

# TEACHER IDENTITY AND PRACTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRICULUM REFORM

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Education (Teacher Education and Professional Development)*

by

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*In the South African educational landscape curriculum transformation since Curriculum 2005(C2005) to the now prevailing National Curriculum Statement (NCS) has been dramatic. In fact in the Foundation Phase and in Grade 10 a revised Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) document introduced in 2012 is presently being implemented. The continuous revision of curriculum policies is the background to the purpose of this research study, which is to understand how four experienced teachers of English Home Language (EHL) engage with changes in EHL policy and the impact this has on their identity/identities as teachers. The National Education Department often hopes that teachers are highly regulated by policies, and will thus change their practices in accordance to curriculum policy. My research project seeks to understand the complexity of the ways in which external regulations, embedded in the changing curriculum, govern teachers' practices and consequently impacts on the identity of professionally qualified teachers. The study is framed by two critical questions: a) To what extent are the practices of experienced teachers governed by external regulation (in the form of the curriculum policy)? and b) To what extent does external regulation shape their identity as teachers? To this end, lesson observation and unstructured interviews were the data collection methods that were employed.*

*This research is located within the interpretive paradigm. Data is gleaned from the stories told by four experienced teachers of English about their everyday classroom practices and the ways in which they translate and implement EHL policy from changing curriculum documents, as well as through observations of their teaching. These teachers work in four diverse South African educational contexts. The analytical framework that is used in this study suggests that teacher practice and identity is shaped by external regulations (such as policy requirements); internal regulations which are the contextual factors such as institutional school culture as well as core regulations such as their beliefs and values.*

*Teachers' sense-making of changing policy entrenched in curriculum documents; their translation of policy and its impact on teaching practices and consequent influence on a teacher's identity are important for the answering of the research question. The findings reveal that these teachers find curriculum changes challenging and are reluctant to implement them entirely. Instead they select and adapt from the document what can fit with minimal change into their present repertoire of pedagogical practices. The impact of this on the identity of a teacher*

*is minimal as teachers' definition of who they are and the role they play is strong. Therefore the impact of curriculum changes on teacher identity appears to be minimal.*

*I discovered that the four teachers in this study are resilient beings who adapt an externally regulated curriculum to fit their frame of classroom practices based on their beliefs of what constitutes effective teaching. To ameliorate the disjuncture between policy and practice would be an ideal situation. But realistically strongly regulated national policies will never be implemented as policy makers intend. Perhaps the lesson is looser regulations are thus more useful.*

**Key Words: teacher practices, teacher identity, English teachers, curriculum reform**

**Declaration:**

I, Managie Naidoo, declare that this Master of Education (Teacher Education and Professional Development) dissertation is my own work and that all sources have been appropriately acknowledged. This dissertation has not been submitted to any other institutions as part of an academic qualification.

The research was conducted in Pietermaritzburg at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education under the supervision of Dr.C.Bertram.

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Managie Naidoo

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Date

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Place

**DEDICATION**  
TO MY PARENTS  
**MRS NELLIE AND THE LATE MR GOVINDSAM Y.M. NAIDOO**

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## **Acronyms:**

OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
C2005	Curriculum 2005
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statements
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
CASS	Continuous Assessment
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training

Definitions of key concepts used in this thesis from the NCS policy documents:

Learning Outcome: A Learning Outcome is a statement of an intended result of learning and teaching. It describes knowledge, skills and values that learners should acquire by the end of the Further Education and Training band (DoE, 2003 p.7).

Assessment Standard: Assessment Standards are criteria that collectively describe what a learner should know and be able to demonstrate at a specific grade. They embody the knowledge, skills and values required to achieve the Learning Outcomes. Assessment Standards within each Learning Outcome collectively show how conceptual progression occurs from grade to grade (DoE, 2003, p.7).

Subject Assessment Guidelines: The Subject Assessment Guidelines set out the internal or school-based assessment requirements for each subject and the external assessment requirements. In addition, the National Protocol for Recording and Reporting (Grades R-12) (an addendum to the policy, The National Senior Certificate) has been developed to standardize the recording and reporting procedures for Grades R to 12. This protocol becomes policy from 1 January 2007 (DoE, 2008, p.3).

Home Language: The learner's home language needs to be strengthened and developed so as to provide a sound foundation for learning additional languages. In the Further Education and Training band, all official South African languages have Home Language Learning Outcomes of a high, internationally-comparable standard. This is in line with the constitutional requirements of equal status for official languages. The cognitive level of the home language should be such that it may be used as a language of learning and teaching. Listening and speaking skills will be further developed and refined, but the emphasis at this level will be on developing the learners' reading and writing skills (DoE, 2003; p.11).

First Additional Language: Learning a first additional language promotes multilingualism and intercultural communication. Learning Outcomes for First Additional Languages provide for levels of language proficiency that meet the threshold levels necessary for effective learning across the curriculum, as learners may learn through the medium of their First Additional Language in the South African context. This includes the abstract cognitive academic language skills required for thinking and learning. This applies to all official languages. There will be an equal emphasis on the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (DoE, 2003, p.11).

# CHAPTER 1

## GENERAL ORIENTATION

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION:**

This introductory chapter outlines the purpose of this study, describes the rationale of the study and then provides a background on the curriculum reform process in South Africa in order to contextualize the study. I will focus on changes, outlined in the various National Curriculum Statements (NCS)<sup>1</sup> policy documents, in pedagogy, knowledge and assessment for English Home Language. This will be followed by a discussion on the difference between the official planned curriculum which teachers receive and the interpreted, enacted curriculum which teachers implement in the classroom. I will also make mention of the role of the teacher in implementing the official curriculum. The background to the study is tied into the research questions, with key concepts being teacher practice, external regulation and teacher identity, which are critical in directing the study. Finally, an overview of the dissertation provides a map for reading the thesis.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to understand the complex relationship between teacher identity and pedagogic practice in diverse school settings in South Africa against the background of curriculum reform. To this end I describe the practices of experienced teachers in the context of an education system that has experienced a number of curriculum reforms in the past 15 years. I focused primarily on the practices of experienced teachers because research over the last ten years (Hamachek, 1999; James-Wilson, 2001 Britzman, 2003; Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Olsen, 2008) has strongly suggested that there is an integral link between the perception teachers have of themselves and how they teach. The same research has revealed that experienced teachers' perceptions of themselves are not arbitrary. Rather, they are built on an accumulation of values, skills and knowledge gained from years of teaching based on the undeniable success of the 'trial and error' method. This integral link is fore-grounded against the notions that the practices of teachers are shaped by a range of elements such as external, internal and core regulations (Hoadley,

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<sup>1</sup>This study focuses only on the NCS and not on CAPS which was only implemented in 2012.

2002). These regulations form the conceptual frame for this study and will be explored in detail in chapter 3.

The study is rooted in the context of curriculum reform where external regulation is taken to be the FET curriculum policy that has been in flux since 2003. Using classroom observation and the stories of the four experienced teachers, the focus of the study is to explore what pedagogical frameworks and practices English Home Language teachers - teaching in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase - are employing daily in the classroom, in response to changing regulations since the introduction of the National Curriculum Statements in 2003 for teachers.

### **1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The impetus for this study comes from my own dilemma with policies governing English Home Language and the expectations of teachers there-of. Changes in the political landscape resulted in changes in curriculum expectations. It was envisaged that a new curriculum would not only help redress the imbalances of the past apartheid South Africa but would also help future citizens in the creation of a new identity.

In the old educational dispensation, pre-1994, English Home Language teachers received the curriculum in the form of department prescribed text books. The contents of textbooks became the knowledge which learners had to know and understand. Subjects were static and unchanging with rigid boundaries. Intensive research into the state of education in South Africa, by Chisholm et al. (2005) revealed that prior to 1994 many teachers taught from highly prescriptive teacher manuals that contained detailed work plans issued by the then Department of Education. Teachers 'taught' learners a specific body of knowledge from within the subject parameters. They had a clear understanding of what to teach (knowledge), how to teach (practice) and their role (identity/identities) in the teaching and learning process.

The introduction of the NCS policy documents in 2003 for the Further Education and Training phase brought many changes to education, especially in the areas of knowledge, pedagogy and assessment. Subject boundaries became blurred and knowledge had to integrate theory, skills and values. Subjects were now viewed as

‘dynamic, always responding to new and diverse knowledge, including knowledge that traditionally has been excluded from the formal curriculum’ (DoE, 2003, p.6). Changes in assessment in Home Language meant teachers must

*monitor learner progress in the skills, knowledge and values necessary for listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, presenting and applying language as described in the four Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards (DoE, 2008, p.7).*

The emphasis on a continuous programme of assessment of new and diverse knowledge that integrates theory, values and skills inferred that teachers had to find new ways of teaching. This study aims at describing the impact of the changes in these three areas – as described in the NCS policy documents of 2003 – on the practices and identity/identities of experienced teachers.

Since I started teaching, at the advent of democracy, the transition in education meant that, as a professionally qualified teacher of English, I had to continually grapple with what was appropriate ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ (Shulman,2004), and how to teach in a way that met with policy requirements. Despite my expertise in the field of language (evidenced in my bachelor’s degree with English major) my own knowing became uncertain. While not peculiar to this era, new teachers did not make an easy transition from university into schools. But during 2003 with large scale changes in South Africa, transition was more difficult in light of the role of the teacher as envisaged in the NCS Home Language (General):

*All teachers and other educators are key contributors to the transformation of education in South Africa. The National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 – 12 (General) visualizes teachers who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring. They will be able to fulfill the various roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators. These include being mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of Learning Programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors, and subject specialists (DoE, 2003, p.5).*

The notably profound difference between the roles that teachers played in the old schooling system and the one envisaged in the NCS (Jansen 2001). The prior system operated on a traditional content based approach that was teacher-centered. Most teachers based their teaching on drill, practice and strict content memorization of concepts and skills. The latter system adopted a competence and skills based approach that was learner centered. Teaching was directed by critical outcomes encouraging the creation of knowledge by learners through creative and critical thinking. The NCS (2003) introduced new identities and roles for teachers that were vastly different from the ones they were previously accustomed to.

Practices of teachers are influenced by a multiplicity of variables and regulations. In South Africa in particular teachers face many challenges, one of which is how to position themselves in an education system whose endeavour – transformation – is informed by a society that is seeking a new identity. Teachers were now promoters of democracy. For Sieborger and Kenyon, (1992) ‘the trend towards the democratization of society requires that the work of the new teachers should be not only qualitatively effective, but essentially democratic and enabling in nature’ Teachers are social beings whose knowledge, tried and tested practices and identity (Kelly, 2006, p.507) are integral components of their character and their position in the classroom. The purpose of this study was to understand how the adoption or adaption of the NCS policy documents impacts on these integral components and the possible consequences for the experienced teachers of English Home Language.

## **1.4 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.4.1 The Reform Process in South Africa**

Large scale global changes, demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the fact that the political landscape of South Africa has changed, necessitated an urgent need for a new curriculum framework in all South African schools in the new democratic era. The new curriculum framework would serve two functions: be a response to global pressure demanding growth and development in knowledge and technology and redress the inequities of the apartheid regime to reflect the values of a non-racial democracy. A

changing South African society needed new attitudes, new skills and new knowledge for social justice, equity and redress. In a research article on curriculum reform in South Africa, Hoadley (2011) reflected on the necessity of a changing curriculum for 'creating new citizenry and for re-inserting South Africa into a global context' (p. 143). Hoadley (2011) recognizes that the

*strong social goals that underpinned the curriculum was aimed at addressing past inequalities and fostering human rights and democracy by including what was learnt and how (p. 143).*

South Africa was influenced by the phenomenon of the creation of qualification frameworks which existed in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Scotland (SAQA, 2000c) and an Outcomes -Based Education (OBE) approach was chosen as a response to this need. The intended focus of OBE was to provide a curriculum framework that would change the pedagogical and ideological legacy of South Africa. Thus it was intended that the guiding philosophy of the OBE as an educational approach that would meet the needs of all students regardless of their environment, ethnicity, economic status or disabling condition. The critical outcomes in the transformational OBE approach would ensure that new competencies in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes would create lifelong learners. Learning would become more than memorizing content and earning marks as learners would now take ownership of their knowledge and would be able to integrate, synthesize and apply their knowledge across a broad spectrum of education. The role of the teacher was to create a curriculum that would meet all the needs of the learners and at the same time be transformational in nature. OBE, a vehicle of integration, was received by teachers in the form of Curriculum 2005 (C2005). This vehicle, designed to integrate education and learning in South Africa, had major implications for teaching, learning and assessment in both formal and informal education.

#### **1.4.2 Language in Education Policy**

While OBE brought about holistic transformational change to education, the current experience of change for English Home Language teachers began as far back as 1996 when the Language in Education Policy in terms of Section 3(4) (m) of the National

Education Policy Act, 1996(Act 27 of 1996) identified the inherited language in education policy in South Africa had been fraught with tensions, contradictions and sensitivities, and underpinned by racial and linguistic discrimination which affected the success of learners. Therefore a new language in education policy was conceived as a strategy for the building of a non-racial nation in South Africa. While English still dominated in schools, the undervaluing of African languages was addressed in the new language policy for South Africa.

The complexity of the South African situation, that is also relevant to this study, is the teaching of English Home Language to learners who speak English as a second language. Despite what is stipulated in the policy, the teaching of English, especially to learners who 'code-switch' (Setati, Adler, Reed and Bapoo, 2002), has complex ramifications that impact on the pedagogic strategies and the skills which teachers employ in practice. Code-switching refers to learners and teachers who as a result of being bi/multilingual adopt the necessary language for explanation of the subject. As Baker (1993) has argued,

*decisions about how to teach [second language learners] . . . do not just reflect curriculum decisions . . . they are surrounded and underpinned by basic beliefs about . . . [the learners' main languages] and equality of opportunity (p. 247).*

While this issue is relevant to the study at hand and will be addressed, it will not be explored in depth as it is not the key focus of the study.

As part of the OBE transformational aim, the new school curriculum, Curriculum 2005(C2005), included the language in education policy. Though most learners in South African schools have a mother tongue other than English, the language still remains the preferred language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in post-apartheid schools. Teachers of English Home Language were expected to embrace pedagogical strategies that would promote collaborative and cooperative learning, problem-solving, and meaningful communication embedded in the new curriculum.

In a titanic paradigm shift from strong disciplinary- bound traditional curriculum subjects, C2005 brought in a wave of local curriculum construction, group work, recognition of prior learning, generic learning outcomes, local choice of content and learner-centeredness. Based on constructivist principles C2005 focused on the competency of learners emphasizing the learning of everyday knowledge (Hoadley, 2011). C2005 broke the back of traditional disciplines of knowledge and allowed teachers to define their own content as long as it met the required learning outcomes. It echoed with concepts such as 'active learning', 'understanding', 'group work', 'learner-centeredness' in antithesis to 'passive-learners', 'rote learning' and 'teacher-centeredness' (DoE, 1997a; DoE, 1997b). Knowledge and pedagogy shifted from a 'content-based to an outcomes-based approach' (DoE, 1997b,p.5).

English Home Language was one of eight learning areas with pre-determined outcomes; vague, unspecified content yet highly prescriptive policy and pedagogy enshrined in Curriculum 2005(C2005). Change, specifically in curricular content, pedagogy and assessment, was propelled by Curriculum 2005. The shift introduced a new discourse about education that saw different knowledge propelled by assessment replace the old established content-driven curriculum. Competence and skills were key aspects of the new framework policy. Shortly after implementation, the numerous shortcomings of the design of Curriculum 2005 led to a review in the year 2000.

Maintaining the critical outcomes from C2005, a group of experts guided by Professor Linda Chisholm, (currently advisor to the Minister of Basic Education at the Department of Basic Education) made recommendations to strengthen and streamline C2005. This revision produced the Revised National Curriculum Statements for Grades R - 9 and then also the National Curriculum Statements for Grades 10 -12 in 2003. Initially Professor Chisholm (2003) pointed out that the curriculum carried the burden of transformation of education. After deliberation with the Review Committee in 2005 she suggested the need to revise curricular content, pedagogy and assessment to increase conceptual coherence which was weak in C2005.

The Department of Education's (2003) view was that education and the curriculum have a crucial role to play in realizing the aims of developing the full potential of learners as citizens of a democratic South Africa. In line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) based on ideals of transformation and development, the following general principles, outlined in the National Curriculum Statement for Grades 10 – 12, are:

- ❖ social transformation;
- ❖ outcomes-based education;
- ❖ high knowledge and high skills;
- ❖ integration and applied competence;
- ❖ progression;
- ❖ articulation and portability;
- ❖ human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice;
- ❖ valuing indigenous knowledge systems; and
- ❖ credibility, quality and efficiency (DoE, 2003, p.1).

It is expected that language proficiency and the integration of the above principles into the English Home Language curriculum would be fundamental in driving change in society. Change in curriculum, as spelt out in the NCS policy document for English Home Language, meant that the subject content/knowledge, forms of assessment and the pedagogy teachers used in the 'old' curriculum could no longer prevail (a detailed summary of this change is encapsulated in 1.4.2; 1.4.3 and 1.4.4.) The consequence of change is reflected in the policy, organization, practices, beliefs, principles, philosophy and knowledge as assumptions that underpin the old education system and which had to change for a new paradigm. The adoption of a new curriculum framework and curriculum change is a complex process that involves the merging of principles of implementation and practical realities.

This approach initiated the notion that learning was a life-long process and could be sustained through informal processes. Furthermore, recognition was given to prior learning and change in learning meant change in assessment strategies. Assessment

could no longer be 'pen and paper methods, notable tests, examinations and written tests' (Reddy, 2004, p.37), but had to be more reflective of a learners process of learning. Learners were recognized as individuals with different learning abilities which the teacher had to cater for within the subject. Enter the development of continuous assessments (CASS) which had to be integrated into the teaching and learning cycle.

The kind of learner that is envisaged is one who will be inspired by these values, and who will act in the interests of the society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice. The curriculum seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate, with respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen. The promotion of values is important not only for the sake of personal development but also to ensure that a national South African identity is built on values very different from those that underpinned apartheid education (DoE 2002, p. 3). The NCS policies failed to address the implications that this new wave of curriculum policy would have for teachers, especially experienced teachers who have established ways of practicing.

For recently qualified teachers, the new discourse is familiar as it is the same discourse as adopted for teacher education at tertiary institutions. My concern lies with teachers who have more than twenty years teaching experience and therefore operate in very established ways of practice. Experienced teachers were familiar with a discourse that embraced a teacher-centered teaching practice, which taught abstract and theoretical content knowledge to learners who were then assessed in their ability to recall content with some understanding. Now a new discourse presents changes in pedagogy, knowledge and assessment that must surely impact on teaching and the sustainability of the identity/identities of an experienced teacher.

#### **1.4.3 The shift in pedagogy in the curriculum**

Since 'all learners can learn' (DoE, 1997; p.17), schools assumed the responsibility for creating environments that were conducive for learner-centered curriculum and that defined teachers as facilitators in a knowledge creation process. Teachers and learners

had to assume new roles as creators of knowledge. The old curriculum perceived the learner to be a 'tabula rasa', a blank slate that teachers had to fill with all kinds of knowledge. Learners were passive recipients who learnt by rote. According to Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1970)

*...students memorize mechanically... Worse yet it turns them into 'containers,' into 'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher. Education thus becomes the act of depositing in which the students are the depositories and the teacher the depositor (p. 135).*

Freire's (1970) 'banking concept of education' was relevant in the old South African education system where teachers were largely responsible for teaching learners to understand and mostly memorize an accumulation of isolated facts. At the end of the task learners were tested for content-based recall.

In a move away from test and recall the Learning Programme Guidelines, which is part of NCS Policy document (2007, p.17), highlights the active role and responsibility of learners in the learning and teaching process. Teachers are no longer the 'depositors' and learners are no longer docile 'depositories'. It was expected that knowledge would be created and constructed by learners in a process that is facilitated by teachers. The NCS Policy stipulates that language is responsible for developing high levels of knowledge and skills in learners that they must know and actively demonstrate in the form of the intended outcomes. As such, teachers of English Home Language are to adopt the text-based approach and communicative approach outlined in the policy document (DoE, 2007, p. 9-10). Content and context were the drivers of learning programmes which specified the scope of learning and assessment.

For English Home Language teachers, teaching learners to demonstrate the skills of speaking, listening, writing or presenting, reading or viewing would be facilitated through familiar methodologies as the text-based and communicative approach. The intention embedded in the policy is that through the text-based approach learners would become competent, confident and critical readers, writers, viewers and designers of texts as they read, viewed and analyzed a range of different genres. The text-based approach

allows for learners to 'come to know' formal aspects (grammar and vocabulary) of language. Through the communicative approach learners would be provided with extensive opportunities to acquire and practice language skills to improve communicative competence.

