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TEACHING WITHIN A PRESCRIPTIVE SCHOOL CURRICULUM:

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER AGENCY AND PROFESSIONALISM

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TEACHING WITHIN A PRESCRIPTIVE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER AGENCY AND PROFESSIONALISM

BY

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. LABBY RAMRATHAN

DECLARATION

I, Taniqua Walbrugh declare that

i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

iii) This dissertation does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs, or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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      MRS T.A WALBRUGH

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

11 March 2015

Ms Taniqua Allin Winter 208526363
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0074/015M
Project title: Teaching within a prescriptive school curriculum: Implications for teacher agency and professionalism

Dear Ms Winter

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 09 February 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Dr Labby Ramrathan
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr P Morojele
cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo, Ms B Bhengu and Mr S Mthembu

This dissertation is submitted with my approval.

_____

PROF. L. RAMRATHAN

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my Lord, without whom I would have no purpose.

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ABSTRACT

The schooling system within South Africa over the last decade and a half has been characterised by several curriculum changes with the goal of providing quality basic education different from that provided by the Apartheid government. The several iterations of curriculum change sought to respond to the various challenges that the new curriculum philosophy presented as a response to the wide range of issues and critiques. At present the school curriculum is framed within the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and has been in existence for the past three years. Now is the right opportunity to research how the CAPS curriculum is experienced by all. However, for the purpose of this study, the research on CAPS will be focused on teachers' experiences of teaching within this curriculum framework. More specifically, the focus is on teacher agency as teachers' negotiate the CAPS curriculum within their context of teaching.

Although the literature review provides some understanding into the implementation of a prescribed curriculum and its theoretical influence on teacher agency, no solutions and suggestions are offered. It is to be simply accepted that teachers have to teach the set curriculum in order to be successful in the eyes of the educational departments as there are numerous factors determining successfulness. Additionally, although Emirbayer and Mische (1998) Samuel (1998) and Apple (1993) provide a theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding teacher agency in curriculum, there is a practical gap as only theoretical and conceptual understandings are provided; ignoring practical understandings.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) provide great insight as to what influences agency and how teachers teach, yet it does not refer to manners in which teacher agency is utilized when restricted by a curriculum. This study provided a practical understanding of how to recognise agency under a prescriptive curriculum; through adoption, adaption and neglect.

In addition, Apple (1993) offers support on understanding the basics of curriculum through state theory; however, theory relating to the context of implementing a national curriculum is limited, especially in relation to South Africa. I feel that my study attempted at bridging this gap, bringing forth new ideas, concepts and theories around the phenomenon of how teachers teach within a prescriptive school curriculum.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS   -   Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

C2005   -   Curriculum 2005

OBE   -   Outcomes Based Education

RNCS   -   Revised National Curriculum Statements

NCS   -   National Curriculum Statement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

Page

PROJECT TITLE

Teaching within a prescriptive school curriculum: Implications for teacher agency and professionalism

Introduction

The schooling system within South Africa over the last decade and a half has been characterised by several curriculum changes with the goal of providing quality basic education different from that provided by the Apartheid government. The several iterations of curriculum change sought to respond to the various challenges that the new curriculum philosophy presented as a response to the wide range of issues and critiques. At present the school curriculum is framed within the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and has been in existence for the past three years. Now is the right opportunity to research how the CAPS curriculum is experienced by all. However, for the purpose of this study, the research on CAPS will be focused on teachers' experiences of teaching within this curriculum framework. More specifically, the focus is on teacher agency as teachers' negotiate the CAPS curriculum within their context of teaching.

This introductory chapter outlines the purpose of this study, describes the rationale for this study and then provides a contextual background on teacher agency with reference to South Africa's Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). I focused on what makes teachers agents and how a curriculum can influence agency; specifically one that is prescriptive. The role of a teacher implementing an official curriculum is paramount, therefore studying the agency involved during policy implementation provides this study with purpose and rationale.

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

The intention of this study is to understand the complex nature of teacher agency and how it is deployed within a prescriptive curriculum. Tracing the curriculum changes since the arrival of our democracy, several iterations of the school curriculum have been implemented across the schools in South Africa. These iterations changed the perspectives from which one has to teach. This study serves to focus on how such reform has affected teachers and their agency, with particular reference to the South Africa's current education policy, CAPS.

