

INT : Lets move on to the next set of questions. The questions are about your history as a teacher and your family background.

If you were to describe your family background as you were growing up, how would you describe it?

T : A very happy childhood I would think. Very loving parents.

INT : Where did you grow up?

T : I grew up, I was born in Central Africa. My parents emigrated from Europe. My father has a long history there. I was born there so I'm a first generation Central African.

INT : Who were your family members?

T : I've got a brother. He's in Johannesburg. My father was in business in Central Africa.

INT : In what year were you born?

T : 1955

INT : Can you describe your schooling experience as a pupil?

T : Well I went to a convent so I was exposed to the Germanic type of teaching. After the convent I went to a private school throughout my school life. I had to because the education system that was very bad. It was the only way that anyone could survive. So I was very fortunate that I Went to a private school all my life and I think I had a good education.

INT : Did all of your schooling take place in Central Africa in private schools?

T : No the last two years of school was in Southern Africa

INT : How would you describe the good and bad teachers that taught you?

T : There were the good ones and there were the bad ones. The good ones you remember for enlightening you and motivating you and inspiring you. The bad ones you remember because you used to make fun of them and joke around, and you remembered, well, not to be like them.

INT : If you were to describe the good teacher in terms of organizing learning experiences, How would you describe him or her?

T : Using real examples from real life, I would think. Real life situations. Related the knowledge to real life.

INT : Do you think that your own experiences of schooling has influenced how you teach?

T : Perhaps, I think that giving personal examples I found very useful and I apply these. But If I compare back I think we're letting the kids get away with a lot.

INT : What initially attracted you to the job of teaching Economics?

T : By accident I'd say. I started off as an Accounting teacher. Then the headmaster called me in to say that we must start an economics department. So we had to do what we had to do and we did it.

INT : Where did you train to become an economics teacher?

T : I did my BCOM at the university of Natal, my HDE through the university of Natal and

my honours in Business Economics through UNISA.

INT : Do you think that better qualifications generally make someone better at teaching?

T : Generally speaking, yes. Because you have the knowledge in your hand. Whether you can convey the information is another story. What you probably saying is that if a person has a very good knowledge of Economics, he may not be able to convey it to the pupils. But you definitely have an advantage if you have honours or a masters degree. I think that there is a big difference between a college graduate and a university graduate. You get the lateral thinking.

INT : How many years of economics teaching experience do you have?

T : 15years

INT : Are you confident with regard to the different aspects of the economics syllabus?

T : At the moment, yes. Well with all the years experience, you become more confident.

INT : The next set of questions concern your experiences as an economics teacher.

What aspects of the job of economics teaching would you say you enjoy the most/

T : The debates in the classroom. When the person doesn't agree with you and vice versa and they have to give their viewpoint. Very often they teach you.

INT : Why do you enjoy this aspect particularly.

T : Because it's economics skills. It's everything around us. Its happening. It's not like history which is dead. Its very relevant. Debates help you know whether a person understands and can apply to real life.

INT : What would you say are the most important qualities that an Economics teacher should have?

T : Enthusiasm and the knowledge. The enthusiasm.

INT : From your experience can you say why enthusiasm is so important?

T : You have to be able to grab the attention of the pupils and you know if you're not enthusiastic, then the most interesting topic can become boring. Definitely you must be enthusiastic. You must be interested. You must present in an interesting way and you will do well.

INT : What do you think are the best ways for Economics teachers to relate to their students. What sort of distance should the teacher set.

T : You must have a teacher pupil relationship. You can't be their friend. There is an age gap and there is an authority gap. So you must maintain that, but you must be approachable. You can't be distant, remote and hostile. You've got to be approachable and you must respect their viewpoints. You know, whoever talks in the classroom, I will listen to it. And we will develop the topic and the point.

INT : How would you describe the learning environment in which Economics teaching should take place?

T : I think it must be interesting to the pupils. It must be a topical thing. All these things must be present. The way you structure your work. If you feel that they are getting bored then you should hurry up through the section and go on to a more interesting section.

INT : In your relationships with children, do you find yourself playing a parental role?

T : Sometimes I am more the advisor with careers and that but yes, authority must be maintained because of the parent pupil relationship. Sometimes they can get out of hand.

INT : What do you see as the central role of the Economics teacher, what is the main role?

T : To engender a love for the subject.

INT : Why is this important?

T : Because everything else comes from this. The will to work, the wanting to read, everything else will come from these.