The expected outcome as a result of using the text-based and communicative approach implies that teaching is now a process of facilitation and negotiation between teacher and learner. The official curriculum (NCS for the FET phase) regards the teacher and learner as equal partners in the facilitation of the creation of knowledge to achieve outcomes. This idea might not be well received by teachers who do not initiate change but have been identified as the key agents of change even though they are not straightforward agents of change (Hoadley and Jansen, 2009; p.216).

#### **1.4.4 A view of knowledge seen through the curriculum**

The concerted effort by the state to transform education through the introduction of policies and practices had a direct impact on the focus of official knowledge (as outlined in the General National Curriculum Statement for Grades 10-12).

Presently NCS defines language as:

*a tool for thought and communication. It is through language that cultural diversity and social relations are expressed and constructed. Learning to use language effectively enables learners to think and acquire knowledge, to express their identity, feelings and ideas, to interact with others, and to manage their world (DoE, 2003, p.9).*

To redress the lack of knowledge and skills that were embedded in the old curriculum for previously disadvantaged learners, the NCS set up high expectations. It aims to develop a 'high level of knowledge and skills in learners through specified minimum standards of knowledge and skills to be achieved at each grade and sets high, achievable standards in all subjects' (DoE, 2003, p.3).

The knowledge base of a subject is determined by the scope and purpose outlined by the learning outcome. English Home Language teachers facilitate learning by ensuring that learners are exposed to content, which by the teachers' definition and in

consultation with the languages department within the school, was meaningful, assisted in their learning and helped them achieve the following outcomes: listening and speaking; reading and viewing; writing and presenting and language.

It was presumed that teachers would no longer transmit knowledge to learners but facilitate knowledge creation. Furthermore teachers are to acknowledge and build on learners' prior knowledge. This view of knowledge has numerous implications. On a practical level, teachers teaching two classes in the same grade would have separate teaching plans for each class to accommodate the differential knowledge of learners within those classes. Perhaps these plans would be easier to implement if learners were streamed.

#### **1.4.5 How does the curriculum view assessment?**

In the old dispensation, tests and examinations were held in high esteem. Rigorous testing and examinations were viewed as a highly reliable indicator of the performance and competence of learners. Logically it followed that the same means was then used to determine the 'passing or failing' of learners for a subject.

With a paradigm shift, the NCS describes the function of assessment as

*a process of collecting and interpreting evidence in order to determine the learner's progress in learning and to make a judgment about a learner's performance. It further elaborated, as assessment is a critical element of the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 – 12 (General), evidence can be collected at different times and places, and with the use of various methods, instruments, modes and media (DoE, 2003, p.47).*

This curriculum places a stronger emphasis on formative and continuous assessment outcomes. The National Curriculum Statements (NCS) as illustrated in the table below is clear in outlining the means of assessment by matching the learning outcomes with assessment standards (DOE, 2003).

**Table 1: LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT STANDARDS (DoE, 2003, pp. 14-41)**

LEARNING OUTCOME	ASSESSMENT STANDARD
<p><b>Listening and Speaking</b></p> <p><i>The learner is able to listen and speak for a variety of purposes, audiences and contexts.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ demonstrate knowledge of different forms of oral communication for social purposes:</li> <li>❖ demonstrate planning and research skills for oral presentations:</li> <li>❖ demonstrate the skills of listening to and delivering oral presentations:</li> <li>❖ demonstrate critical awareness of language use in oral situations:</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reading and Viewing</b></p> <p><i>The learner is able to read and view for understanding and to evaluate critically and respond to a wide range of texts.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ demonstrate various reading and viewing strategies for comprehension and appreciation.</li> <li>❖ evaluate the meaning of a wide range of written, visual, audio, and audio-visual texts:</li> <li>❖ evaluate how language and images may reflect and shape values and attitudes.</li> <li>❖ explore key features of texts and explain how they contribute to meaning (these features should never be dealt with in isolation).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Writing and Presenting</b></p> <p><i>The learner is able to write and present for a wide range of purposes and audiences using conventions and formats appropriate to diverse contexts</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ demonstrate planning skills for writing for a specific purpose, audience, and context.</li> <li>❖ demonstrate the use of advanced writing strategies and techniques for first drafts.</li> <li>❖ reflect on, analyze, and evaluate own work, considering the opinion of others, and present final draft.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Language</b>  <i>The learner is able to use language structures and conventions appropriately and effectively</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ identify and explain the meanings of words and use them correctly in a wide range of texts.</li> <li>❖ use structurally sound sentences in a meaningful and functional manner.</li> <li>❖ develop critical language awareness.</li> </ul>

Learning and assessment were seen as two parts of a whole. It was expected that the outcomes illustrated in the table above would be made explicit to learners. The assessment standards became the criteria against which learners would be assessed on a continuous basis. The purpose of assessment extends beyond a mere measure of what knowledge learners have assimilated in the subject. Assessments, as outlined in the NCS, are for

*monitoring progress and providing feedback, diagnosing or remediating barriers to learning, selection, guidance, supporting learning, certification and promotion (p.47).*

It is envisaged that this purpose is achieved by integrating both daily informal tasks as well as a formal method of assessment. It is incumbent on the class teacher to ensure that daily testing activities are devised to compliment class learning activities.

According to the NCS curriculum, continuous assessment through informal daily assessment and the formal Programme of Assessment should be used to:

- ❖ develop learners' knowledge, skills and values
- ❖ assess learners' strengths and weaknesses
- ❖ provide additional support to learners
- ❖ revisit or revise certain sections of the curriculum and
- ❖ motivate and encourage learners (DoE. 2008, p.1).

For an effective programme of assessment, various methods and tools are to be employed to ensure that assessment is continuous and year-long. Through informal means on a daily basis learners are monitored through structured self, peer or group assessment activities that are guided by a rubric. Informal tasks are designed in a manner, which provides

*learners with opportunities to research and explore the subject in exciting and focused ways, for example debates, presentations, essays, practical tasks, exhibitions and research projects (DoE, 2008, p.3).*

The aim of this is to encourage the learner to take ownership of their learning in a reflective manner. Continuous assessment was to be used to track the progress of learners, to provide them with continuous feedback that would enable them to correct themselves and make shifts in order to realize the pre-specified learning outcomes. In addition to these tasks, Home Language teachers are to conduct numerous formalized writing and literature tasks. These are assessed according to rubrics set out in the NCS documents (example of a rubric for essay writing: appendix A).

Informal assessment tasks are complimented by formal assessment tasks, such as standardized tests and examinations, which provide parents with a holistic reflection of the learners' performance. In the FET phase – which is the focus of this study – for grade 10 and grade 11 school based assessment tasks account for 25% of the learners' over-all marks and 75% is determined by the end of year examinations. For Grade 12, school based assessment tasks count for 25%, and 75% is determined by the externally set examinations. (Refer to appendix B and C for programme of assessment for grade 10, 11 and 12). School- based assessments would supplement the formal examinations and CASS.

In summary, assessments in the old traditional paradigm were tests or examinations added on at the end of the learning of a set body of knowledge. It was to test if learners memorized the content taught by the teacher. At present the NCS views assessment as an integral part of the learning process. Learners learn for and from assessments (Barnes and Hunt, 2003, p.2). Assessment is now a measure of what is remembered,

understood and demonstrated from multiple contexts and resources. Learners' performance is measured in different ways on a continuous basis.

#### **1.4.6 The intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum**

The NCS for English Home Language is set out in the following policy documents: General Home Language Guidelines; Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines. These guidelines set the national requirements for learning and teaching in the classroom. They stipulate exactly what knowledge, skills and values learners need to know and how they should be taught. Plans in the NCS documents prescribe to schools the way in which learning and teaching of English Home Language must unfold in the classroom. The aim of these prescriptions is to standardize learning and teaching of English nationally to ensure that all learners in all schools across the country are receiving the same standard and quality of education. This intended curriculum is viewed as the curriculum plan.

Curriculum plans are relevant and crucial to education, but when these plans are 'unpacked' in the context of the school, the 'curriculum-in-practice' (Hoadley and Jansen, 2009, p. 39) becomes the enacted curriculum. Hoadley and Jansen (2009) have pointed out that:

*What is set out in the intended curriculum is not always what occurs in practice. The fact that the government prescribes a curriculum, or that teachers receive a planned curriculum cannot guarantee that teachers will teach the curriculum in the manner in which planners may intend, or that learners will learn what has been prescribed in the curriculum, or even in the adapted curriculum (p.43).*

Prior to the introduction of the NCS, and still very prevalent today, research (Hoadley and Jansen, 2009) has shown that teachers do not simply deliver the curriculum as planned. In practice the formal, official, intended curriculum is interpreted by the teacher and implemented within many constraints, for example resources, classroom size and background knowledge of the learners. So the actual, experienced, lived and practiced curriculum may be different from what is in the explicit curriculum defined as the official curriculum

#### **1.4.7 The teachers' role in implementing the curriculum.**

According to the official curriculum, education is no longer a one-way process where the teacher holds all the knowledge and imparts this to the learners. As a result of the complexity of the curriculum, the role of the teacher is equally multi-faceted. Teachers are to assume various roles and these include being mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and Learning Area or Phase Specialists (DoE, 2003, p.3). Teachers are seen as key agents of change (Hoadley and Jansen, 2009), based on the assumption that they are implementing the official curriculum as the policy makers intended. The key point is that policy makers want teachers to adopt the curriculum, while in fact research shows that teachers interpret and adapt the curriculum. They do not implement it 'faithfully'.

The curriculum is interpreted against a myriad of possibilities (teacher knowledge, experience, talent) and difficulties (resources, contextual factors) and then re-enacted as the planned curriculum. For the curriculum to unfold effectively, teachers of English Home Language must do the following: teach explicitly for deep understanding; focus instruction on understanding not memorization; provide detailed explanations; encourage learners to think about learning; provide opportunities to test their understanding and receive feedback; explain the difference between deep and surface understanding of important concepts and relationships; and demonstrate what can be done with deep understanding.

Ideally teachers are responsible for designing learning programs that must achieve the nationally mandated learning outcomes while taking into account the strengths and the shortcomings of individual learners. Taking cognizance of the context, resources available and access to learner support material, teachers are to map suitably different routes for their learners' learning. The implication of this is that no two teachers would practice in the same way despite the commonality of purpose. Not all teachers implement the curriculum in the same standardized manner. While the official

curriculum prescribes detailed outcomes, competences, knowledge and content it does not take into account that the curriculum might change in the practice of teaching. In the context of schools and teaching, the received planned curriculum is interpreted by teachers and the enacted curriculum is practiced in class. It could be argued that by not implementing the official curriculum, teachers are key agents of change. Policy makers create the impression that the teacher's role is to implement the official curriculum – but this can be disputed.

### **1.5 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of my research is to understand the complex relationship between teacher identity and pedagogic practice in diverse school settings in South Africa against the background of curriculum reform. Curriculum reform is a hugely contested issue but for this research it will be limited to external regulations in the FET phase. For the purpose of research, I translated this into two specific research questions:

- a) To what extent are the practices of experienced teachers governed by external regulation (in this study understood as curriculum policy)?
- b) To what extent does external regulation shape their identity as teachers?

### **1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION**

The function of this chapter is to provide a general overview of the format of this thesis. It clarifies the purpose of the study and defines the rationale for it. The background to the study details the trajectory of curriculum changes in the educational landscape of South Africa since C2005 in 1997, to the present day. Research around curriculum reform indicated that it is a highly contentious concept and a necessary inclusion to highlight the waves of change experienced teachers has had to navigate while simultaneously teaching effectively in their classrooms on a daily basis. The key questions inform how the study is designed.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature in the field of study. Here I examine in detail the nature of personal and professional identities that play an integral part of the role of a teacher. The key concepts are: teacher identity, teacher practice and external regulation. I note the literature on and discuss the various identities which teachers

have. This is followed by a summary on the link between the teacher identity and external regulations embedded in curriculum policy documents.

Chapter Three presents the analytic framework that informs the study. I employ Hoadley's (2002) concepts of external, internal and core regulations to make sense of my data.

In Chapter Four I describe the methodological tools and research design employed in the study. I set out to justify my intention for using this specific research approach together with data collection methods and sampling, coupled with issues of validity, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

The penultimate chapter, Chapter Five, provides the findings in the form of narratives as I retell the stories experienced teachers of English have told me about their practices in the classroom. In doing so I create a portrait of them that reflects something of their real self. This is aligned with the aim of the study which is to make a connection between teacher identity and their practices in the classroom in the face of changing external regulation found in curriculum policies.

In conclusion, Chapter Six presents the overall synthesized discussion on the findings and the implications there-of. In particular the focus is on the relationship between teachers' practices, their identity and how the literature speaks to it.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has introduced the topic under study, the background and the motivation for pursuing such research. The overview of the dissertation provides a 'road map' for what lies in following chapters.

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a synthesis of selected research on teacher identity, teacher practices and external regulations that govern a teacher's work. These key concepts under review are the main focus of this research study. The theme of this literature review is the perennial gap between the visionary ideas on teacher identity and teacher practice suggested in the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) and the practical realities of a teacher's life in the school context.

The process of adaptation to reform that may be inconsistent with a teacher's personal beliefs, values, knowledge, and ideas within education, impact heavily on both the identity and practice of teachers. In this chapter I will seek to understand the implications of the state regulating teacher practices and their identity across differing contexts through changes embedded in external NCS curriculum policies. The process of this understanding begins with definitions necessary to outline the complexity of teacher identity and teacher practice.

## **2.2 UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY**

Identity is a complex and varied concept that can be defined as 'the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities' (Jenkins, 1996, p. 4). Vygotsky (1978) offers a working definition of identity suitable for this research. He framed identity as a situated, dynamic process of individuals developing conceptions of themselves as rational beings. This suggests that as 'social beings' (Kelly, 2006, p. 507), teachers are continually 'reconstructing views of themselves, in relation to others, workplace characteristics, professional purposes, the culture of teaching' (Olsen, 2008, p.5) and in their practice while locating themselves on a 'professional knowledge landscape' (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996, p. 26). If identity is dynamic and continually reconstructed then Wendt's (1992) 'stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self,' (p.397) is problematic. Varied and sometimes conflicting definitions of identity highlight teachers' confusion in creating and sustaining a plausible, authentic and workable identity. The

rich complexity of identity stems from being produced within the 'rich and complex set of relations of practice' (Wenger, 1998, p.162). Maclure (1993 , p.312) contends that identity is not a 'stable entity that people have but is something they use to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate'.

Literature indicates that in shifting contexts and multiple circumstances experienced teachers may hold many varied identities such as social identity, professional identity, co-identity (relation that a teacher has with learners, colleagues and members of management that shapes and moulds a teacher) (Pennington, 2002), pedagogic identity (Bernstein, 1996) or subject identity (Marshall , 2000) all of which are open to interpretation. Identity for teachers becomes a fine balance between agency, institutional regulation and teacher practices. In addition scholars such as Holt-Reynolds (1991), Knowles (1992) and Vinz (1996) among others, 'identify multiple influences that shape teacher identity, ranging from personal experience to media images to pedagogical beliefs supported by pre-service instruction'.

Teachers are always in the process of 'becoming'. Their identity is never mastered. Given the dynamics of their work teachers are forever engaging in the process of forging new identities through dialogue and collaboration, ongoing and consistent study and deep reflection about their practice. Teachers are continually rediscovering who they are and what they stand for. The friction between 'who teachers are and the role they occupy is worked out in the dynamic of practice' (Franzak, 2002). It is fair to assume that teacher practices are linked to the kind of identity that a teacher embodies. Identity and practice share a symbiotic relationship. Stemming from rights and responsibilities Welmond (1999) notes that teacher 'doing' (*practice*), that is, their responsibilities, functions and conducts; coupled with teacher 'being' (*identity*), which is, their contractual arrangement and their expectations of their profession, forms part of identity. With such a turbulent landscape between teacher identity and changing policies, Welmond (2002) redefined his view of teacher identity 'as dynamic and contested, shaped by and constructed within politically contradictory interests and

ideologies, competing conceptions of rights and responsibilities of teachers and differing ways of understanding success and effectiveness' (p.40).

In 2001 Jansen highlighted the problematic relationship between policy texts, official projections, (policy images) of what the ideal teacher should look like, and the understandings (identities) teachers' hold of themselves. Policy images outlined in policy texts may be embraced by 'novice teachers who are still in the process of developing an identity' (O'Sullivan, 2008, p.44). But many experienced teachers on the other hand have already crafted, refined and established a set understanding of their role. The state believes that official policies can have a profound influence on both identity and practice in teachers' lives. While the state envisions the roles that teachers must play and identities they should have, the policy does not make provision for the varied identities of teachers. Neither does it address the present multiple influences of teacher identity. Whether as individuals or as social entities, experienced teachers are continually negotiating their identities within and outside the school community.

### **2.2.1 MULTIPLE IDENTITIES**

By recognizing the fluid and multiple identities of teachers enables them to recreate, rearrange and re-negotiate their personal and professional identities and become freer agents of change (Pillay and Govinden, 2007).

#### **2.2.1.1 PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY**

The professional identity of a teacher is manifested in their classroom practices by way of deliberate choices made in planning lessons, style of teaching, activities with which they engage learners in the classroom, their discipline measures, engagement with school activities and responses to externally regulated educational encounters. A teacher's identity is initially authenticated by their qualification and then by their engagement as a member of the profession. Their professional identity becomes plausible by their roles, social behavior, values and habits that are in line with the profession of a teacher. Teachers' professional identities cannot be determined by the competence or the expertise with which teachers execute their professional tasks. . Professional identity has within its complexity, aspects of the 'self, multiple aspects of

teaching including pedagogical and subject knowledge, and the social, political and cultural contexts and practices of education' (O'Sullivan, 2008, p.44).

Teachers' professional identity is partially influenced by their feelings about themselves, in the context of the school and society's recognition of them, as well as their feeling about their learners. 'This professional identity helps them to situate themselves in relation to their students in order to make appropriate and effective adjustments in their practice and their beliefs about and engagement with, students' (James-Wilson, 2001 as cited in Day, 2002, p.684). The development and sustaining of a strong professional identity which distinguishes the expertise of teachers within the profession is not a simple process. The concept of professional identity is dynamically shaped by contextual factors, teacher learning, their experiences, their sense of agency, the union, powerful forces that drive teachers' behavior and actions both within and outside the classroom (O'Sullivan, 2008, p.44) and external policies. It is a never-ending cycle of re-establishing and negotiating. Therefore identity cannot be fixed, but it must be open, negotiated, 'shifting, ambiguous and the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended power-laden enactment of those meanings in everyday situations' (Kondo, as cited by Sachs, 1999, p. 24). A teacher's life as a social being, their individuality and concept of themselves are intertwined with their professional identity. The professional identity of a teacher stems largely from their own beliefs about 'who' they are their practice and the role they should occupy. But as Kondo (cited in Sachs, 1999) noted, identity is not insulated against power relationships. As with pedagogic and subject identity (refer to 2.2.2.2 and 2.2.2.3) professional identity is also a process of negotiation, struggle, conflict and tension. This is further exacerbated when rapid changes in education, through 'policy images' (Jansen, 2001) in texts, further challenge teachers' sense of themselves and their identity as professionals.

#### **2.2.1.2 PEDAGOGIC IDENTITY**

Aligned with a strong professional identity is an equally important pedagogic identity. A teacher's pedagogic identity is demonstrated by their selection of knowledge, their performances and the way they practice. Their propositional and procedural knowledge, performance as a teacher both inside and outside the classroom and their practice all

become tacitly interwoven into ways of being and knowing which is reflected as a pedagogic identity. Bernstein (1999) noted the official pedagogic discourse found in the official curriculum documents links a market identity to a teacher's pedagogic identity. Knowledge crafted and influenced by the market economy becomes recontextualized through training courses, government policies and syllabus documents into classroom discourse. It becomes the skills and knowledge of an official pedagogic discourse which teachers must transmit to learners.

This official pedagogic discourse may be characterized by a performance model of education and/or a competence model of education (Bernstein 1996). The performance model includes explicit assessment and evaluation of learners' mastery of skills and procedures which teachers have taught them. The curriculum is externally determined as teachers are regarded as technicians and implementers of a knowledge over which they have no control. But the teacher is the authoritarian disseminator of knowledge. By contrast the competence model places emphasis on learners' prior knowledge and self-reflection. Within this model learning and the creation of knowledge is a process between the teacher as facilitator and learner. While both models have several advantages for the education of a learner, the dominance of any one model had a direct bearing on the pedagogic identity of a teacher. The competence model leans towards a learner-centered pedagogy where knowledge is co-created and the teacher is relegated to the role of a facilitator or guide. The hidden role of the teacher in the competence model masks the power relations between teacher and learner, thereby impacting on the pedagogic identity of the teacher. Clearly, teachers' ability to assert their agency over knowledge in the classroom affects the identity they hold of themselves.

In response to a change in the focus of official knowledge, Parker (2006) recognizes the construction of new pedagogic identity which 'emerges as reflection of differing discursive bids, such as reform, policy process and external performance indicators, to construct in teachers a particular moral disposition, motivation and aspiration, embedded in particular performances and practices' (Bernstein, 1999, p.246). To sustain a pedagogic identity South African teachers need to have a balance between what is

imposed upon them in terms of the externally regulated curriculum, expectations of the institute and their personal vision.

### **2.2.1.3 SUBJECT IDENTITY**

The subject identity of a teacher is one of the layers of teacher identity that is peculiar to secondary school teachers. The subject identity is usually overshadowed by a teacher's preference to be regarded as a professional first. Beijaard (1995) found that secondary school teachers' professional identity was intrinsically bound to their specialization in specific subject areas. Subject identity is intricately bound with the status of the subject, first within the department and then the school. Subject identity is more than just a label (Little, 1995 p.186) since the construction of professional identity is influenced by the teaching of the subject itself (Kerin, 2005).

Subject status depends on the qualification needed to teach the particular subject. For example if it is a compulsory subject like English, or if it is an elective (learners have a choice of subjects in the FET phase) which must be passed to pass the grade. Teachers of English Home Language and Mathematics are often treated with greater respect by all stakeholders, especially parents, than teachers of Life Orientation for example, or elective subjects such as History or Tourism. Since English and Mathematics are crucial for passing the grade, greater importance is accorded to the status of those teachers. Teachers of English Home Language and Mathematics gain greater status as a function of the subject status. Although some Life Orientation teachers have a qualification in the subject, others have moved into that subject area after becoming surplus teachers of their own subject. Therefore their identity with the subject is minimized. Secondary school teachers identify themselves as experts in their field, hence their strong identity with the subject. There is usually a strong sense of community amongst teachers of the same subject. In some South African schools, this sense of community is further entrenched by cluster group meetings to standardize the curriculum.

## **2.3 UNDERSTANDING TEACHER PRACTICE**

### ***2.3.1 A GENERAL VIEW***

A general view of teachers' practice suggests that teachers construct their own ideas of what is good and effective practice from their own teaching experience, school experience, knowledge, individual beliefs, attitudes, values, intuition, ideologies as well as their formal teaching qualifications. Over time these ideas become the sedimented practices of experienced teachers. Recent educational research reminds us that teaching is not merely a cognitive or technical procedure but a complex, personal, social often elusive set of embedded processes and practices that concern that whole person (Britzman, 2003). Hoadley (2002) identified beliefs, attitude, values, knowledge and theories of teaching and learning as core regulations which are responsible for influencing teachers' practice.

### ***2.3.2 HOW TEACHERS PRACTICE***

Pedagogy is defined as the art of teaching. It is a demonstration of the blend of teacher knowledge and skills that becomes their practice. The outcome of effective pedagogy is learners' 'acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions, demonstrated both within and outside of the school context' (Vaughn et al, 2006). Hattie (2003) found that 'teacher quality is the single greatest in-school influence on learner-student engagement and outcomes' (p.9). He highlights that 'the impact of the teacher as a key determinant to learning and is more important than other factors such as resources, curriculum guidelines and school organization' (p.9). Echoing Hattie's (2003) sentiments, Scheerens and Bosker's (1997) contemporary research on school effectiveness revealed that the quality of instruction a learner receives is more likely to impact on learning than the school environment.

Many experienced teachers are reflective mindful practitioners whose experience, personal characteristics and understanding of the subject enable them to teach in a thoughtful manner. From a tacit, intuitive body of propositional and procedural knowledge (Knight, 2002), and a tapestry of the psychology of the learner, the philosophy that informs teaching practice, contextual constraints, subject content, goals

and examinations enable teachers to communicate enthusiasm, understanding, ability to explain, make clear, respond to and illuminate learners' perception. The practice of a teacher is never static. When teaching and learning becomes a challenge, teachers as intellectuals 'seek new understanding and insights and forge new ways' (Pillay & Govinden, 2007; p.3) to practice. Bearing in mind the cultural context and professional traditions, it is through the creative practices that teachers are able to meet the challenge of converting the curriculum into 'classroom practice'. Teachers interpret, adapt and modify their practices in relation to the subject matter, learners' needs and contextualized factors.

Ideally teachers as intellectual professionals should have the freedom to exercise discretionary judgment concerning their decisions regarding teaching and learning. Instructional discourse involving transmission and acquisition of specific competencies, skills and knowledge forms a large part of teacher practice.

#### **2.4 THE DIALOGIC RELATION OF TEACHER IDENTITY AND PRACTICE**

The shaping of experienced teachers' identity and practices is open to contestation as it involves the interplay of many complex factors and various influences. Both locally and abroad, issues of teacher attrition based on low morale, stress, burn-out, work load, sense of dislocation and conflicted by official policies has led to investigations into teacher identity and practice. Over the past decade a huge body of research has emerged to make sense of teachers' identity and practices to find ways to sustain their commitment to the profession in times of radical change. The site of contestation for teacher identity in South Africa is between the state's attempt to regulate and homogenize all teachers' identities and teachers' individualized perceptions of who they are. The regulation and homogenizing of either identity will impact in the same way on practice because of the shared reciprocal relationship.

Britzman (2003) (as cited in Olsen, 2008, p.5) noted that the concept of teacher identity is sewn into 'a complex, personal and social set of embedded processes and practices'. Therefore policy endeavors to regulate teacher identity leaves them with a sense of dislocation within themselves, their context and practice. However Welmond (1999,

2002), Britzman (2003) and Hoadley (2002) have all come to believe that 'teachers' sense of self as well as their knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests, and orientation towards work and change' (Spillane, 2000; Drake, Spillane and Hufferd-Ackles, 2001, as cited in Jita and Vandeyar, 2006, p.41) is by far more influential, in the construction of identity, than external regulations. The beliefs of these researchers are the very essence of my study; to explore whether core regulations – teachers' beliefs, knowledge, values, attitudes and commitments – or external regulation, that is curriculum policies, have a greater impact in shaping the practices and the identities of experienced teachers of English Home Language.

Since teaching is 'a socially constructed activity (*practice*) that requires interpretation and negotiation of meanings embedded within the context of the classroom' (Johnson, 1996.p24), teachers then automatically develop personal individualized understandings of and for themselves (*identity*), as teachers. This happens automatically through practice. Day (2002) recognizes that teachers are 'an amalgam of personal biography, culture, social influence and institutional values which may change according to role and circumstances' (p.689). The policy process pays little attention to the centrality of teacher identity in sustaining motivation, efficacy, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness. Instead greater impetus is placed on national curricula, national testing, and performance management of teachers, target setting and school development plans (Day, 2002, p.689).

## **2.5 LOCATING CURRICULUM REFORM**

The National Core Curriculum Statement Grade 10 - 12 (General) Languages, especially English Home (2003) outlined values, duties and structures of basic education providing a framework of policies and guidelines for teaching. Implicit in this core curriculum are the boundaries of autonomy and agency for teachers 'doing and being' (Hoadley, 2002). By holding teachers accountable to external regulation, their flexibility and creativity within the subject maybe curbed.

Ideally curriculum reform should be a response to the intrinsic needs of education but this is rarely the case and South Africa is no exception. A post-apartheid South Africa

was responding not only to economical, technological, and socio-political imperatives that are aligned with global and international trends, but also attempting to combat shortages of teachers of mathematics, science and technology. Major changes in assessment, curriculum content and grouping of learners were advocated despite ineffective training initiatives and poor access to training material. Bantwini (2010) claimed that the ever-changing curriculum reforms with their impressive goals were a failure the implementation process and classroom practice was neglected. The ineffectiveness of cascading and training models for curriculum reform implementation was widely noted in the media and by university academics, teachers and journalists.

Both locally and abroad externally regulated policies intended to bring about curriculum reform in school often conflict with the identity teachers consciously and deliberately create for themselves. The context created in schools by constant reform thus undermines many teachers' sense of identity and agency. Moore et al. (2002) refer to Coldron and Smith's (1999) account of the development of United Kingdom (UK) teacher identities which they believe are in crisis because continuous reform measures increased government control, severely restricting teachers' choices of identities. Evidently, teachers are no longer trusted to use their discretionary judgment to make sound pedagogic choices based on their skill, understanding of the context and wisdom of their experience (Bernstein, 1996). Rather they are constrained by reform policies and are compelled, albeit grudgingly, to put into practice that which is imposed upon them. In countries, such as UK (Day, 2002), Australia (Sachs, 1999) and South Africa (Blignaut, 2008), government intervention, through constant curriculum reform, challenges the existing practices of teachers resulting in the destabilization of their identity. Is it possible, despite policy demands, for teachers to develop and sustain a clear identity by an '*active location in social space*', as suggested by Coldron and Smith (1999, p.711)? This '*active location in social space*' (Coldron and Smith, 1999, p.711) presumes that teachers have the freedom, from a possible array of relations within an inherited structure, to create an identity. In other words, teachers have agency to analyze, interpret and adapt reform using discretionary judgment. For this study, I am interested to know the kind of agency the four participant teachers have.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) use the phrase 'teachers as curriculum makers' to highlight that teachers are not simply disseminators of a curriculum. Embedded in policy documents are the official pedagogic discourse but teachers do have a personal practical knowledge (Olsen and Craig, 2001) which filters how they disseminate the curriculum.

This discussion follows from an understanding of identity (refer to 2.2), teacher practice (refer to 2.3) and curriculum reform (refer to 2.5).

Reform policies in South Africa have attempted to image a fixed, ideal teacher 'identity' which clashes with many teachers' professional identity and personal identity (Jansen, 2001; p.242). These policies deny the notion that to be a teacher is to exhibit one of a range of possible multiple, overlapping, shifting and fluid identities. Because of the gap between policy ideals and teachers' perceptions of themselves, many South African teachers are also in an identity crisis that is similar to that of their UK counterparts. In 'unpacking' 'images of teachers' embedded in South African education policy documents, Jansen (2001) noted that policy reform and teacher identity are closely tied with the historical patterns under which policy has 'imaged' teachers in South Africa. Embedded in South African education policy documents (NCS) were drastic role changes for teachers. Significant insightful literature on the consequences for teacher identity of externally regulated change is well documented by Dhunpath (2000), Reddy, (2000) and Samuels (2001). When teachers' identity is externally regulated, important characteristics such 'their sense of self as well as their knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests, and orientation towards work and change' (Spillane, 2000; Drake, Spillane & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001 as cited in Jita and Vandeyar, 2006, p.41) may be sacrificed. In addition their strong professional identity, based on their roles, social behavior, values and habits that are in line with the profession of a teacher, are challenged.

The regulation of teacher work is at the heart of curriculum change. Then Norms and Standards – which has now been replaced by a new policy in teacher education (DoE,

2010), “‘imaged’ the teacher as a well-regulated professional performer whose actions were measured against set standards or outcomes or performances determined by the state” (Jansen, 2001). The majority of teachers are confused by the idealized image of teachers, presented in current policies, which ignore South African teachers’ professional, emotional, personal and political identities. From within the competence model of education, teachers were re-imaged into ‘soft facilitators’, guiding the learning process from the margins of the classroom. Many teachers were immobilized by the new and distant challenges with policy texts. C2005 not only fails to engage the identities of South African teachers but the competences in the policy are experienced by teachers as complex, difficult, demanding, ambitious, unrealistic and impractical given the existing demands on teachers (Jansen and Christie, 1999).

The challenge of teachers’ knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests, and orientation towards work, which lies at the core of teacher professional, pedagogic, subject and personal identity, left them feeling dislocated. Teachers were confounded by the gap between what was familiar and effective in the classroom and what was embedded in policy documents. O’Sullivan’s (2004) Namibian case study indicated that statements such as ‘teachers should structure their lessons to facilitate this active learner role’ were unrealistic in teachers’ (p.594) teaching context. While policies can be standardized, teachers, schools and classrooms cannot. In an environment of ambiguity and conflicting understanding, many teachers are unable to make sense of the process of transformation that was not aligned with their personal, subject, pedagogic and professional identities. By homogenizing the identities of teachers, policy documents displaced the racialised identities of South African teachers. According to Carrim (2001) this would account for the differential implementation of the revised curriculum by black and white teachers. Jansen (2001) pointed out that the political background of teachers was imperative in their different understanding of response and commitment to the implementation of the curriculum reforms.

In addition, the familiar official pedagogic discourse based on the performance model was replaced by a competence model. From within the competence based model of

education, the prerequisite pedagogical content knowledge of the teacher was shifted in order to put reform into practice (Spillane, 2000). Teachers were expected to promote learner creativity and thinking abilities using inquiry based learning. Such a curriculum undermined teachers' professional competence, as learners were now expected to generate their own knowledge. Teachers found themselves in an uncertain position between knowledge and pedagogy as their image shifted from 'knowledge expert to knowledge manager' (Bonal and Rambla, 2002, p.4). Policy ignored the fact that teacher knowledge is one of the central aspects of pedagogic, professional and subject identity and to shift this role to that of a knowledge manager was a radical form of disempowerment with which many teachers still struggle. Many teachers creatively resist the endeavors of the school and policy documents to reconfigure what it means to be a teacher.

In a report reviewing the setbacks in the implementation of the curriculum, a Review Committee led by Professor Chisholm (2000) highlighted, among other confounding variables, the inadequate orientation, training and development of teachers. Inadequate training impacted negatively on teacher identity which is internally regulated by a number of factors, of which training and socialization provides necessary guidelines for teachers' practice (Hoadley, 2002). The implementation process neglected to address an important aspect of teacher identity, viz. the fact that how teachers behave and their classroom practices are shaped by inexplicable, unaccountable variables which Hoadley (2002) terms 'core regulations'. The 'core regulations' as Hoadley (2002) identifies them, are critical to successful educational reform because professional identities are closely bound up with how teachers feel about themselves and how they feel about their learners. 'This professional identity helps teachers to situate themselves in relation to their learners in order to make appropriate and effective adjustments in their practice and their beliefs about, and engagement with, students' (James-Wilson, 2001 as cited by Day, 2002, p.684). Therefore when values embedded in reforms undermine teacher professional identities it is difficult for teachers to adjust. The change in curriculum required constant change in the classroom implementation which meant teachers were required to restructure, revise and re-invent the way things such as

content and assessments used to be, or used to work in ways that were alien to them. This translates into adjusting from current programmes to the new programmes, changing personal habits and ways of being and doing.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has laid out significant literature which revolves around teacher identity, teacher practice and curriculum reform. In the literature it is evident that teachers' identity and practices have a dialogic relationship, but an externally regulated curriculum makes no provision for accommodating such a relationship. Instead policy has attempted to image a fixed, ideal teacher 'identity' (Jansen, 2001) that homogenizes the identities of all teachers. In addition a competence model was adopted as the new official pedagogic discourse. The literature speaks of change in curriculum which leaves many teachers feeling dislocated.

# CHAPTER 3

## ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is the impact of curriculum reform (external regulation) on teacher identity. Thus it was necessary to use an analytic framework that would enable this question to be answered. This chapter describes Hoadley's (2002) framework which includes external, internal and core regulations.

### 3.2 AN ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

A framework is a useful research tool as it provides a reliable structure based on research, to analyze the data. There is an abundance of research both internationally and nationally that informs the theoretical frame of this study. The broad scope of this study problematises the extent of impact of external regulation on teacher practice which is crucial in shaping teacher identity. If teacher practices are subject to continual change, due to external regulation prescribed by the Department of Education's National Curriculum Statements (NCS), then I believe that the identity of a teacher would be in a state of 'dis-ease'. Pillay and Govinden (2007) firmly believe that teachers' practices are a powerful means of understanding the slipperiness of identity. The possible consequence of the impact of external regulation on teachers' practices would lie in teachers' inability to engage in the continual construction of a sustainable identity.

Teacher identity, teacher practice and external regulations in the form of NCS policies are the key concepts of this study. The complexity of these concepts do not lead to unambiguous issues, clearly defined objectives, mutually exclusive choices, undisputed causal relationships and predictable rationalities. Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that

*As with all investigation in the social world, the framework itself forms part of the agenda for negotiation to be scrutinized and tested, reviewed and reformed as a result of investigation. (p.225)*

To enhance the credibility of my research I used the following criteria to judge the applicability of the analytic tools employed in this study:

- ❖ provide a common language from which to describe the situation under scrutiny and to report the findings about it (Mason and Waywood, 1996);

- ❖ develop a set of labels/guiding principles against which judgments and predictions might be made;
- ❖ provide a structure within which to organize the content of the research and to frame conclusions within the context (Minichiello, Axford, Greenwood, and Sullivan, 1999).

After careful consideration in choosing a language that best speaks to my study, I settled upon the concepts of social regulation provided by Hoadley (2002). The strength of Hoadley's (2002) study lies in her conceptualization of external, internal and core regulation that is critical in the shaping of a teacher's identity.

### **3.3 TEACHERS' IDENTITY**

As I have already described in Chapter 2, an identity is not static but is developed by a continuing and dynamic process. Bernstein (1999, p.246) observed that the concept of pedagogic identity is continually impacted upon by reform and policy processes, external performance indicators in addition to teachers' personal motivations, their aspirations and their moral dispositions. Britzman (2003) also observes that since the nature of teaching is a complex, personal and social process then the concept of teacher identity becomes a dynamic process.

The literature has indicated that identity and practice have a dialogical relationship. Identity is an abstract construct that is fluid in nature and therefore difficult to measure and pin down. It is impossible to extract and specify those concepts of identity that can become a tool in understanding data. For a language of description that will make sense of the data, I will extrapolate from Hoadley's (2002) research her concepts of the regulation of teachers' work and its impact on identity,

### **3.4 THE REGULATION OF TEACHERS' WORK**

Teachers' practices are governed by numerous variables, one of which is regulation. Hoadley (2002) argues that teachers' work is regulated in a number of ways.

***External regulation** refers to the pact between the State and the teacher; the ways in which the State regulates and constructs teacher identity. **Internal***

**regulation**, or the positioning of teachers in relation to the school, is looked at in terms of teachers' work (How teachers' rights and responsibilities are defined in relation to the set of social relations, teacher to teacher and teacher to community). **Core regulations** are concerned with the relation between the teacher and the learner, and the definition of being and doing in the classroom (Hoadley, 2002, p.42).

The different regulations become the descriptive categories that enable me to make sense of my data.

### 3.4.1 External regulations

One of the key regulations on a teacher's work is the official or intended curriculum. For this study, the particular curriculum policy which teachers need to follow is the English Home Language curriculum document, namely: General Home Language guidelines; Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines (DoE, 2003). English Home Language (EHL) is regulated by a broad outline, learning outcomes, assessment standards, critical outcomes and compulsory assessment tasks. 'A learning outcome describes the knowledge, skills and values that a learner should acquire by the end of the FET band' (DoE, 2003,p.7).An assessment standard exists within the learning outcome and defines collectively the body of knowledge, skills and values that a learner must achieve and demonstrate to progress to the next grade (DoE,2003, p.7).

The following **Learning Outcomes** dictate the direction of EHL:

**Learning Outcome 1: *Listening and Speaking.*** The learner is able to listen and speak for a variety of purposes, audiences and contexts.

**Learning Outcome 2: *Reading and Viewing.*** The learner is able to read and view for understanding and to evaluate critically and respond to a wide range of texts.

**Learning Outcome 3: *Writing and Presenting.*** The learner is able to write and present for a wide range of purposes and audiences using conventions and formats appropriate to diverse contexts.

**Learning Outcome 4: *Language.*** The learner is able to use language structures and conventions appropriately and effectively. (DoE, 2003, pp.12-13)

### **3.4.1.1 External assessment guidelines**

The EHL NCS identifies the following characteristics of the assessment process which should:

- ❖ be understood by the learner and the broader public
- ❖ be clearly focused
- ❖ be integrated with teaching and learning
- ❖ be based on pre-set criteria of assessment standards
- ❖ allow for expanded opportunity for learners
- ❖ be learner-paced and fair
- ❖ be flexible
- ❖ use a variety of instruments and
- ❖ use a variety of methods.

The execution of assessments will be guided by the Subject Assessment Guidelines (SAG) (DoE, 2008). This outlines that the process of assessment will be divided into three areas: a) Daily assessment  
b) Programme of Assessment Guidelines (PAG): and  
c) Nationally set examinations.

The process of assessment is discussed at length in chapter 1 section 1.4.4. Externally regulated policy documents have adopted a constructivist view of learning. This means that learners are actively involved in the process of meaning making and knowledge. The teacher is responsible for facilitating learning and creating an environment that fosters critical independent thinking. Learning becomes interactive and learner-centered.