INT : You see your main role as trying to engender a love for the subject. To what extent do you

feel that you are able to meet this goal.

T : I don't do enough. Because of time, because of pressures as teachers. But there's plenty of material around. Tours and guides and visits and everything that you can do to engender a love for the subject. Often they come back to me and say thank you for making economics interesting.

INT : What factors seem to stand in your way of doing this?

T : Pressures of a teacher. We're not doing justice to all our subjects. There's pressures of the class teacher, pressures of other subjects, exams. We're overloaded with classes.

INT : Do you mean the teacher pupil ratios?

T : Yes , teacher pupil ratios are increasing which is not good.

INT : What is your teacher pupil ratio.

T : Averaging about one to thirty. I shouldn't complain. We were one to twenty five. But the school's growing so we have to adapt.

INT : What would you say is a good ratio?

T : I'd say one to twenty.

INT : What would you say is the least satisfying aspect of your job as an economics teacher?

T : Forcing them to work. Forcing them to work. You've tried your best. You know you can't do anymore. It's just that they don't want to . There's other factors involved. It's got nothing to do with whether you're interesting or boring. It's just that they don't want to do the work. So whether you're interesting or boring it makes no difference. Basically the disinterested student.

INT : .... is your biggest problem.

T : Yes

INT : So it's your disinterested student and it nothing like marking and admin tasks?

T : marking. Its actually a pleasure to check whether they are progressing, to see how well they are doing. You don't mind setting a test. And if the class id interested, you go out of your way to make a more interesting test. Discipline, yes . That's also a problem. But that comes with lack of motivation.

INT : The economics lessons themselves. How would you describe the planning of the Economics lessons.

T : When I plan, I plan ahead of the topic. You would do that. For example if I were doing the topic the state, I will write out a whole model using two economics textbooks and suggest how they work through the work. I generally plan for the term. When it comes to individual lessons, I may use a transparency, I may use a chart, I may use a talk or I may just make them do notes.

INT : Do feel that economics is integrated with other subjects?

T : Yes definitely.

INT : Can you comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the KZN syllabus?

T : The weaknesses is that it does not do enough micro graph work. Its strengths- well it does interesting topics like taxation, international economics and things like that. There is a little bit of hogwash, you know like the old syllabus was real rubbish. It had the importance of water schemes which I don't think is really economics. The new syllabus as it stands is much better.

INT : When it comes to your pupils, what would you say are your academic expectations of them?

What do you want them to achieve?

T : Most of them go on to do Bcom. I want them to make something of themselves. I expect a high standard from them.

INT : Do you think it is important to have pupils involved in decision making in the Economics

teaching and learning activities.

T : Yes, the other day somebody said to me that he wanted extra stuff on international economics. Yes. Well if he is prepared to learn, then I will encourage it.

INT : What is the level of pupil involvement in your lessons?

T : I should make them more involved, but then again its the time you need to plan like in the OBE style. You get them more in involved. A lot more discussion. If they could actually quite happily to research a topic and come back to us.

INT : What factors seem to stand in your way of achieving greater pupil involvement?

T : Time its the lack of time.

INT : How would you describe the teaching methods that you use in your Economics lessons.

T : Well I use the overhead projector, I use the board, I stand up and I vary my voice. I use visiting speakers and I use outings. Again, speakers and outings are hard to plan.

INT : When it comes to assessment, would you regard assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning Economics?

T : Yes assessment is very important.

INT : How would you describe some of the assessment procedures that you use in economics?

T : I use the essay technique and then I give it back. Then they mark it themselves. They mark one another's essays. I prepare data response type questions. We have a policy in this school where the minimum is three tests per term, formal tests. I think that anybody who tests more than that , there is a direct benefit. I find that it has advantages because in the first term, I gave them tests on International economics, section by section, bit by bit I found that it helped a lot.

INT : Would you say that the teaching of economics is different from teaching other subjects, say mathematics or geography.

T : No not really. You've got to make it more interesting. You've got to make it alive. Get the enthusiasm and interest of the pupils. Make them like the subject. With Economics you can relate it easily to the real world.

INT : What would you say are the major problems that you experience as an Economics teacher in this school?

T : One of the problems is that you get the boys doing it thinking that it is an easy subject. And a major problem is that sometimes you get a stigma attached to it where some people think it is business economics when it's not. Another thing is that I like to take them on outings, but its a big problem, because I have to get ..... for my classes. You know its that sort of thing, admin obstacles.

INT : We've come to the end of the interview and I must thank you for your time.

T : You're most welcome