### **3.4.2 Internal regulations**

This offers an understanding of teachers' identities which are constituted as a result of their 'doing' teaching and 'being' a teacher' (Hoadley, 2002, p.40) within the school context. Internal regulation refers to the institutional conditions and the manner in which these regulate all facets of a teacher's life. To unpack this, Hoadley (2002) refers specifically to three issues: socialization and training; school/teacher cultures and institutional constraints, for example learners who are English Additional Language

learners doing English as a Home Language subject. These variables shape the professional and subjective identity of a teacher as teachers 'justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people and their school context' (Maclure , 1993, p312). The sample of teachers employed in this study were teaching in different schools thus were working under very different internal regulations.

#### ***3.4.2.1. Socialization and Training***

As the literature points out, there are many ways of being a teacher and the identity a teacher adopts to make sense of their position is not clearly defined in terms of personal, subject, professional or pedagogic identity. Literature around teachers' work identity (Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1982; Sharp and Green, 1975; as cited in Hoadley, 2002) suggests that identity is constituted from a teacher's own experience of schooling. This experience is seamlessly translated into ways of being a teacher and doing what a teacher should in the present context. Identity is formed by a teacher's own socialization of what being a teacher means, and also their own training as a teacher. Lortie's (as cited in Hoadley, 2002) research reveals that teachers are mostly 'self-socialized'. This could be attributed to the lack-of, or weak socialization into the profession. As a result teachers rely on personal experiences and the trial and error method of what it means to be a teacher and do as a teacher does. 'A weak collective identity; intrusion of regulation from sources external to the profession' (Hoadley, 2002; p. 47) and a lack of 'shared technical vocabulary' (Hargreaves, 1980) creates inconsistencies between a teacher's own definition of their identity and a commonly accepted professional knowledge base.

A possible consequence of the low impact of teacher training and a weak classification of the profession is that a policy document could dictate the following roles for teachers:

*All teachers and other educators are key contributors to the transformation of education in South Africa. The National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 – 12 (General) visualizes teachers who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring. They will be able to fulfill the various roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators. These include being mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of Learning Programmes and materials, leaders, administrators*

*and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors, and subject specialists (DoE, 2003, p. 5).*

Policy assumes that the roles envisaged in the above definition would become critical to a teacher's identity.

### **3.4.2.2 School Culture/Teacher Cultures**

The school provides the macro-environment within which individual teachers work. This macro-environment is governed by bureaucratic imperatives, the community, the style of leadership and the goals of the school. The aim of governance is to create a commonality of teaching culture that teachers of the school can identify with so that everyone works towards a common purpose and a pre-determined 'end'. In addition to institutional structure, the school operates on a patterned set of activities and events which become a routine, almost a culture into which all teachers, despite their personal idiosyncrasies, have to find a fit. But teachers bring to this space 'personal knowledge' (Shulman, 1987), 'personal habits, thoughts, sentiments and predispositions' (Hoadley, 2002). A teacher's greater concern is not with the 'end' but the process of their purpose.

Teachers enact a 'hidden pedagogy' which is not acknowledged under the governance of the school. This 'hidden pedagogy' is defined as:

*a set of aims and methods of teaching which is tacitly understood by teachers, which stems from practical imperatives created by the organization of the classroom and which is basic to competence as a teacher (Denscombe, 1982, p.259).*

The following researchers echo similar thoughts on the merits of the 'hidden pedagogy' : Esland(1977) coined 'recipe knowledge' then Mardle and Walker (1980) discussed 'latent culture' followed by Hargreaves(1981) who spoke of 'hegemony' and Wedekind's (2000) term 'personalized frame'. Teachers practice reflectively from a repertoire of propositional and procedural knowledge (refer to definition in 3.3.3b) that seems almost automated and intuitive in character.

While the school culture is clinically determined, based on the physical structure and goals of the school, the culture of teachers is determined by their 'consciousness,

knowledge, sentiments and values' (Hoadley, 2002). Teachers have a collective disposition and their ways of 'being and doing' (Hoadley, 2002) are socially constituted.

### **3.4.2.3 Institutional Constraints**

The discrepancies between schools in South Africa are manifold. Among an innumerable list of inequalities that exist between schools are: the physical structure of the school, particular ethos of the school, entrenched dominant discourse and practices of the school system, the resources that are available, number and characteristic of learners in a classroom, nature of leadership, experience of staff, expectancies of the school, workload of teachers and the list goes on. The nature and the extent of the constraints which teachers face daily are determined by the institutional structure and operation of individual schools. As such the school can be a constraining environment that impacts on how a teacher performs. In reaction to the school constraints teachers may employ personal, individual strategies learnt from experience to counter the strains of their institutional environment. Woods (1980) defines these counter strategies employed by teachers on a daily basis as 'situationalism'. Noteworthy is that such personal choices can be further constrained by changing institutional practices.. As such conflict arises between the agency of a teacher and the structure within which they have to work. This invariably is a threat to the autonomy that is necessary for a teacher to practice according to what they personally believe are successful, pedagogically sound methods.

Morrow (2007) notes that

*we are here embroiled at the intersection between a concept of what it is to teach and the institutional and other contextual realities of the situations in which those whose professional task is to teach, try to carry out this activity; or the intersection between the idea of teaching and the roles and responsibilities we ascribe to those employed as 'teachers', and the conditions in which they are expected to carry out these roles and responsibilities (p. 5).*

Morrow's sentiments are supported by Hatton's (1987) investigation of teacher practices. Hatton (1987) concluded that teachers define their work around the constraints of their workplace. Upon further research years later, Hatton (1988)

elaborated that teachers' view about teaching were shaped by the constraints of their own school; temporarily remote constraints that existed before they enter the school as well as their experience in their teaching training.

### **3.4.3 Core regulations**

The manner in which teachers define themselves and practice in the classroom is often framed by their beliefs, knowledge, values, attitudes and commitments. While teacher professional identity comprises of curriculum expertise and pedagogic practice, it is also influenced by a teacher's personal characteristics such as their beliefs, knowledge, values, attitudes and commitments. These core regulators (Hoadley, 2002) are important concepts for this study. The core regulators help us understand how the educational process unfolds as teachers rise to meet the challenges of their professional life, shape learners' environments by providing learning opportunities and mediate the effects of changes in curricula policies.

I have used these concepts based on the success of other empirical studies of Kane, Sandretto, and Heath (2002) who have noted consistent relationships between core regulations and teacher practices. Prior to this Pajares (1992) noted, 'the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom ...' (p. 307). In the same year further supporting evidence was provided in Kagan's (1992) research which noted that: 'empirical studies have yielded quite consistent findings: A teacher's beliefs tend to be associated with a congruent style of teaching that is often evident across different classes and grade levels' (p.66). In fact, given that the knowledge base of teaching consists of few, if any, indisputable 'truths,' Kagan (1992) postulated, 'most of a teacher's professional knowledge can be regarded more accurately as a belief' (p. 73).

#### ***3.4.3.1 Values, Beliefs and Commitment***

These concepts form a vital part of teachers' identity and should not be underestimated. Hoadley (2002) has, through extensive research (Lortie, 1975; Ashton And Webb, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989; Maclaughlin and Talbert, 1994), documented the importance of teachers' values, beliefs and commitment as an importance component of teacher

practices. Such research has revealed that teacher practice is best understood by analyzing teachers' attitudes, their beliefs and feeling about what and how they teach. Hoadley (2002) adds 'commitment', 'motivation' and 'a sense of efficacy' (p.51) as equally important concepts to understand teacher practice.

### ***3.4.3.2 Knowledge***

An understanding of teachers' knowledge is difficult to conceptualize. Knight (2001) distinguished between procedural (practical) knowledge and propositional (higher-order) knowledge as necessary for teaching. Neither is more important than the other, as teachers need both procedural knowledge – the learning to do in practice – and propositional knowledge which is about sense-making and meaning of all that is necessary to function as a teacher. For the purpose of this study I want to understand 'the kind of knowledge that teachers draw on for their pedagogical practice' (Hoadley, 2002,p.51) Shulman (1987) was the first researcher to describe the knowledge base for teachers, referring to this knowledge as 'pedagogical content knowledge' while Connelly and Clandinin (1998) called it 'personal practical knowledge.' Included in the pedagogical content knowledge is the theoretical orientation that teachers have about learning and reading that influence their practice. Shulman (1987) argues that there is a knowledge base for teaching and that it includes the following:

- ❖ knowledge of students
- ❖ knowledge of the subject to be taught
- ❖ general knowledge of teaching processes, management, and organization that 'transcend the subject matter'
- ❖ 'pedagogical content knowledge,' which includes: curricular knowledge of 'materials and programs;' knowledge of how to teach particular kinds of content; knowledge of educational contexts and situations; and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values (p.9).

While Shulman's (1987) categories describe mostly propositional knowledge, more recently the NCS has been a greater emphasis placed on teachers' personal practical knowledge.

### ***3.4.3.3 Theories of Teaching and Learning***

Teaching is a practical act which is governed by many preconditions and different frames of reference (note literature review, 2.4 layers of a teacher's identity). Theoretical knowledge, educational knowledge, personal knowledge and ideological knowledge that make up an amalgam of knowledge blended with multiple practices, inform the personal theories that teachers have of what good teaching looks like. I say this with some reservation as I acknowledge that to conceptualize theories that teachers' hold of teaching is difficult because such personal theories are private, tacit and continuously changing. Theories around the concepts of teaching are often value-laden and ideal-filled notions. Hoadley(2002) surmises that theories of teaching and learning are shaped by ,among other variable, teachers personal philosophy, their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, and their professional ideals. In an informal and tacit manner these theories share a reciprocal relation with practice.

### ***3.4.3.4 Internal Accountability***

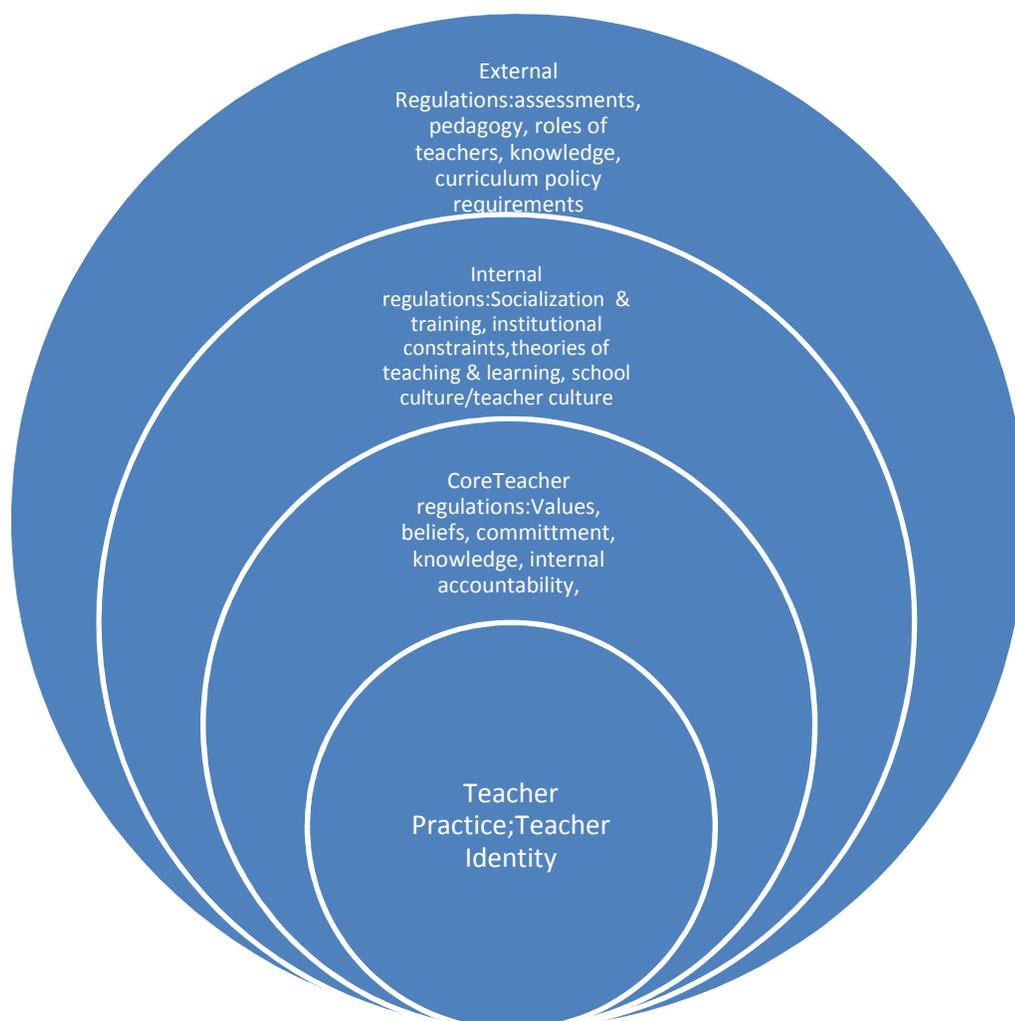
Teachers possess 'internal regulatory systems' (Cohen, 1995, p.16) through which they hold themselves accountable. Such accountability is recognized by teachers' internal beliefs, motivations, and perception; their notions of responsibility (Muller, 2000). In the absence of centrally regulating criteria, teachers measure their professional accountability by core standards which they set themselves. Internal accountability provides clarity for the 'regulatory agents of teacher practice' (Hoadley, 2002, p.53) that contribute to a teacher's identity.

These external and internal regulatory frames will form a major part of the theoretical and conceptual reference to understand 'how teachers regard themselves and their work of teaching' (Hoadley, 2002, p.40) in the light of current policy measures.

Since teaching is multi-dimensional there are many potential positions that a teacher might occupy as an 'active participant in a rich array of educational traditions' (Coldron and Smith, 1999; p.711). Through years of practice, experienced teachers informally identify 'good practices' based on practical ethic. Coldron and Smith (1999) believe that good practices are created as a result of experience in the profession and the knowledge that teachers continually acquire from different resources. These good

practices together with various regulatory factors, shape what teachers believe about who they are. The philosopher, MacIntyre (1981) calls these good practices, traditions. Similar to Hoadley's (2002) core regulators, Coldron and Smith (1999, p.713) view them as 'ways of acting and thinking' sometimes of considerable duration, which are patterned into practices and sets of practices'.

The following figure highlights the varying impact of core, internal and external regulation on teacher practice and identity.



**Figure1. External, internal and core regulations**

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

This conceptual framework provides an analytic tool to engage with the data of how teachers' practice and their identity are related. I needed a research tool to explore and understand the integrated relationship between teacher practice, identity and curriculum

reform embedded in policy documents. For this reason the conceptual framework becomes pivotal in providing clear links between the research questions, the literature, the research design and the discussion.

# CHAPTER 4

## METHODOLOGY

## **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This research study examines the practice and identity of four English teachers in light of external regulations. This chapter provides the research design and methodology I employed to conduct the study. I commence by introducing the three parts of the qualitative research methodology which are: choice of methodology and paradigm; design coherence; and strengths and limitations of the study. This methodology is designed to elicit, in a cost effective and realistic fashion, the most useful information that would translate into accurate and credible data.

## **4.2. CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY**

### **4.2.1 AN INTERPRETATIVE PARADIGM AND A QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

The methodology of any study is determined by the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher. This study is located in an interpretive paradigm which emphasizes experience and interpretation. An interpretive research orientation was adopted to focus primarily on how teachers 'make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world' (Merriam, 1998, p.6). In keeping with this tradition the perspectives of the participants form the main focus of the study. This study fits within this paradigm as the purpose is to describe the teacher's practices and sense of identity. By relying on the participants' recall and interpretation of policy documents, this interpretative research is value-laden. Furthermore individuals are not considered to be 'passive vehicles in social, political and historical affairs, but have certain inner capabilities which can allow for individual judgments, perceptions and decision-making autonomy (agency)' (Garrick, 1999, p.149). By contrast positivists believe that external forces shape individuals and therefore researchers are external to the experimental situation, from where they attempt to identify and measure these forces to discover pre-existing patterns.

As an interpretive researcher, attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation I acknowledge that my subjective role is a key concern, as in the process of describing and interpreting, data can be colored by my ontological and epistemological perspective. But such a bias was made explicit to the participants

and it is also acknowledged in the interpretation of the data. The challenge posed by this paradigm is the integrity of the research being reliant on the accountability of the researcher in the documenting of the study from beginning to end. To this end I exercised great caution with the designing of the methodological procedure, and transcribing and interpreting of the data. I acknowledge that the character of the data is shaped by the researcher's interpretation which could greatly influence the conclusion of the research study.

My view is that 'reality is subjective, a social product, constructed and interpreted by humans as social actors according to their beliefs and value systems' (Darke, Shanks and Broadbent, 1998, p.276). As a qualitative researcher, I am acutely aware of my subjectivity in the research process as I attempt to gain a deep understanding of the practices of experienced teachers and their teacher identity being investigated 'through accessing the meanings that participants assign to them' (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991, p.5), within their natural social context. To understand ***the extent to which the practices of experienced teachers are governed by external regulation and how this shapes their identity as teachers***, I used a qualitative approach which lends itself to exploration and the knowing of reality – a social construct – through the eyes of the research participants.

The qualitative approach allowed me to explore research questions pertaining to the extent to which external regulation governed practices of experienced teachers and shaped their identities as teachers. To gather opinions, facts, stories and to gain insight into the practices and identity of experienced teachers within the qualitative methodology which lends itself to answering questions framed as 'what', 'where', 'why' and 'how,' the researcher engaged the participants in an exploration of key research questions .

The purpose of the research was to understand and describe the dynamics within teacher practices and teacher identity in relation to the external regulation to which teachers were subjected. Meaning and definitions created by teachers were fluid and

therefore could not be predicted and controlled. There was no attempt on my part to 'present any objective, scientific *truth* or arrive at neat conclusions, proof, or any rationalistic simplification of reality, to *edit out* complexities' (Hesketh, 2004, p.106). Rather, I assumed that we create truth and meaning in our engagement in social interactions and that different people can ascribe meaning in different ways to the same phenomena. Through reflection teachers created meaning to make sense of their world. Such meaning became the data in the form of teachers' stories, subject to analysis and was then described as an interpreted understanding of the experiences of these teacher-participants.

### **4.3. DESIGN COHERENCE**

#### **4.3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The key research questions of the study are:

1. To what extent are the practices of experienced teachers governed by external regulation?
2. To what extent does this external regulation shape their identity as teachers?

By drawing inferences from the data to answer these questions the researcher was able to investigate and to collate data for analysis about the impact of external regulations on experienced teachers whose practice and identity is quite entrenched (refer to literature review: Britzman, 2003; Day, 2002). The nature of the qualitative method yielded soft data. The data generated from the interviews was a mass of words dealing with feelings, understandings, interpretations, opinions, facts, stories and insights into the experience of four experienced teachers. Using interviews as a means of data collection I was able to probe for answers that would provide useful insight into understanding the extent to which external regulations (in the form of curriculum policies) regulated teachers' practice and their impact on the teachers' established identity. It was important enough to enable the researcher to provide a rich description and understanding of the nature of the phenomenon. The research questions linked to the goal of the study, providing coherence to the study.

#### **4.3.2 SAMPLING AND PARTICIPANTS**

The sample was purposively selected. Teachers were selected from specific schools that represent the demographic composition that prevails in South Africa. These teachers were selected because they, by my judgment, would best be able to answer the questions of my study as a result of their experience of the many curriculum reforms that have traversed the educational landscape. My association with the participants stems from a network of teachers teaching English Home Language in the Umgungundlovu circuit since 1998; as well as the marking of matriculation English Home Language external examination papers. Teachers within the circuit networked as clusters for the purpose of external moderation for the matriculation examinations. More recently, since 2004, teachers of English have been meeting regularly to negotiate the setting of common examinations papers for grades 11 and 12. It was within these ranks that I had identified my participants based on their knowledge and expertise in the subject, accumulated years of experience and their qualification in the subject. I believe the sampling of experienced teachers who have an eloquent command of the English language, would elicit rich data as they would be speak confidently about their practices and identity as a result of wisdom of experience. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) define purposive sampling as a process whereby the 'researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought' (p.115).

As a primary source of data the participants play a pivotal role in the study. The participants were four teachers of English who each have twenty or more years of continuous teaching experience. In my view these teachers would be 'information-rich' (Merriam, 1998, p. 61), hence providing a deep well of data. My study was further enriched by the participants' eager and open willingness to share their wealth of experience because very few teachers are given the opportunity to talk about what they do in the classroom. To secure participation, I identified possible participants in each of the selected schools and made a formal request for their participation in my study. In

the request I explained the purpose of my study and assured participants that their participation was voluntary and they would have anonymity.

**Table 2: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF PARTICIPANTS**

TEACHER	SCHOOL	QUALIFICATION	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TEACHING ENGLISH
Sagren	Aster High	College Diploma	31	31
Anne	Rose High	B.A Degree & HDE	23	23
Vani	Watela High	College Diploma & Teaching Degree	20	20
Rajan	Azalea High	B. Paed &Hons (English)	27	27

#### **4.3.4 RESEARCH CONTEXT**

The research is located in four different high schools in the Pietermaritzburg region. The four government aided schools differed in demographics: Rose High School is situated just outside the central business district , Aster High School is in very close proximity to the down town city centre ; Azalea High School is built in an affluent, previously Indian zoned suburb and Watela High School is found in a township area. Each school operates in a unique context and has a particular history that allows for the sustaining of specific classroom practices; as noted by Blignaut (2008) context frames classroom practices. By selecting the afore-mentioned types of schools I had the opportunity to explore, compare and contrast the teaching practices and identity of experienced teachers, who are operating in vastly different contexts.

##### **4.3.4.1 CONTEXT OF EACH SCHOOL**

The context of the school, for example the size of the school, teacher-learner ratio, access to resources and extra-curricular activities, set the internal regulations for teachers. Teachers operating under different contexts have differing variables that influence their practices. Noted in this study are differing variables such as physical

location of the school, school fees, hostel facilities at the school, matriculation pass rate, and English Home Language schools that have learners who speak English as an additional language.

### ***Aster High School***

This large co-ed high school, situated on the periphery of the city centre, previously catered for learners who were interested in woodwork and mechanics. Presently there are approximately thirty-seven classes, a library, a physical and life sciences laboratory, a computer room, a computer laboratory and a media room where learners have access to the internet under supervision from educators on duty.

The school fees at Aster High school are R1800 per year. Aster High school has forty-five educators including management members. The school governing body does not have the financial capacity to hire additional teachers. The population of 1089 learners is drawn mainly from the city and the near-by informal settlements. In December 2011 they achieved a 99.4% matriculation pass rate.

The English classes at the school have approximately forty to forty five learners per class in the FET phase. Even though the language of instruction is English Home Language (that is learners write examinations at the standardized level of home language speakers) ninety-five percent of the learners are second language English speakers. Most of the second language learners attended rural isiZulu-medium primary schools but when they entered high school in grade eight, by choice of school they had to adapt to an English medium syllabus.

The Languages, Literacy and Communications Department at Aster High school have a poetry society within the school. They also offer learners a chance to participate in the Nelson Mandela Speech Contest and the Natal Witness/Varsity College Schools Quiz.

Teaching and learning at the school is affected by the following social factors: learner pregnancy; child-headed households; learners having to care for parents with HIV; learners who are in very abusive relationships and learners who experience death of loved ones and care-givers.

### ***Rose High School***

This girls' high school is situated in an urban area within close proximity to the central business district. The school has a library, three computer centers, audio-visual facilities, two art rooms, a sculpture room, a technology room, a drama room and a music auditorium. It also has hostel facilities and two kitchens. The school fees for day learners are R12500 with boarders paying more to include boarding facilities and amenities. The staff is made up of sixty-one educators of which forty, including management, are state paid and twenty-one teachers are hired by the school governing body. The school governing body has the financial capacity to hire additional educators to compliment the staff and create an ease in the teaching load of permanent educators. The population in this school is made up of 220 boarders and 1020 day pupils. This school is ranked as one of the top three schools in its district for 100% achievements in the Matric Examination.

The English classes have approximately thirty-four learners per class in the FET phase. The school is an English-medium school and the subject English is engaged with at home language level; that is learners write the standardized home language examinations. There are a large number of learners at the school for whom English is their home language, but there also exist a sizeable number of learners who don't have English as their mother tongue. However, these learners speak English with great fluency. Anne tells me that the reason for their fluency lies in the fact that most of these learners have attended an English medium primary school.

The Languages, Literacy and Communications Department at Rose High School offer learners a chance to participate in debating at KwaZulu-Natal High Schools debating level, English Olympiad, Readers are Leaders Nelson Mandela Speech Contest, Natal Witness/Varsity College Schools Quiz.

### **Azalea High School**

Azalea High School, a co-ed school, is situated in the eastern suburbs of Pietermaritzburg. This school houses thirty-eight classes, a physical and life sciences

laboratory, a media centre which allows learners capped internet access and a drama room. The school fees are R2100 per year. The staff consists of forty-five teachers including management. Ten of these educators are employed by the school governing body to provide some relief for the load carried by permanent educators. The school population is 1435 learners most of whom are from the neighboring areas. This school boasts a one hundred percent pass rate in matriculation for the past ten years.

Ten percent of the huge population of this school is English second language speakers. The English classes have approximately thirty-eight to forty-two learners. Learners engage with the English curriculum at home language level. The Languages, Literacy and Communications Department at Azalea High school offer learners a chance to participate in English Olympiad, Nelson Mandela Speech Contest and the Natal Witness/Varsity College Schools Quiz.

### ***Watela High school***

Watela high school is on the periphery of the city centre, situated in an impoverished area that has a very poor infrastructure and therefore serves a very poor socio-economic community.

The school houses forty-three classes, a library, a computer room, a consumer studies room and a science laboratory that is not functional. The classrooms are inadequate and the entire school is in need of repair. This school is ranked as quintile three which means it is government subsidized. Watela is classified as a 'non-paying school fees' school. Therefore the Department of Education allocates R837000 per year to the school but the principal is instructed very clearly on how the money should be spent. To this end he has a long paper trail of accountability. Including management members there are twenty-seven teachers at the school who are state paid. The school governing body is unable to hire any extra teachers therefore all the teachers carry a full teaching load. The school has a population of 987 learners all of whom are within very close proximity to the school. Last year the school had a matriculation pass rate of 86%.

The English classes have approximately forty- seven to fifty learners per class. All the learners are English second language speakers who engage with the exams at the standardized level of home language speakers. The Languages, Literacy and Communications Department at Watela offers learners a reading club where senior learners teach and monitor other learners to read and speak English. Learners also participate in the Nelson Mandela Speech contest and The Natal Witness/Varsity College Schools Quiz.

The functionality of this school is affected by the high rate of learner absenteeism. In addition the following social factors affect teaching and learning: high rate of learner pregnancy; learners who are parents; child-headed households; learners have to care for parents with HIV; learners who are in very abusive relationships; learners who have very old partners and learners who experience the death of loved ones and care-givers. As a consequence of these factors, learners are not easily disciplined and the boundaries between teacher and learner are not very distinct. From my observation I noted that learners are not keen to learn or to be in class. Of the fifty-two learners in the class, only ten or twelve paid attention to the lesson. Other learners were sleeping, some were painting their nails, some were whispering to each other, some were writing notes and some were staring around in a disinterested way.

#### **4.3.5 ETHICAL ISSUES**

For the integrity of research and to have a study that is credible I made every attempt to maintain an ethical code. For an informed system of ethics I referred to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) and I conformed to the following ethical criteria:

- ❖ The researcher must reveal fully her identity and background.
- ❖ The purpose and procedures of the research must be fully explained to the participants at the outset.
- ❖ The research and its ethical consequences should be seen from the participant's and institution's point of view.
- ❖ Informed consent should be sought from all participants: all agreements reached at this stage should be honored.

- ❖ Gain fully informed consent in writing, in order to respect self-determination and autonomy; provide information on all aspects of the research and its possible consequences.
- ❖ Participants should have the option to refuse to take part and know this, and the right to terminate their involvement at any time and know this also.
- ❖ The dignity, privacy and the interests of the participants should be respected and protected at all times.
- ❖ Ensure non-maleficence (no harm or suffering caused to participants as the result of the research)
- ❖ Ensure beneficence (the research will bring benefit to the participants and will contribute to their welfare).
- ❖ Don't abuse your position or power as a researcher (p.76-77).

From McKernan (1996) I have noted the following ethical considerations:

- ❖ No individual participant will have unilateral rights to veto the content of any research report.
- ❖ All documentary evidence, such as files, correspondence and suchlike, should not be examined without official permission.
- ❖ The researcher is responsible for the confidentiality of the data.
- ❖ Researchers are obliged to keep efficient records of the research and make these available to participants and authorities on demand.
- ❖ The researcher will be accountable to the school community who impact on the research.
- ❖ The researcher has a right to report the research fairly.
- ❖ The researcher must make the ethical contractual criteria known to all involved (p.241).

Taking cognizance of the above I embraced ethical practices in the study and interviews under the principles and guidelines of informed consent. I obtained written permission from the principals of the schools as well as the participants. I received ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ethical Clearance

Committee. This study was not a sensitive subject nor is the research participants likely to be exposed to any painful or traumatic experiences/memories. The participants were informed that they were under no obligation to answer any question that they were not comfortable with. As part of a protective system I have to use pseudonyms to provide anonymity for the participants and the schools in the study. I am aware that the five basic principles related to the ethical code are: informed consent to participate; right to privacy; harm avoidance to participants; objectivity and honesty in reporting; promise of confidentiality and anonymity of participants, all of which I practiced rigorously.

#### **4.3.6 RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY**

As an experienced teacher of English Home Language myself, I am acutely aware that I bring a certain biography to the research. Further, that a participant's behavior and responses in the interview may be as a result of my presence. I am an 'inescapable part of the social world that I have chosen to research' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.14), therefore I have openly acknowledged and disclosed my credentials as a teacher. While I cannot eliminate this part of my biography, I was constantly aware of my intention to understand and not influence the data. Through continual monitoring of my actions this reflexivity allowed me, as a researcher, to engage in critical practice of my own research.

#### **4.3.7 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

##### ***4.3.7.1 Interviews***

Data must be collected in a systematic and thoughtful manner to ensure that it is meaningful and accurate. For the purpose of this study the researcher used unstructured interviews and lesson observations. The researcher found that interviews are flexible and adaptable, which therefore allowed for interviewees themselves to raise complementary issues in the discussion that fitted into the research scope and formed an integral part of the study's findings. While the interview style was unstructured it was not haphazard, and the questions were deliberate and focused with the intent to elicit

answers to the research question. I used specific questions in the semi-structured interview process and this provided the space for the participants to use their own words to describe, interpret and discuss their feelings, experiences and views in a conversational-like atmosphere. I used open-ended questions (refer to appendix D for a schedule of interview questions) to guide the participant's reconstruction of their experience of teaching over the years. The initial one-on-one interview with the teachers was recorded. Noting 'short-comings associated with the manual recording of participants during an interview'(Merriam, 1998, p.87), an audio recording device was also used with the consent of the participants, to ensure that everything said was recorded and made available for analysis. These tape recorded interviews were immediately transcribed after the interview session in order to make the raw data available for analysis.

To facilitate the process of data collection and for the ease of the participants I arranged for the observation of the lesson to be followed immediately by the interview. This allowed me to make easy reference to the teaching styles used in the lesson. Appointments were set-up personally so participants could meet me first and we could establish a rapport. I allowed the participants to choose a lesson they preferred me to observe. At this meeting I clarified the intention of my research with both the participants and the principal. It was mutually agreed by all parties that arrangements would be made for the teacher to be free after the lesson so I could conduct my interview. Except for Anne who was interviewed during the weekend when she was free, others were reluctant to see me outside of the school. This prior meeting with the participants removed any threat that participants may have perceived about my agenda and it paved the way for the rich data that I was able to elicit. Prior to the scheduled appointment I reminded participants telephonically about our appointment. The observation of the lesson was approximately fifty minutes long, followed by a two hour interview.

Interviews are an excellent source of primary data in an interpretative research study as the researcher can best access participant's views and interpretations of actions and events. The interview focused on the participant's experience, details of their practices

of teaching over the past twenty years, their present day teaching practice and their reflections on the implications of curriculum changes. By tape-recording the interview the researcher captured complete descriptions of responses and comments, even though it could have been an inhibiting factor for the participants.

#### ***4.3.7.2 Observation***

The purpose of observing a lesson was for me to develop a lucid picture and understanding of teachers' classroom practices noting their style of instructional practice. The lesson observation allowed me to have 'a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest' (Merriam, 1998, p.94). Through the observation, I was able to gain access to the everyday life experiences of my research participants. Wearing my researcher cap and not that of a fellow teacher, I had no intention of judging their beliefs, perceptions or teaching styles, but simply wanted to observe their practice. Since the lesson observation was not the primary source of data collection, it was kept to a minimum of one lesson and I took copious notes. This lesson observation enabled me to view how teachers practiced their usual routine and interacted with the natural environment of their classroom. It served as a guide for the interview session and enabled the construction of narrative notes for the findings of this study.

I am aware that my presence in the classroom may have distorted the behavior of both the teacher and the learners and produced unnatural teaching and learning practices. The teacher-participants could have behaved uncharacteristically. Personal experience as the secretary of my school's Staff Development Team with the process of Integrated Quality Management Systems revealed that teachers were reluctant to allow colleagues to observe lessons. To mitigate the effects of my presence I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible by sitting at the back of the class, out of the learner's line of vision after the teacher had introduced me as an observer. In addition I opted not to use any recording equipment that would alter the natural, routine setting which the learners and teacher were familiar with. In my initial discussions with participants about the process of data collection I noted their reluctance to allow me into their space. Coldron and Smith (1999) whose research I have used extensively to ground my study have revealed that 'teaching happens from a very personal space' (p.718).

To guide my process of data collection I relied on mutually agreeable terms with participants to maintain the integrity and trustworthiness of the process. These terms included participants choosing the lesson to be observed, no recording equipment would be employed during the observation, and they would have access to all notes taken. In this way I was able to collect first hand 'live', authentic (Cohen, et al. 2007) data from the classroom. This trustworthiness strengthened the validity of my study as in the interview we discussed congruence between the participant's actual classroom practices and what they say they do in their practice.

#### **4.4 DATA REPRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Data was generated from the classroom observation and interviews. The stories told by the participants about their experiences and practices became that data for analysis. The concepts of external, internal and core regulations were used as the analytic lens to analyze the data generated, from the interviews, and represented in the form of stories. Through this process the research questions were answered.

#### **4.5. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

##### **4.5.1 STRENGTHS**

By giving participants the freedom to answer as they wished, allowed them to have a feeling of control in the interview situation. The participants telling of their personal experience makes for powerful data that quantitative research cannot lay claim to. This emic (insider's viewpoint) provides an understanding and description of people's personal experiences of the phenomena under study. Through the interview process I was able to ask complex and probing questions ensuring quality data. The individual interviews allowed for in-depth information to be captured. The research study provides a rich detailed description of the phenomena as situated and embedded in local contexts. Congruent with the interpretive paradigm is non-probability sampling which is non-representative and does not allow me to generalize the findings beyond these four participants.

#### **4.5.2 LIMITATIONS**

I was aware of the observer effect, which by my very presence in the classroom could impact on and distort the participant's natural practice that I wanted to observe. Furthermore the data is gathered from four individuals so it cannot be generalized to a larger population but only allows for detailed analysis of teacher practice. I understood that the quality of the research depended on my skill as a researcher and could have been influenced by any subtle biases or idiosyncrasies that I may possess. By placing such heavy reliance on the integrity and skill of the researcher, the study is difficult to replicate.

Participants were not eager to check the data therefore the researchers' interpretation cannot be cross checked, hence information could be distorted. This calls into question the trustworthiness of this study in the absence of methodological triangulation which gives credibility to a research study. The key strength of triangulation is the possibility of uncovering complexity and of finding different views.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

This methodology chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research design employed in conducting this study. The researcher acknowledges the merits of qualitative research and accounts for her choice of methodology, paradigm and design coherence. A detailed description of the research context was a necessary inclusion to show the institutional structural constraints [a core regulation referred to in the theoretical framework (refer to 3.3.2c)] under which the sampled participants operated. The attention to minute detail in data collection techniques highlights the care with which data was collected and handled. Finally the ethical considerations, coupled with strengths and weakness of the study brings awareness to concepts of teacher identity, practice and curriculum reform that are grounded in real world circumstances.

# CHAPTER 5

## FINDINGS

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the stories, generated from the individual interviews and the lesson observations. My attention to teachers' stories about their experience, their practice and their engagement with learner and curriculum policy is significant in understanding how these teachers negotiate, construct and contextualize their identity. As a researcher my intention in this chapter is to describe and retell - as authentically as possible - 'the storied lives' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p.2) of these experienced teacher participants. These stories then become the data for analysis to answer the research questions.

## **5.2 SAGREN'S NARRATIVE OF BEING A TEACHER: Aster High School**

### **5.2.1 SAGREN'S STORY**

Sagren holds a management position as the Head of Department for languages, literacy and communications at Aster High School. He aspired to be a doctor but at that time there were limited places for Indian students at medical schools. Teaching was his fall-back plan. According to Sagren his Springfield College Diploma did little to prepare him for standing in front of a class and delivering a lesson from the then prescribed English syllabus. Sagren regards his training as a 'cosmic joke'. When he went to college on the first day the interview was conducted in Afrikaans. There was a dire need for Afrikaans teachers but not many students were pursuing this field. Sagren proved that he could converse well in Afrikaans. The result was that he became an Afrikaans/English special. This meant his student training was leaning towards teaching Afrikaans at a high school. It was taken for granted that as first language English speakers there was no real need for specific or complex training.

Sagren began his career in Ladysmith where he taught standards six, seven and eight (grades eight, nine and ten). He then moved around a few schools in Pietermaritzburg teaching English to all grades at high school, before he assumed the position of Head of Department in his present school. From this informed perspective he notes that much of his learning as a teacher had been informal training which he has developed on his own through trial and error. He claims vociferously that:

*my mentors/seniors/superiors did not teach me anything; they did not teach me how to teach at all. I learnt how to teach on my own. There was no professional development when I was a novice teacher.*

This meant that he had to analyze and translate the literature into 'classroom talk' for the learners. By implication, two teachers of English, teaching the same material will have a different interpretation and achieve different results. Sagren reflects that no amount of formal training or professional development can prepare a teacher for '*how to handle a particular subject in the context of a particular school*'. Since it is common knowledge that teachers interpret the curriculum in different ways, the topic of this study explores the reciprocal relationship of the impact of identity and beliefs on the practice of teachers of English in particular.

From his vast experience of having taught subjects other than English, Sagren was able to claim with some degree of conviction that a teacher of English could teach any other subject with great skill. Further he believes that teachers qualified in other specialized subjects could also comfortably become teachers of English in the GET phase. But the process has to be gradual, especially in the FET phase where pedagogical content knowledge was a definite requirement. In Sagren's words:

*I don't think there is a fair amount of intricacy. Again it depends on the level, if a mathematics teacher is teaching grade 8 English they might be quite successful but if they go higher up in the grade there will certainly be difficulty.*

Sagren pointed out that curriculum policy for English allows for some degree of creativity in the GET phase but is far more regulated and prescriptive in the FET phase. His understanding is that teaching English is not particularly specialized, except in the FET phase and this is where my study is located.

He was quite candid in his view about the prescribed content for the English curriculum in the FET phase. He found it to be onerous and very limited in its scope for learners who were second language English speakers practicing as home language learners.

The minimal difference in curricula between English Home Language and English First Additional Language lies in *The Language Standardization Policy July 2001* which aimed to bring about uniformity in all official and non-official languages in the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (General) for Languages. The vision when designing the new curriculum for all languages, whether it be Home, First Additional or Second Additional language, was the emphasis of teaching, learning and assessing will be placed on the communicative approach, text-based approach and different forms of literacy including visual literacy. This scope did not augur well for Sagren. In his view it did not address the complex practicalities of teaching English Home Language to learners who speak English as a second language.

Reflecting on his experience Sagren notes that English second language learners are not benefitting from the inclusion of the communicative approach and the different forms of literacy. He adds that these approaches have replaced the teaching of the *'bones of English'* such as basic punctuation, parts of speech, grammar, sentence construction, diction and syntax. He believes that the learning of basics first is advantageous for learners in using the communicative, text-based approach and the different forms of literacy as prescribed in the NCS document. The absence of learning the basics, which is the present situation, results in learners being seriously encumbered in the FET phase. Observing Sagren teach I noted that learners had difficulty in understanding the comprehension passage. Many of the learners were conversing in Zulu with their peers to translate for understanding; a process called code-switching, where learners refer to language familiar to them for translation and understanding. My observation that this situation posed a teaching and learning problem was confirmed by Sagren. Further during the observation I noted that learners conversed with each other in Zulu and struggled to express themselves in English when talking to the teacher despite his familiarity with Zulu.

Sagren's experience has served him well in directing and changing his practice in the classroom. The changing of his practice was a necessary recourse to teach learners language in a way that was creative while still trying to stay true to the English Home

Language syllabus for the FET phase. In addition Sagren found that he had to draw on a vast store of his general knowledge to continually scaffold learners' understanding by providing detailed background knowledge of society and its history...

*our children here, many of them were born post-apartheid so they don't know what apartheid is, yet in our syllabus here is the novel Buckingham Palace that is entrenched in that era. Some of the children cannot understand poetry, sometimes when you talk about pass laws. They know the pass laws but they do not know some of atrocities associated with it. I say if you think I'm lying go home and speak to your parents and grandparents about this. Those few who do actually come back richly rewarded because of their experiences. They have a bigger picture of life, they begin to appreciate life.*

Perhaps another way to make sense of Sagren's practice is that he wants to improve learners' general knowledge of society and history while they study literature. So the process of teaching and practices in the classroom for Sagren is not couched in some strictly prescribed curriculum plan of what should happen in the classroom. My observation lesson was evidence that much of what happens in the classroom on a daily basis cannot be rigidly planned. Sagren had planned that learners would engage with the comprehension and answer the varying levels of questions on their own. In practice learners struggled to comprehend. Sagren moved around the class helping individual learners, but due to large numbers this was not viable. He then resorted to line by line teaching of the comprehension using Zulu words when necessary. No doubt there are definite rules about specialized language and grammatical rules of the language that learners must be taught to use.

Sagren's practice is to introduce those technicalities by linking it to learners' everyday knowledge with rhetorical questions in a poem...

*You have to explain to them that it is nothing unusual; your mothers use it all the time especially when they want you to think carefully about what you are doing.*

So, for Sagren his purpose as a teacher of English is to make the usage of the English language more practical, more user friendly rather than making it some theoretical frightening subject. To add another dimension, Sagren also relies heavily on fun 'stick' figures which he demonstrated in the observation lesson, to graphically represent particular words or concepts, especially when learners' interest is waning and you need to refocus them.

*They look at it, everyone is puzzled because anything different on the board catches their attention, so everyone sort of absorbed this picture on the board, and I ask what it is? All have different suggestions...learners are beginning to latch onto what you are saying. For me that really works so I try not to use much technical language.*

For standardization the grade twelve curriculum is externally regulated and results are determined by external examinations. Despite the rigid regulations governing the Grade twelve syllabus, Sagren uses the same practices very successfully in his grade twelve classes as well. Although the official curriculum is strongly prescriptive, Sagren takes cognizance of it but is governed more strongly by his own beliefs about teaching English.

In fact he finds the NCS document very difficult to follow strictly. In his view it is the old syllabus reworded to a large extent.

*It does not present a problem for me because I understand all the different components no matter what the heading; old wine in new bottles.*

When expounding on the learning outcomes and assessment standards for English as prescribed in the NCS document, Sagren finds it to be a 'foreboding bother' because teachers are expected, as per the NCS document, to actually incorporate this into their preparation journal which he believes to be a futile activity.

The only change worth mentioning is the assessment standards. Sagren acknowledges that the English Home Language Policies has become very prescriptive with no room for deviation in terms of testing and assessing. The consequence of this for him is that

teachers of English are doing more similar types of assessing and less teaching. He elaborates that of the sixteen mandatory assessments for the FET phase; four assessments are for orals and four for writing skills. The writing skills are further assessed in the June (mid-year) and November (final) examinations. Other tests are also prescriptive in that they have to be for specific language or literature, poetry or contextual tests. In this way the teacher does not have the freedom to reflect on the needs of the learners and assess accordingly. Moreover, Sagren favored the old paradigm when teachers test after a completed section to assess the short-fall of the learners and then do remediation.

Sagren has no respect for the NCS documents that stress vague skills and do not pay enough attention to the need for subject expertise, which in his opinion is vital to the treatment of literature. Subject expertise refers to specific knowledge indicators required for the teaching of English Home language. Such knowledge indicators are collated by qualified persons because of their experience and expert knowledge in the field of English Home Language teaching. Sagren says

*what troubles me is that the treatment of a book from school to school is different, very different. Simply because there is no law that is laid down by the department, there is no guide line. We have to make up our own content. So the material delivered in the class is only as good as the individual teacher... To teach William Blake, T.S Elliot, Cummings does require a great deal of understanding of the poet's background and some skill.*

So what does this mean for teachers' practices? How do they engage with the official curriculum? These are the questions that propel this study. I want to recognize patterns of practices that are required when teaching is specialized and the impact that has on the identity of the teacher. For Sagren, his purpose as a teacher of English is not embedded in the actual teaching of technicalities but rather the subject and its content is a vehicle to prepare the learners for life.

*If you are analyzing literature it's about the thinking one would engage in to analyze the literature. So at the end of the day the learner should walk away not with all the technical knowledge about the literary skills but the learner should*

*have the capacity to have argued and thought in an in-depth fashion about the issues that have been raised in that piece of literature. So it's a lot deeper for me. It's not these jargon related terms that go with English.*

This was a strong theme in Sagren's identity as a teacher. He viewed himself as a teacher of life rather than a teacher of specific subject content. He demonstrated this by engaging learners about their life stories as they related to the comprehension passage.

As Sagren reflects upon his teaching practice over the past 31 years he sees very little change in terms of the content of the subject as outlined in the curriculum documents. As a result of his vast experience, Sagren feels that it is with good authority he is able to pass judgment on the demands of the curricula laid down by the department. For him the curriculum changes have been a challenge because of the failure of the cascading model to adequately train teachers to implement what is laid down in the NCS document. He is frustrated but has had to 'soldier on;' learning on his own and leaning on the experiences of colleagues.

In his attempts to be objective, Sagren acknowledges that learners in his school also contribute to his frustration as

*they have very little knowledge; we have to be like jugs that are pouring information out to learners.*

He believes that this problem is not peculiar to this school but is a nation-wide plague as learners simply do not read. Sagren feels that the process of education, presently, is similar to a production line, competence has been sacrificed.

Sagren defines himself as such:

*I am a versatile teacher. I do not feel that I should be governed by the NCS or the law that may be laid down by the state because at the end of the day it does not get you very far. It becomes a clinical process and you would not have achieved anything. As a teacher you must establish a kind of individuality.*

To this end he does not teach English according to the rigid plans laid down in policy documents but rather inspires learners by actively interacting with them using the text

(which is chosen depending on availability of numbers at the school) on a larger scale. Despite Sagren's obvious dislike of the NCS policy, his actions do not appear to be in contradiction to policy. Sagren's annoyance stems from the lack of resources at the school. He teaches from outdated textbooks that are no longer relevant to learners. The constraints of teaching English Home Language are that texts are not chosen in response to the educational needs of learners. The school receives a list of prescribed poems and the necessary textbook to be used in a three year cycle for grade twelve learners. The school then spends from the budget allocated from the SGB for grade twelve learners at the expense of the learners in other grades. Sagren notes that it is illogical as grade twelve is the culmination of a learner's education, but because of the scarcity of appropriate teaching material, they are not adequately prepared.

Sagren's last words on being a teacher:

*I believe that a teacher cannot be like a closed vessel, he is not an entity that can be referred to as being complete, and he is constantly developing, growing and learning. That is a philosophy that I practice, the best way to handle frustration of being a teacher is being prepared to learn, go in with an open mind and if you do that you will be able to cope with the challenges that you are faced with in class. Open-mindedness and the spirit of wanting to learn are the key elements that have helped me to survive.*

### **5.3 ANNE'S NARRATIVE: Rose High School**

#### **5.3.1 ANNE'S STORY**

Anne, born and educated in Swaziland holds a B.A degree and a Higher Diploma in Education. Her sense of herself as a teacher was a reaction to her perception of the injustices that prevailed during the time of apartheid. Therefore she saw herself as

*an alternative kind of teacher. We are talking about the apartheid years 1971/1972 when I did my training. When I thought about teaching I imagined being involved with black schools... I did not want to go into a normal system of teaching. That's where I saw my role as being a teacher.*

Anne first taught business English to immigrants in London before her teaching post in a multi-racial co-ed school in Swaziland. Her first impressions were:

*I hated the teaching experience. I was young, thrown in the deep end and very idealistic, I wanted to teach in a certain way. I did not believe in the teacher standing in front and talking for hours, I wanted to interact with the learners and they probably took advantage of me.*

Before she came to Rose High School, Anne taught history and English at a school for Black learners only. This was during the apartheid era of separatist education when schools were differentiated on the basis of different race groups. When comparing her teaching styles with the styles of newly qualified teachers, Anne found that her teaching was entrenched in a very traditional paradigm. The teaching of history was very structured and content bound. English too was taught with similar rigidity. Anne was conflicted by her personal sense of being a teacher who interacts with learners and the design of the curriculum which portrayed teachers as imparters of knowledge. This way of teaching, where the teacher was the 'knower' in control, was practiced across the curriculum even for biology which included experiments.

When reflecting upon her teaching then Anne notes that:

*In an English lesson, there were times when you ask 'what you think?' to the class. But I did not allow the children as much freedom then as perhaps I do now to express themselves. I was still definitely in charge, very much more in charge as a teacher. The classes were in rows and that's how I liked it and that is how I expected it to. It was a far more formal situation.*

My observation of Anne's lesson reveals that she has grown in a different direction as her class was set in group formation and most of the lesson was spent on exploring learners' thoughts and ideas with very little information from Anne. Now Anne sees that learners can create knowledge but with the guidance of the teacher. She says

*the problem with OBE is that it was so child-centered that you often lost your way as to what learners were meant to be doing. It was easy for the teacher to disappear too much.*

Anne's aim as a teacher of English is to have her learners think critically –

*I want them to be able to be thinkers so that when they go out into the world as citizens they are critical thinkers. Learners must be involved and thinking and try to be critical of what is around them on the radio, in newspapers and the language they are using. To me the comma and the full-stop and the dash is part of what they have to do to pass their examination but ultimately I want to see people who can think and be critical in what they see, hear or read.*

To strengthen this in her learners Anne incorporates it into her practice in class where learners spend most of the lesson reflecting, experimenting with language/grammar, discovering, arguing and respecting what their peers think, using the text as a vehicle for this process. She has moved away from the notion that as a teacher she is the knower and imparter of knowledge. It is from this open space of being willing to learn that Anne is able to experiment with different methods of delivery in the classroom. For example the lesson on the language of persuasion that I observed used group work and during the interview Anne revealed that she also encouraged learners to teach a poetry lesson or she would allow learners to lead comprehension lessons without her input. Anne says that this way of teaching is very tiring because she is continually on the ball to find different, creative ways to get learners to think and accept the merits of their views as more important than hers. In this way they become independent thinkers. With mixed ability learners in the same class Anne found this style of teaching with constant engagement in an attempt to create a spark or arouse enthusiasm or just elicit some reaction from resistant lazy learners, exhausting. Anne's commitment to this approach stems from her belief that learners must be motivated, and she has been relatively successful in her robust approach. She basks in the glory of testimony of past learners. For Anne the greatest change in her teaching practice is that she no longer views herself as the only person with knowledge authority. She looks to learners as also having huge amounts of knowledge.

Being a part-time tutor at the university played a pivotal role in helping her negotiate change successfully in the classroom. Anne tutored an accredited first year subject, Learning, Language and Logic which was part of Applied Language Studies. She claimed that her experience as a tutor had an enormous impact on the way she practiced at school. She trusted more in the ability of learners to grasp concepts without her continuous input. She allowed for the process of learning 'to happen' organically and this she laughs '*is not easy for teachers.*' But more specifically her approach to the teaching of writing changed so completely that she had subsequently published a book for teachers on the teaching of writing. Anne sees her role in the class as a '*puppet master*' who controls the creation of knowledge and not as an expert.

In every lesson, whether it is grammar, advertising or comprehension, Anne stays true to her purpose as a teacher in that she teaches techniques that learners will be able to use in their life after finishing school. But at the same time she is mindful that they have an external grade twelve examination to write and as a teacher she is bound by what the curriculum dictates. Nevertheless she thinks that the process of teaching English has a wonderful, free, fun creativity to it. For example, Anne used bill boards of a local newspaper, *The Witness*, to teach advertising. This for her was a new way of introducing knowledge, by allowing learners to create from newspapers. She said it was the most fun they had learning.

Noting her style of teaching practice, it is easy to understand why Anne detested the idea of teaching to test and further hated the sixteen assessments that are prescribed in the FET phase. Her words were

*if you want to teach a literary essay it is a whole process that should take a long time but you are so worried about getting those marks in and you have to get it done on time. Moreover learners will only work for activities that count for marks; that is what determines their level of engagement. The assessment requirements have made me feel a little indignant, angry and irritated.*

In addition to this prioritizing of assessment over teaching Anne feels

*it is sad that the curriculum has been dumbed down a lot. We are not demanding nearly as much as we should from the learners.*

But in a more positive light she felt that

*I like the methodology of OBE, I like the interactive nature of the methodology, it suits the way I teach. I do believe that it is important that learners create knowledge and are able to question stuff; but I find there is no time to teach properly or to allow the teaching process to happen as it should. But then I do like the idea of continuous assessment because I think that is very important for a learner to know that they have got to work throughout the year.*

Anne is very up-beat about the curriculum changes and has decided to embrace them. She enjoys the fact that they are different, less focused on the teacher in charge and more interactive. In this way power in the classroom is spread out and the teacher only holds a thread of it. Anne believes that while the curriculum changes, nothing really changes hugely except that the teacher is no longer the total authority in the classroom; that control is dispersed.

From the interview and my observation it is easy to label Anne as a reflective practitioner. She makes considerable efforts to teach in a way that is conscientious by assessing, reviewing and adapting her practices to improve her delivery in the classroom. She has made it abundantly clear that while transition in education is difficult in many aspects, she readily embraces change and overall, her teaching ideal is to create good citizens who are critical thinkers. Therefore Anne has adapted her teaching, and to a larger extent her assessment practices, to be aligned with the requirements as prescribed in the externally regulated curriculum. While she does not agree with externally regulated policies except for the purpose of nation-wide standardization, she is bound by it. Further she feels that the curriculum does provide some sort of formalized structure to the knowledge base that teachers of English need or else teaching can become 'airy-fairy.' Anne reveals that at her school they do not follow the curriculum to the letter but have adapted many aspects of it to suit their contextual

factors. For example, they do not subscribe to all sixteen assessments in the FET phase and they choose books based on financial viability. Of this Anne says

*it's an English Department decision and we change from year to year, we move and shake things around. So if somebody came to school and criticized the English department they will find that we take short-cuts quite often. They will term them short-cuts, we term them survival. We move things to suit ourselves.*

In terms of teaching content Anne shies away from the lecturing style. In her opinion learners need to work with the knowledge and create new knowledge from what they have. So while the lecturing method is still very popular with teachers of English because it covers content quickly, it is not a style she uses. At the culmination of lessons Anne favors the use of worksheets in order to solidify what she and learners have been co-creating.

#### **5.4 RAJAN'S NARRATIVE OF BEING A TEACHER: Azalea High School**

##### **5.4.1 RAJAN'S STORY**

Rajan's passion for language, words and the world of imagination had driven him to attain not only a B.Paed degree but also an honors degree in English. He spoke passionately about his love for language '*I would marvel at language for the sake of language;*' the facility for communication which he understood was a means of empowering people to use language to make sense of the world. For Rajan teaching was a calling, the only choice of career that he considered.

While Rajan had taught smatterings of other subjects, like economics, he preferred teaching English because it was exciting and divergent. He saw the learners themselves as the subject material, '*their thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions*' that had the possibility of evolving because of the language whereas economics was more content-orientated. Therefore many teachers of the subject simply imparted knowledge. Rajan noted that the responsibility required from a teacher of English was

*not to teach language per se, yet they are dealing in language all the time so they are really practitioners of language who have a great responsibility to*

*develop an innate sensitivity to language. And only if you, yourself have that awareness for language and how powerful it is and how subtle it can be that you can perhaps enable learners to develop that same sensitivity to language as well.*

With this sensitivity and awareness of the power of language Rajan taught the poetry lesson which I observed. For Rajan lessons must be process or skills orientated where a teacher was not teaching content but the 'how to' part of the subject. The 'how to' in the observed poetry lesson drew out the learners' understanding of how the poet used diction and register evocatively to enable the readers to feel his pain when facing the death of a loved one.

Rajan was supportive of the philosophy of OBE and the theoretical framework of Curriculum 2005 because it was a vehicle for transformation, to redress the inequalities of the past. He believed that one of the fundamental ways to transform society was to go into schools and educate, or mould, the youth. For Rajan, the old curriculum and the way he remembered teachers were teaching according to the old paradigm was largely 'chalk and talk'. He says that

*teachers were seen as traditionally authority figures and their job was simply to impart knowledge to ignorant learners' blank slates that you actually filled up.*

Rajan saw there was a move away to where learners are seen as playing a fundamental role in the education process as a partner. The focus shifted from content knowledge to skills, attitudes and values that learner's need and which Rajan viewed as a holistic development of the learner. Therefore he believed that teaching had to be child-centered, where teachers had to connect with learners, inspire enthusiasm, create a non-threatening comfortable 'rounded' space for learners to express themselves and remain relevant in the subject through life-long learning. Rajan did not perceive himself to be an imparter of knowledge but rather aimed to teach learners to think for themselves by asking critical questions. This perception was abundantly clear in the observation lesson as Rajan shifted the focus away from the content and teaching of figures of speech to what moral lesson the learners gained. He encouraged a sense of

compassion for the pain of others. Rajan felt conflicted between trying to bring about change but at the same time tapping into what is important for learners.

He defined true education as *'teaching other people to think, to ask critical questions and there is no telling where they actually stop'*. He says

*teaching critical thinking skills on the one level dealt with the rational and the mind. On the other level, and language helps, is teaching learners; creating an environment where learners can become sensitive to and connect with their inner selves as well.*

The purpose of a teacher was to empower learners. As a reflective practitioner, Rajan was able to easily embrace the new paradigm of teaching. But Rajan was not always able to fulfill this purpose. He was vociferous with the view that

*there is a contrast in traditional roles expected of us. I tell my Grade Twelve class, I always felt I might actually teach differently in some ways if we weren't focused so obsessively and obviously necessarily so much towards your high stakes examinations because we are basically focusing on syllabus coverage. As a result you don't have the space and freedom to teach in such ways that enables and puts more responsibility on learners to generate new insights or to take ownership of the dialogue process or come to new knowledge. As the teacher, you take on more responsibility.*

This was supported by Rajan's belief that an effective teacher teaches learners before they teach a subject because the teaching of a subject would determine the methodology that the teacher would use. For example,

*I believe that mathematics is a language, so I will teach mathematics as a language, as a transactional language. Rather than making sure that learners imbibe all things and are able to reproduce them as well.*

For Rajan, an effective teacher was a confident, dynamic one who had access to vocabulary and was able to communicate effectively. In doing so the teacher must be able to reach out, touch and inspire learners' enthusiasm.

*Teachers must lead by example. Learners must recognize that you are not just imparting knowledge.*

This did not mean that learners must simply admire the teachers' expertise because *the expertise is not static or fixed, it's changing all the time and you have got to be exposing yourself all the time or you literally or figuratively die. Learners must recognize that you are a specialist by the sound theoretical and practical knowledge you demonstrate.*

I recognized Rajan's subject expertise in his teaching as he moved seamlessly between the poem and tapping into the diverse responses of learners. He was able to thread all of this into a coherent stream of ideas that linked back to his goal in teaching the particular lesson. He intends to show learners that poetry represents a valid experience and not simply a ticking list of complete poems to write an examination. In addition if learners are not energized by the lessons Rajan explains, *'we must actually question our own practice before we question the failing we see in learners. Are we as teachers pressing the right buttons?'*

Rajan defines a competent learner as one who is able to integrate, master and practice concepts skillfully across all subjects. With reference to assessments in the NCS document, Rajan felt that it was a burden because if the

*curriculum shifts focus to skills, attitudes and values then assessment becomes an obstacle to the inculcation and development of the purpose intended in the document.*

He felt that the

*process of development was punctuated by regular assessments for the sake of assessments because at any school no-one was actually reflecting on the assessments and feeding back into practice. We have lost the plot, we are assessing for the sake of assessing.*

Rajan saw no link between the assessment and practice.

When implementing the tenets of OBE Rajan found that there were gaps in the learners' knowledge and their understanding of concepts. He found he could no longer take for granted their grasp of basics such as sentence construction and grammar and conceptual knowledge. He says of OBE

*It's a bit too much of a laissez-faire approach if it's interpreted not very imaginatively by the teacher. There needs to be various ways to build capacity within the teachers because I don't think a lot of teachers realize that there is a document called a code of norms and standards where they talk about seven different roles and included in those roles are things like creators and implementers of curricular material.*

In this light Rajan admitted that he tried to modify his practices using the learning outcomes to inform his practice and incorporate specific skills. He acknowledges the merits of learning outcomes as a framework in merely informing, refining and sharpening his practice but not slavishly following them. But Rajan noted that in terms of the English Home Language curriculum very little had changed because the body of material had been retained, and the change was on the skills and values that learners needed to focus on.

Rajan perceived the role of the teacher of English to be more of a facilitator who was responsible for creating independent and critical thinkers in the classroom. It is a role he demonstrated in class by allowing learners to dismantle the poem with peers before he engaged with it. In this way learners were compelled to think creatively and create meaning. Further he believed that teachers needed to be reflective and introspective about how they implement policies in their practice. But he noted that this task had become over shadowed by the level of bureaucracy that focuses on administrative tasks at his school. Rajan explains that at his school

*teacher morale, enthusiasm and commitment have been clouded by rigid bureaucracy and micro-management by the principal.*

The practice of giving demerits, which is a system of controlling learners by recording their misdemeanors, alienated teachers making them resentful and impacting negatively

on their delivery in the classroom. Teachers are overwhelmed by administration which takes precedence over teaching and learning.

*The constant record keeping of peripheral things, school fees, subject attendance record, homework record, has become unwieldy and strips away some of the joy and spontaneity that should go with teaching. Teachers are stressed, burnt-out, cynical and unhappy.*

Rajan laughs 'reminds me of a definition of a lunatic, somebody who re-doubles his effort when he has forgotten his aim.'

He notes that

*schools do not create environments that enable growth and collegiality for teachers to hone themselves. There aren't situations where teachers actually get together to discuss problems or share good experiences.*

Rajan wants to remain a relevant teacher and one who could see the value of introspection, debating, discussion and life-long learning. Rajan was very insightful about the identity of a teacher. His beliefs were informed by various sources: having a philosophy about what good teaching encompasses and being able to implement it; staying personally motivated; the link between leadership and management styles at school and the kind of ethos prevailing at school to create an enabling environment to develop identities that empower teachers. He emphatically pronounces that the

*identity of a teacher comes from the fact that things are taking place in his heart and mind that reinvigorate the kind of commitment to what they are doing. Teachers will take ownership of the school if they feel connected to it.*

He also felt that teachers needed to define an identity for themselves which best served both them and their learners.

*The challenge is for us all to find ways to create environments and mechanisms that we can build together. As individuals we need to identify core values to motivate, guide and develop us while holding a collective identity that links to the values and mission of the school.*

He saw himself as an *English* teacher, one committed to bringing real-world literacy to his classroom. He sees this process begin with his commitment to an active literary life.

## 5.5 VANI'S NARRATIVE: Watela High School

### 5.5.1 Vani's Story:

Vani had deliberately chosen to become a teacher of English because of her flair for the language at school and her interest in stories and novels. She trained to be a teacher at Springfield College of Education and then supplemented her basic diploma with a Bachelor of Education Degree that she started at the University of South Africa and completed at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her experience as a teacher of English encompasses a four year teaching stint in London.

When reflecting upon her training at college, Vani felt all the theory she had ingested only started to make sense when her actual teaching at school began. In addition she felt her Bachelor of Education degree enabled her to have a greater understanding of the curriculum. She found that with practice and experience as a permanent teacher she had more of a license to experiment, reshuffle and readjust the syllabus to suit specific classes. Vani saw her role as a teacher as a platform to

*inculcate a little more than just language and a lot more of morality based on my interpretation of the literature.*

Vani's initial interpretation was that learners need to be indoctrinated to her way of thinking but her experience in the real classroom revealed learners have their own method of interpretation that informs their understanding, hence her teaching had to be adjusted accordingly. Lately she's found that all that a teacher needed to do was to plant the 'seeds of ideas' and learners would provide creative interpretations. As teachers of English she noted

*there was no need to search for the right answer but an exploration of the interpretation of prescribed drama, novels and poetry.*

Vani did not imagine that she would teach English Home Language to Black learners who spoke English as a second language. Therefore she was unprepared for all the difficulties of her situation where language itself was a barrier to learning. She says

*when I first got here it was a total cultural shock for me, the learners were fascinated at being taught by a first language English speaker. I know this because they started imitating me to sound like me.*

Reflecting on her years of teaching Vani claims that her most enjoyable teaching experience is at her present school, where for the past twelve years she has been teaching English Home Language to Black learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. She notes that

*despite the numerous constraints (refer to 4.3.4.1d research context of Watela High School) the personal intrinsic rewards were incomparable to teaching practice in other diverse contexts.*

She feels almost like a savior.

One of the tools that Vani identified as being critical to the teaching of English was 'experience'. She explained that communicating with her learners

*was very difficult as they have a very limited vocabulary of English words. Then to teach them grammar, for example an adverbial clause, was extremely tedious.*

So as a teacher she had to be quick to interpret the situation and find creative means to bring them into a space of understanding before they lost interest. Therefore teaching the technicalities of language required a number of different approaches and the teacher must be experienced, energized and enthusiastic enough to be able to draw on vast theoretical and practical knowledge. She added that teaching language at her school required creative skills to get learners to a place of knowing. In the observation lesson Vani used pictures, music and posters to explain a short story to grade twelve learners. Her experience at this school taught her that learners' interpretation was fairly distorted. Her facilitation of the lesson appeared more like imparting knowledge to them.

She elaborated that experienced teachers of English Home Language are able to reflectively draw from their wealth of accumulated knowledge to create meaningful lessons. In Vani's opinion an effective teacher is

*one who is able to integrate thorough knowledge of the subject and curriculum expectations into 'classroom talk.'*

Vani says that

*learners have great respect for, and are more willing to learn from teachers who are experts in their subject and are able to demonstrate this in their teaching.*

Therefore Watela High School does not expect to mentor student teachers, as learners are disciplined and willing participants of the lesson when they believe that the teacher is an authority on the subject. This was demonstrated in the observation lesson where learners were only prepared to hear the voice of the teacher. When peers spoke no learner paid attention.

With reference to competences and performance standards as outlined in policy documents for English, Vani found it very difficult to follow policy as the competences of learners in her school vary widely. She found that very few learners are able to speak and write English competently. While Vani is familiar with the learning, critical and developmental outcomes in the NCS document for English Home Language, she does not adhere to it rigidly. The context of her current school determines her purpose as a teacher which is to have learners interpreting, speaking and writing enough English to pass the Grade Twelve external examinations. Again, noting the context of the school, Vani is satisfied to make small differences in the lives of learners. Learners' competency is determined by their ability to read, write and speak English. Aesthetic appreciation of the intricacies, complexities and power of the English Language is beyond the scope of learners. Therefore it is not an area Vani gave much attention to.

Learners benefitted from the focus on orals as they are better able to express themselves verbally than writing an essay for three hours. Since English was a second language for learners, spelling and grammar confounded them. So the shift in the curriculum towards communication skills benefitted the learners of this school and helped them pass the grade.

Vani noted that the content for the English Home Language curriculum had remained the same for years despite huge curriculum changes in other subjects. She reflected that the types of skills that needed to be taught to learners had changed. Previously

learners found it easier when they were expected to memorize content and consequently teaching at Watela was easier. But the present focus on skills, values and attitudes brings into play a competition between influence from outside school and what a teacher teaches from the text. Taking cognizance of this and reflecting on her actual practice especially since all learners are second language speakers, Vani says

*her classroom practices incorporate understanding where they come from, their background, specifically their lives. I can't teach Romeo and Juliet to them because the language would be totally different, they would not understand as it has no relevance to their life.*

So teaching literature was very difficult because she had to find similarities between the learners' life experience and the text. This practice was noted in class as Vani had to scaffold learners' understanding of the short story with events that were familiar to them.

For Vani, teaching this way was not an easy feat as tasks became very involved and learners would take a long time to grasp concepts because of the language barrier. She says

*teaching English at this school is more difficult because it is a second language done as a first language. You go at a slower pace. e.g. the poem 'The world is too much with us' is really difficult for these learners and what normally takes sixty minutes to teach, it takes hundred and twenty minutes for these learners to interpret.*

Learners are involved in the process of code-switching to supplement their understanding. They search for words in a language that is familiar to them to understand the English meaning. This sort of switching for translation inhibits both teaching and learning. This was compounded by the number of compulsory tasks that had to be completed.

*We are forced into testing. I think that for English Home Language, certain aspects of testing should be done away with.*

Vani believes that in the FET phase assessments have taken priority over teaching. She considers this to be sad as it places unnecessary pressure on both teachers and

learners. The consequence of these curriculum changes meant that she had to teach most Saturdays in order to complete the syllabus and conduct assessments. So time was a real issue.

Vani was not shy to admit she used very traditional methods to teach. She said

*her learners did not have sufficient knowledge or access to resources for them to work on their own or in groups.*

She did not view herself as a facilitator of the lesson, but as an authority figure on the knowledge learners need to know. Therefore the teacher had to be a subject expert.

She scoffed at the idea of rubrics provided in the subject assessment guidelines saying that it was impossible to apply to her learners, therefore she created her own rubrics taking cognizance of the learners. She claimed

*most of the time I create my own rubric because I know the children and I can't compare them to first language speakers or even second language speakers who come from privileged backgrounds.*

Vani said she found that she was very flexible with her teaching practice and was not 'regimental' in her way of teaching. She felt bound by time in that there were too many tasks for her to do justice to teaching creatively. She noted that moderation and departmental demands made for an

*unpleasant learning experience for kids because they are drilled for tests.*

In this way her teaching style was stunted because she was unable to explore the text in depth or get adventurous in teaching it. Despite this frustration her learners' vision that *'this education is going to help them break out of the cycle they were trapped in'* keeps her motivated. The learners Vani teaches have *'overwhelming social issues but their positive spirit is admirable'*.

This school was really dilapidated so teaching here was further constrained. The structure of the school was not conducive to learning and resources were minimal. But Vani says she makes a plan by being prepared a term ahead. She explained that long

term planning assists in their resource building and in the teaching itself. As a result, implementing curriculum change as dictated by policy was not always an educationally sound decision for this institute. Vani spent a lot of time adapting the guidelines. For this purpose, at this school, a teacher was expected to teach the same grade for many years so that they continued to learn from their mistakes and adjust the framework for the grade. Therefore Vani had been teaching Grade eleven and twelve for many years. For clarity she explained that the school had no resources so it was difficult to follow the dictates of the department in terms of genres that must be taught. Instead they taught what they had access to. So sometimes grade tens are not taught drama but short stories only. It was only in grade twelve because of the external examinations that all the prescribed texts were adhered to.

Vani chose and implemented what suited the needs of her learners depending on the availability of resources. When reflecting on her experience as a teacher Vani saw that she had become a lot freer in that she was knowledgeable enough not to be enslaved by curriculum demands. Since she understood the learner intimately she was able to teach from a very confident place of knowing. She is far more receptive to the learners' insights in the interpretation of the novel, drama and poetry. She says

*no more dictatorship, it's totally interaction and engaging the learners.*

But this cannot apply to language lessons. Learners struggle with sentence construction, rules of grammar and especially errors in concord. Therefore in this area she still maintained her authority as the expert bringing in the knowledge.

From observation I noted that Vani uses the questioning technique to draw learners into the lesson. Furthermore she reveals that the learners think in Zulu and use the Zulu interpretation to understand the short stories so she uses questions to check their thinking and understanding. I observed that she had to correct their interpretation of words as they translate directly from Zulu to English. Learners also apply the grammatical rules of Zulu which are more familiar to them than English. This manifests in learners' inability to write grammatically correct sentences in English. Vani provides evidence by referring to learners' essay writing papers where learners have words in a sentence, but prepositions are incorrectly used or missing completely, tenses are

incorrect and error of concord is evident. So learners know enough English to communicate verbally but are stunted in their written ability.

Vani's purpose as a teacher of English at this school was to ensure that learners were as skillful in writing, speaking and reading as learners who were naturally English Home Language speakers. Vani draws a comparison between teaching in London where she was for many years to her teaching experience in South Africa. She says

*in London there is much more control and direction from the education department and teachers are absolutely committed. Teachers are monitored and everybody adheres to rules. No teacher leaves school before 5pm. She says in South Africa flexibility has made teachers extremely lazy.*

In conclusion, Vani feels that her teaching continues to evolve because of the challenges which teachers are compelled to negotiate on a daily basis. Teachers light the way for learners.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter, to describe as authentically as possible the 'lived stories' experienced teachers tell about how they make sense of the gap between policy and practice in light of the strong shifts in South African education. These stories have become a powerful tool to understand teachers' complex negotiation with external policies and its impact on their practice and identity in relation to their contexts, positioning and knowledge, reflecting the influence of prior qualifications, reflective competence, access to resources, grade level, subject knowledge and confidence.

# CHAPTER 6

## DISCUSSION

## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this discussion chapter is to analyze the data in order to answer the two research questions. I draw on the stories of four teachers working within four very diverse South African school contexts, to explore their identity at the confluence of teacher practices(what happens in classrooms) and externally regulated curriculum (what government officials intended). I use Hoadley's (2002) concepts of core, internal and external regulation as categories to analyze the data.

## **6.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: To what extent are the practices of experienced teachers governed by external regulation?**

The data from the four teachers in this study shows that their practices were governed more by core regulations than by external regulation. The teachers adapted the external regulations in the NCS curriculum to fit into their own beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge and experience about effective teaching practices in the English classroom. The planned NCS curriculum was not enacted in the class as intended in the policy documents. Participants selected and adapted aspects from the curriculum which they thought were educationally sound and suitable for learners. They made these selections by drawing on their 'knowledge base for teaching' (Shulman, 1987) (refer to 3.3.3b). One of the core regulations of teaching practice is an almost automated body of intuitive knowledge which influences participants' selection. They explained that this knowledge base is built both formally through their continuous academic studies, and informally through experience and practice within the school context. All participants have indicated that they intuitively draw on their experience and knowledge of students, 'the subject, of teaching processes, management, and organization that 'transcend the subject matter' and their 'pedagogical content knowledge' (Shulman, 1987) to inform their practice.

Although the practices of all four teachers were primarily governed by their own internal core regulations, the school context played an important role in how the NCS curriculum was adapted. While the greater influence stemmed from participants' experience, ideologies, personal resources, knowledge and theories about teaching; school culture

and contextual factors also exerted a considerable influence in shaping participants practice. For example, Vani admitted that due to language issues that is the mother tongue of the learners differed from the language of instruction, she taught her learners only the parts of the poem she knew they would be tested on. Despite the policy-makers belief in the effectiveness of the learner-centered approach, it could not be implemented in schools that were overcrowded, under-resourced and where learning material was shared.

Influenced by the school context and learners' needs, Vani adopted a traditional formalistic teaching approach for her classroom teaching practice. Her teaching approach has many characteristics of Bernstein's (1996) performance model. She indicated she would like to co-create knowledge and facilitate learning with her learners but the contextual factors at her school compel her to be 'the authoritarian disseminator of knowledge' (Bernstein, 1996). The learning outcomes in the NCS curriculum for English Home Language is too ambitious for learners at Watela High School therefore Vani selects and adapts what in her view is do-able in the context of her school. In addition she implements explicit assessment and evaluations of the skills and procedures which learners were taught.

By contrast Rajan embraced the learner-centered approach which he learnt about through his own reading and experimented with prior to the implementation of the NCS. Unlike Vani, Rajan asserts less authority over knowledge in the classroom by deliberately adapting a competence model (Bernstein, 1996) which places emphasis on learners' prior knowledge and self-reflection where the creation of knowledge is a process between the teacher as facilitator and learner. He continues to use parts of this competence model but is challenged by the learners' resistance as they simply slot into predetermined roles of receiving knowledge from the teacher. Learners' resistance to active learning roles was also noted by Eisner (2000) who found that learners familiar with the drill and practice methods and rote memorization did not change their ways when teachers attempted to adopt different practices.

At the core of every teacher's practice is the intention that learners emerging from the FET band must: 'have access to, and succeed in, lifelong education and training of good quality; demonstrate an ability to think logically and analytically, as well as holistically and laterally; and be able to transfer skills from familiar to unfamiliar situations' (DOE, 2003, p. 5). For Anne and Rajan these aims were a possibility, given that their learners had access to many resources, in and out of school. Furthermore English is officially the language of learning and the main home language of the majority of learners which advantaged them. Therefore the two teachers in the better resourced schools (refer to the research context 4.3.4), Anne and Rajan, had greater flexibility to adapt the curriculum. The mother tongue of learners is a key factor in determining the adaption of the curriculum. When the greater majority of learners spoke English as a home language, teachers exercised greater flexibility in teaching beyond the requirements of the curriculum. Rajan believed he was a practitioner of language who created a rounded environment for learners to cultivate an innate sensitivity and awareness of the power of language. Anne also practiced in the same manner but she was aware of the small number of learners in her class who spoke English as an additional language, she therefore tailored her lessons to accommodate them.

But for Vani and Sagren, who in my opinion is representative of the greater majority of teachers in South Africa, teaching in bi/multilingual contexts, the image of learners in the policy document was unrealistic. They struggle in their everyday practice to teach learners the basics of listening, speaking, and reading. The complexity of teaching essay and transactional writing in the FET phase is a monumental process that requires far more resources and time than is allocated to it by the curriculum. In resilient reaction to the curriculum, Sagren and Vani adopted a more formalized, traditional teaching approach to accommodate 'code-switching' since all of their learners had English as an additional language. In addition the schools in which Vani and Sagren taught were further constrained by many contextual factors. Where Rajan and Anne could be creative with their teaching given the resources and finances at their disposal, Vani and Rajan struggled with daily teaching activities. By way of example Vani had scarce access to books and worksheets at grade twelve levels.

Guided by their internal core regulations teachers feel an internal accountability (refer to 3.3.3.d) and are ethically bound to teach not as per the curriculum but what is successful with learners present in the classroom. Some aspects of the NCS curriculum have merit but when implementation fails in class, teachers automatically draw on core regulations to inform their practice. Participants highlighted that they taught in ways that were consistent with their own ideas of what constitutes good teaching practice. Setati, Adler, Reed and Bapoo (2002) argued that ‘teachers’ skills, their context of practice and what they perceive to be in the interests of their learners’ (p.140) will have a greater impact on the language practice of English teachers than what is stipulated in the policy. Rajan explains he teaches a learner before he teaches a subject and that determines his methodology. Sagren, Vani and Rajan found that the constructivist teaching approach embedded in the curriculum required a complex and varied repertoire of teaching skills for which they were not trained. Anne’s leaning towards the constructivist approach stems from her own learning in her attempts to be ‘an alternative, different kind of teacher’ during the apartheid era. Also the teaching of business English to immigrants in London and her tutoring in the School of Applied Language Studies has shaped her receptivity to the approach.

Policy-makers views teachers as key agents of change (Hoadley and Jansen, 2009) because they believe that teachers implement the planned curriculum as intended and by so doing bring about transformation. This study provides evidence that there is no guarantee that teachers as agents of change will abide by and practice the curriculum as officials intended. These four teachers appear to be interpreting and adapting the planned curriculum based on their personal internalized set of beliefs of what is effective in the classroom. These results do not stand alone. Distinguished scholars, Bascia and Hargreaves (2002) have concluded that teachers’ classroom practices are hard to change because they interpret and enact instructional policy shifts from the department, through unique filters of their own experiences, beliefs, personal resources, theories, contexts and ideologies.

Participants of this study are evidence that an amalgam of teacher procedural and propositional knowledge is key to practice. Teachers determine what teaching and learning must happen in a classroom based on a tapestry of learners' backgrounds, their prior knowledge and available resources. This tapestry of knowledge is part of their core regulation which shapes practice. These findings are supported by Bantwini's (2010) research of teachers in the Eastern Cape Province. He too noted those teachers' 'beliefs, values, experiences and daily challenges influence and shape' how they interpret and adapt new reforms which in turn play a vital role in their practice.

The knowledge and practices required for teaching on a daily basis cannot be dictated by a standardized external curriculum policy. The majority of South Africa's teachers work in classrooms and schools where English is officially the language of learning, but is not the main language of either the teachers or the learners. Therefore, for learners to acquire 'high knowledge skills, demonstrate knowledge in different forms..., reflect and analyze' (DoE, 2003) are goals too grandiose and divorced from the reality of the classroom to be implemented with any success. In a case study of Namibian primary school teachers, O'Sullivan (2004) reached similar conclusions. She noted the learner-centered approach outlined in policy did not take the 'classrooms realities' (O'Sullivan, 2004, p.599) of the teachers into account.

As the study shows, no two schools are alike (refer to research context 4.3.4) and policy does not engage with these differences. Vani teaches her learners to master the essential knowledge and skills for listening, speaking, reading and writing yet they cannot write structurally functional sentences at grade twelve level. Anne and Rajan teach their learners to be critical independent thinkers. For Anne and Rajan the learning outcomes as per NCS policy is an achievable goal. Sagren has to use drawing and stick figures for learners in the FET phase to comprehend a reading passage. I believe Sagren wants his learners to master skills that would enable them to cross the language barrier and then think creatively. The planned curriculum does not recognize the differing contextual constraints under which teachers' practice. Contextual constraints result in participants relying on an 'automated, embodied and intuitive knowledge that is

procedural in character' (Knight, 2002, p.231) and which are part of the core regulations that govern their practices.

The classroom assessment practice of the four teachers in the study is not congruent with the official external regulation requirements. The official intention, to create a continuous programme of monitoring and feedback based on developmental, critical and learning outcomes, were not altogether successful. Evidence from the data indicated that participants did not refer to outcomes (refer to table 1, p.25) as a goal in the setting of assessments. But all four schools of this study had an internal school assessment policy to regulate teachers' testing programmes. Three of the participants indicated that they were compelled by their school to adhere strictly to the programme of assessments in the English Home Language Subject Assessment Guidelines (DoE, 2008), so the externally regulated department policy for assessment was adopted as an internal policy regulation at school. Anne indicated that management at her school allowed the English Home language teachers to select and adapt from the official assessment programme, sound assessment practices for use in the school.

Sagren, Rajan, Vani and Anne highlighted the futility of the testing programme in the NCS subject assessment guidelines for English Home Language. They claimed that they conducted assessments for the sake of having a mark and that assessment had none of its intended value. Participants engage with the NCS as though it was a 'recipe for assessment' (Vandeyar and Killen, 2003), administered as a technical procedure for marks to satisfy officials and not a matter of professional judgment to understand learner short-comings. These findings are supported by a case study research by Vandeyar and Killen (2003).

Experienced teachers' 'deeply rooted understanding of teaching, learning and their subject matter' (Cohen and Barnes, 1993, p.214) becomes a core regulation which overrides the requirements of the planned curriculum. In fact their wisdom and experience allows them to analyze the document for all its pitfalls. The findings of this research study concur with other South African studies which have made similar

conclusions. Blignaut's (2008) interpretive research study on the enactment of curriculum policy demonstrated that 'teachers' prior understanding and beliefs about knowledge, assessment and what constitutes effective teaching, combined with their classroom contexts' framed their practice. Mattson and Harley's (2002) research indicates that interpreting and teaching conceptual knowledge is context bound and best left to the 'sense of plausibility' (Prabhu, 1990) of the teacher. They view this as a strategy teachers adopt to engage with a policy system that is dissonant with their personal and professional identities. When experienced teachers assume agency over the complex relations of school change, it allows them to redraw boundaries among teachers, new material and teaching practice. But when an externally designed curriculum impacts on the teachers' relations to school change, they feel precluded from the process of change and may rebel against it.

In conclusion while teachers make every attempt to stay true to a personalized set of internal core regulators, contextual factors do ultimately exert a considerable influence in shaping teachers' practice. Vani and Sagren have demonstrated that while strong personal beliefs, values, attitudes and knowledge are central to their teaching, their school contexts mould their practice more than core regulations. Their internal core regulations are challenged by institutional regulations. The core of teacher beliefs, values and attitudes about effective teaching and their firm commitment to good teaching practice are continuously refined and sharpened more by their experiences than by the external official curriculum. Morrow (2001) points out good teaching practices can be recognized but are difficult to define. Ensor (2001) notes 'teaching repertoires contain symbolic and material resources that teachers select and configure in order to shape good classroom practice' (p.299). Often the performance of a learner is inappropriately used as an indication of teachers' practices.

In answer to the research question, these four experienced teachers do not consider the official curriculum to be compulsory and thus this external regulation does not strongly govern their teaching practice. Their teaching practice is determined by personal choices and by the school context.

### **6.3 RESEACRCH QUESTION 2. To what extent does this external regulation shape their identity as teachers?**

External regulation in the form of curriculum documents played a minimal role in shaping the identity of the four teachers in this study. As experienced teachers of English, the participants have stayed true to identities that are familiar to them. Can an externally determined policy document regulate teacher identity as suggested by the literature review of this study? The answer in this study is no. From the participants' stories it is evident that their identity is an integration of age, education, life, experience, culture, values, and character coupled with beliefs, values, assumptions, aspirations, feelings and knowledge about the many roles they play.

In a study similar to this research, O'Sullivan (2008) also noted that teachers' professional and subject identity are shaped by core regulations as their values, knowledge and perceptions of themselves as practitioners. O'Sullivan's (2008) study explored the role teaching English, as a subject, played in the construction of English teachers' professional identity. In results similar to this research study, O'Sullivan summarized

*the professional identity of those who teach English is observed to be something highly personalized; it represents unique aspects drawn from the self and the subject, which manifest themselves in different ways depending on the individual's particular context of work (p.44).*

In both O'Sullivan's (2008) study as well as this research, participants claimed a strong sense of subject and professional identity and deeply rooted beliefs about the teaching of English. These identities and beliefs share a strong reciprocal relation with classroom practices. Participants' personal vision of what it means to be a teacher has a greater influence than policy process and external performance indicators in shaping their identity.

All four participants indicated that they were familiar with the roles expected of teachers in the NCS document. But they did not use it as a mechanism to define who they were; neither did they aspire to embrace the seven roles outlined in the externally regulated curriculum. Rather, core regulations established through years of experience helped teachers define their roles within the school and classroom contexts. The four participants translated personal emotive feelings into perceptions of themselves as dynamic, enthusiastic, passionate, committed, conscientious, reflective practitioners, introspective, inspirational, teachers of life and subject experts. These familiar ideas teachers have of who they are have been developed over a long period of time and seem to be enduring.

Upon close analysis of participants' stories, two identities, those of reflective practitioner and subject expert stand out. The identity of reflective practitioner was explored in great detail during their training as teachers and participants have since identified with the role. The identity as subject expert is the result of the participants' vast 'pedagogical content knowledge' (Shulman, 1987) which these experienced teachers of English continuously sharpen and refine. They maintain that this allows them to be relevant and inspire enthusiasm in learners.

Participants also regard themselves as ideal teachers within their own context. Their strong subject identity as teachers of English has been created through their personal lived experience and in their ownership of the subject. Rajan's practice reveals that there is a fusion between the teacher and subject. Sagren indicates he teaches about life using English. Participants' pedagogical practices are strongly influenced by their subject and professional identity.

The data also reveals that experienced teachers are not overly concerned with the issue of their identity. There is a large body of literature around teachers constructing and negotiating professional identity as an ongoing dynamic process that balances internal and external expectations as they make sense of their work (Beijaard, et al. 2004). As experienced teachers, the participants were very comfortable and secure in their own

definitions of their role. I observed that they did not need to be validated as teachers from external sources. Their role as a teacher, their practices, commitment, their fulfilling of their purpose and the act of teaching in class defined their identity as a teacher. Clearly these teachers have an individualized personal frame of reference that is insulated from the impact of externally regulated policies.

#### **6.4 IMPLICATIONS**

As South Africa goes through further curriculum reform, the implications of the study are that for experienced teachers, their own beliefs about effective teaching are likely to prevail. Teachers have their own very clear and strong views and beliefs about what it is to be a professional.

Policy-makers continue to expect external regulation to change teaching and assessment practice as intended by the curriculum documents, despite the huge body of literature to the contradiction. They have no means of determining whether policy is being implemented as intended. Until the disjuncture between policy intentions and what is actually feasible in practice is effectively engaged with by allowing teachers greater flexibility and autonomy in, and ownership of, the change process, externally regulated policies have a slim chance of bringing about school reform. Policy-makers need to recognize that teachers' practice is embedded in a history of pedagogical habits. Changing a teacher's practice requires continuity of support and the kind of assistance that will enable teachers to get better at what they do (Eisner, 2000).

My study shows that all three kinds of regulation – core, internal and external regulations are important elements in the educational landscape. While curriculum reform should engage with all three levels of regulation, policy must pay particular attention to the importance of teachers' existing core and internal regulations. At the heart of policy changes are good intentions to transform education positively. But this must coincide with the creation of conditions for teaching and learning to flourish. The quality of engagement with learners has been overshadowed by an emphasis on the measureable outcomes and assessment standards in the present NCS subject policy and assessment policy guidelines document. The conditions of school context, for

example, classrooms that are overcrowded and undersupplied with resources, and the forms of thinking and action which teachers engage in (Eisner, 2000) are fundamental to the change process, yet educational officials have chosen to ignore this.

When external policy demands threaten to override teachers' internal beliefs, commitment and practice, the result is often teacher burn-out, complacency or silent complicity (Barrett, 2009, p.1025). Policy shifts may be an 'assault on teachers' practices and identity' (Barrett, 2009, p.1018), but this study has concluded that it is possible for the core regulations which govern experienced teachers to be so pervasive that official policies are adapted and interpreted in ways that resonate with teachers' own identities, knowledge and beliefs.

## **6.5 CONCLUSION**

In answer to research question 1, the study has shown that except for the assessment programme in the NCS document, experienced teachers of English Home Language are more strongly regulated by core and internal regulations than external regulations. In response to research question 2, the study concluded that experienced teachers have strong professional and subject identities that are validated by an internalized, personal frame of reference. These core regulations have developed over a long period of time and cannot be quickly replaced by norms and standards for teachers in the external policy documents.

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# APPENDIX A

		<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Meritorious</b>	<b>Substantial</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Not achieved</b>
<b>ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE RUBRIC</b>  <b>SECTION A: ESSAY</b> <b>50 MARKS</b>	<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language, punctuation effectively used.</li> <li>Uses highly appropriate figurative language.</li> <li>Choice of words exceptional and mature.</li> <li>Sentences, paragraphs brilliantly constructed.</li> <li>Style, tone, register highly suited to topic.</li> <li>Text virtually error-free following proof-reading, editing.</li> <li>Length in accordance with requirements of topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language, punctuation correct, and able to use appropriate figurative language.</li> <li>Choice of words varied and creative.</li> <li>Sentences, paragraphs logical, varied.</li> <li>Style, tone, register appropriately suited to topic.</li> <li>Text largely error-free following proof-reading, editing.</li> <li>Length correct.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language and punctuation mostly correct.</li> <li>Choice of words suited to text.</li> <li>Sentences, paragraphs well constructed.</li> <li>Style, tone, register suited to topic.</li> <li>Text mostly error-free following proof-reading, editing.</li> <li>Length correct.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language simplistic, punctuation adequate.</li> <li>Choice of words adequate.</li> <li>Sentences, paragraphing might be faulty in places but essay still makes sense.</li> <li>Style, tone, register generally consistent with topic requirements.</li> <li>Text still contains few errors following proof-reading, editing.</li> <li>Length correct.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language mediocre and punctuation often inaccurately used.</li> <li>Choice of words basic.</li> <li>Sentences, paragraphs, faulty but essay still makes sense.</li> <li>Style, tone, register lacking in coherence.</li> <li>Text contains several errors following proof-reading, editing.</li> <li>Length – too long / short</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language and punctuation flawed.</li> <li>Choice of words limited.</li> <li>Sentences, paragraphs constructed at an elementary level.</li> <li>Style, tone, register inappropriate.</li> <li>Text error-ridden despite proof-reading, editing.</li> <li>Length – too long / short</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language and punctuation seriously flawed.</li> <li>Choice of words inappropriate.</li> <li>Sentences, paragraphs muddled, inconsistent.</li> <li>Style, tone, register flawed in all aspects.</li> <li>Text error-ridden and confused following proof-reading, editing.</li> <li>Length – far too long / short</li> </ul>
	<b>CONTENT</b>		Code 7: 80 -100%	Code 6: 70 – 79%	Code 5: 60 – 69 %	Code 4: 50 – 59%	Code 3: 40 – 49%	Code 2: 30 – 39%
<b>Outstanding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content exceptional, highly original.</li> <li>Ideas: Thought provoking, mature.</li> <li>Coherent development of topic. Vivid, exceptional detail.</li> <li>Critical awareness of impact of language.</li> <li>Evidence of planning and/or drafting has produced flawlessly presentable essay.</li> </ul>	Code 7: 80-100%	40 - 50	38 – 42	35 – 39				
<b>Meritorious</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content commendable, original.</li> <li>Ideas: imaginative, interesting.</li> <li>Logical development of details. Coherent.</li> <li>Critical awareness of impact of language.</li> <li>Evidence of planning and/or drafting has produced a well-crafted and presentable essay.</li> </ul>	Code 6: 70-79%	38 – 42	35 – 39	33 – 37	30 – 34			
<b>Substantial</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content sound, reasonably coherent.</li> <li>Ideas: interesting, convincing.</li> <li>Several relevant details developed.</li> <li>Critical awareness of language evident.</li> <li>Evidence of planning and/or drafting has produced a presentable and very good essay.</li> </ul>	Code 5: 60-69%	35 – 39	33 – 37	30 – 34	28 – 32	25 - 29		
<b>Adequate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content appropriate, adequately coherent.</li> <li>Ideas: interesting, adequately original.</li> <li>Some points, necessary details developed.</li> <li>Some awareness of impact of language.</li> <li>Evidence of planning and/or drafting has produced a satisfactorily presented essay.</li> </ul>	Code 4: 50-59%		30 – 34	28 – 32	25 – 29	23 – 27	20 – 24	
<b>Moderate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content mediocre, ordinary. Gaps in coherence.</li> <li>Ideas: mostly relevant. Limited originality.</li> <li>Most necessary points evident.</li> <li>Limited critical language awareness.</li> <li>Evidence of planning and/or drafting that has produced a moderately presentable and coherent essay.</li> </ul>	Code 3: 40-49%			25 – 29	23 – 27	20 – 24	18 – 22	15 – 19
<b>Elementary</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content not always clear, lacks coherence.</li> <li>Ideas: few ideas, often repetitive.</li> <li>Sometimes off topic but general line of thought can be followed.</li> <li>Inadequate for home language level despite planning/drafting. Essay not well presented.</li> </ul>	Code 2: 30-39%				20 – 24	18 – 22	15 – 19	03 – 17
<b>Not Achieved</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content largely irrelevant. No coherence.</li> <li>Ideas: tedious, repetitive, off topic.</li> <li>Inadequate planning/drafting. Poorly presented essay.</li> </ul>	Code 1: 00-29%					15 – 19	03 – 17	00 – 14

Table 3.2: Example of a Programme of Assessment for Grades 10 - 11

Term 1	Task 1 – 50 marks	Task 2 – 35 marks	Task 3 – 10 marks	Task 4 – 45 marks
140 marks converted to 100	<p>Writing: Essay Narrative/ descriptive/ reflective / argumentative / discursive / expository</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<p>Literature: Novel / Drama / Poetry *Essay/ contextual questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<p>**ORAL: Reading / listening / speaking: Interview / debate / prepared speech / unprepared speech / conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<p>Test 1 Comprehension / summary / language</p>
350 marks converted to 100	<p>Writing: Essay Narrative/ descriptive/ reflective / argumentative / discursive / expository</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Longer transactional text (30) and Shorter text (20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<p>**ORAL: Reading / listening / speaking: (interview / debate / prepared speech / unprepared speech / conversation)/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<p>Literature: Novel / Drama / Poetry Essay / contextual questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<p>Midyear examinations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper 1 (70) – Gr.10 and 11: 2 hours</li> <li>Paper 2 (80) – Gr.10: 2 hours, Gr.11: 2½ hours</li> <li>Paper 3 (100) – Gr.10: 2 hours, Gr.11: 2½ hours (Can be completed in May)</li> </ul>
150 marks converted to 100	<p>Writing: Essay Narrative / descriptive / reflective / argumentative / discursive / expository</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<p>Literature: Novel / Drama / Poetry *Essay / contextual questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<p>**ORAL: Reading / listening / speaking: Interview / debate/ prepared speech / unprepared speech / conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<p>Test 2 Comprehension / summary / Language / Shorter texts – Reference / informational</p>
60 marks excluding Nov. Exam (Task 16) Note The total mark for Tasks 1 – 15 (700) is divided by 7 & added to the Nov. examination mark.	<p>Task 13 – 20 marks</p> <p>Writing: Shorter texts –Transactional and Reference / informational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<p>Task 14 – 20 marks</p> <p>Oral: Response to literature - Film study / television drama / radio drama / short story / folklore / short essay / autobiography / biography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<p>Task 15 – 20 marks</p> <p>Test 3 Comprehension / summary / language / Shorter texts – Reference / informational</p>	<p>Task 16 – 300 marks</p> <p>November examination TOTAL: 250</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper 1 (70) – Gr.10 and 11: 2 hours</li> <li>Paper 2 (80) – Gr.10: 2 hours, Gr.11: 2½ hours</li> <li>Paper 3 (100) – Gr.10: 2 hours, Gr.11: 2½ hours</li> </ul> <p>TOTAL: 50</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper 4 (50) – see oral tasks 3, 6, 11 &amp; 14.</li> </ul>

\* One essay and one set of contextual questions should be attempted of different genres in Task 2 and 10.

\*\* Oral: Learners should do at least one reading, speaking and listening task during the year.

**Table 3.3: Example of a Programme of Assessment for Grade 12**

Term 1	Task 1 – 50 marks	Task 2 – 40 marks	Task 3 – 10 marks	Task 4 – 10 marks	Task 5 –40 marks
150 marks converted to 100	<b>Writing: Essay</b> Narrative / descriptive / reflective; / reflective / argumentative / discursive / expository <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<b>Literature: Novel / Drama</b> *Essay / contextual questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<b>**ORAL: Reading / listening / speaking</b> Interview / debate / prepared speech / unprepared speech / conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric/ memorandum</li> </ul>	<b>**ORAL: Reading / listening / speaking</b> Interview / debate / prepared speech / unprepared speech / conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<b>Test 1</b> Comprehension / language/ summary
Term 2	Task 6 – 50 marks	Task 7 – 50 marks	Task 8 – 20 marks	Task 9 –30 marks	Task 10 – 250 marks
400 marks converted to 100	<b>Literature: Novel / Drama</b> *Essay/contextual questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric/ memorandum</li> </ul>	<b>Writing:</b> Essay Narrative/ descriptive/ reflective / argumentative / discursive / expository OR <b>Longer transactional text (30) and Shorter text (20)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<b>Oral: Response to literature</b> Film study / television drama/ radio drama/ short story / folklore/ short essay / autobiography / biography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<b>Literature: Poetry</b> Seen (20) and Unseen (10) Essay / contextual questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / memorandum</li> </ul>	<b>***Midyear examinations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper 1 (70) – 2 hours</li> <li>Paper 2 (80) – 2½ hours</li> <li>Paper 3 (100) – 2½ hours (If necessary to be completed in May)</li> </ul>
Term 3	Task 11 – 50 marks	Task 12 – 10 marks	Task 13 –40 marks	Task 14 – 250 marks	
350 marks converted to 100	<b>Writing: Essay</b> Narrative / descriptive/ reflective; / reflective / argumentative / discursive / expository <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<b>**ORAL: Reading / listening / speaking</b> Interview / debate / prepared speech / unprepared speech / conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment tool: Rubric / Memorandum</li> </ul>	<b>Test 2</b> Comprehension / language/ Summary / Shorter texts – Reference / informational	<b>***Preparatory examinations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper 1 (70) – 2 hours</li> <li>Paper 2 (80) – 2½ hours</li> <li>Paper 3 (100) – 2½ hours</li> </ul>	

\* One essay and one set of contextual questions should be attempted of different genres in Task 2 and 6.

\*\* Oral: Learners should do at least one reading, speaking and listening task during the year.

\*\*\* In Grade 12 one of the tasks in Term 2 and/or Term 3 must be an internal examination. In instances where only one of the two internal examinations is written in Grade 12, the other examination should be replaced by a test at the end of the term. (Tasks 10 and 14)

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS:

#### Profile questions

1. Why did you choose to become a teacher of English?
2. Tell me about your teacher training. Did you train to become an English teacher specifically?
3. How long have you been teaching at this school? How long have you been teaching English altogether?
- 3.1 Do you teach any other subjects? *(If yes, compare teaching other lesson to that of English)*

#### About being a teacher (practice and identity)

4. What do you envision is your purpose as a teacher of English? *What does it mean to you to be a teacher of English?*
5. What do you hope your learners will gain/learn in your lessons?
6. What skills/qualities/attributes do you think is necessary for a teacher to be an 'effective teacher of English'? Are these different or the same as being an effective science teacher, for example?
7. How do you understand the changes that have happened in the English curriculum (FET) since 2006? What kind of demands does the revised National Curriculum statements made on you?  
Probe: in terms of a) content b) pedagogy c) assessment
8. To what extent have curriculum changes impacted/ changed your classroom practice (pedagogy and assessment). Reflecting on the changes you have experienced, in what way have these changes impacted on your motivation as an English teacher. *(Discuss)* To what extent have you been able to translate policy into practice?
9. What curriculum changes have you not implemented? Why not? (Probe: I didn't like the changes; my school did not have the resources etc)
10. What kind of teaching practices do you think the Revised National Curriculum Statements promotes
11. How does the new curriculum understand the purpose of teaching and learning English?
12. Reflecting on your 20 years of teaching as an English teacher, what has changed in terms of practice?

#### About the lesson

13. Would you say that was a 'typical lesson'? Why/ why not
14. Why did you choose to teach the topic in this way?
15. What did you hope to achieve/ or for learners to learn in this lesson.