I focused on both experienced and novice teachers as I was exploring adaptive qualities as influenced by experience on a new curriculum on the one hand and new exposure not influenced by experience on the other. Through the understanding of my practice as an inexperienced teacher within the CAPS framework and that of an experienced teacher, the phenomenon of teacher agency, through exploring teachers' adaptive qualities, would be elevated as the central phenomenon of this study. Relying on the principles and guidelines of self-study, the research on myself formed one of the case studies envisaged in this inquiry.

This study was rooted in South Africa and the influence of its current curriculum policy on teachers. Using document analysis and semi-structured interviews, the focus of this study was to unearth the power a prescriptive curriculum has over teachers and their agency. Documents revealing preparation and schedules for term content were compared to the outlines provided by the current curriculum policy and further questioned within interviews. The focus of this study was to reveal how teachers teach within the CAPS framework, what agency teachers deploy within this framework as well as how might teachers justify their practices within their prescriptive setting.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

My personal feeling and stance on CAPS

In this introductory chapter, I present my experience, thoughts and feelings of CAPS as a way of declaring, upfront my position in this study. These experiences, thoughts and feelings are also captured as data for this study as part of a self-study component purposefully included in the research design and argued for in the methodology chapter. I included my thoughts, feelings and insights derived from my limited experience of teaching within the CAPS curriculum as part of my rationale to further argue for why this study is needed and how this study could enlighten me as a professional teacher based on literature reviewed and of the experiences of other teachers. Hence part of the research design includes an experienced participant that has taught across most of the curriculum that influenced school education. Drawing from her experiences of teaching within several curriculum frameworks, including that of CAPS, I will be better informed about my professional role as a teacher within the CAPS curriculum and how teacher agency could be extended and adapted to current and future curriculum changes.

I have come to believe that in order to be a successful teacher, one needs to be an agent in the classroom as it empowers individuals to be unrestricted and independent in their choices, exercising judgement in the interests of not only themselves, but others too (Campbell, 2012). I understand teacher agency to be an agent of, in and for education. However, with a prescriptive curriculum being the platform by which you have to teach, the opportunity for teacher agency is somewhat eradicated. Although I find myself exercising my agency, my concern lies with how South Africa's current curriculum, CAPS (Department of Basic Education, 2011), might inhibit the nation's teachers to be agents in their own right. This study, therefore, explored my own interest invested in teacher agency with regard to curriculum implementation, followed by linking my experiences and ideas with those of other teachers and researchers in the field.

My interest in this study lies in the fact that I am highly concerned about not only the current state of teaching, but the future of teaching. I am concerned about the standard of work we, as teachers, teach the children of our country. There is not enough time to teach concepts in depth and to further reinforce those concepts properly in order to ensure that learning takes place. Teachers are forced to move on to the next concept regardless of whether all children understand or not. There is only time to teach what is planned for a single lesson; one cannot extend or spend extra time on topics as there is a checklist to tick off on. Teachers aim for children to understand a topic within that lesson, however with the lack of reinforcement following the initial lesson, children struggle to retain the knowledge taught. When it comes to examination time, it is as if we did not teach certain concepts at all as reflected in the poor results. This truly concerns me.

I am a newly qualified teacher in South Africa, this year being my fourth year in the field. I prepare the content for mathematics to be taught across the grade. Then, I teach the class mathematics, English, Afrikaans, natural science/technology, history, geography and life skills. I teach in a well-resourced, suburban primary school. I am extremely fortunate as my school is the face of what many schools in South Africa do not represent. We have a library, a computer room and a music room. We have flushing toilets, electricity and text books. Each classroom is additionally equipped with air-conditioners and Smart IQ Boards. My principal and staff are supportive and an open door policy is a principle we thrive upon. However, this is not the case for many schools in the world, let alone South Africa, and therefore my circumstances differ to those in the rest of the country. My concern therefore lies with the latter. The curriculum policy, which is dissected in this study, has come in to support and

guide teachers but it has not considered or specified what type of teachers. Who is it designed for? It is not contextual; it is labelling all teachers and all schools as the same.

In my experience, the policy does not allow for adaptation in order for content to be contextual. CAPS dictates what concepts are to be taught along with how and when, leaving no room for expansion or modification. For example, in Grade 4 Mathematics, the document states that only 6 hours is to be spent on the concept of time for the entire year, yet 17 hours is to be spent on Data Handling in the same year. This does not make sense because getting 9 to 11 year olds to grasp the concept of time versus the concept of tallying is a lot more challenging. Through my experience, the concept of time is a great deal harder to comprehend and requires a longer duration in order to reinforce this life skill. However, learning to tally and concepts applicable to data handling is an easier topic to teach.

Additionally, I do not feel and have not found that the curriculum policy considers public holidays, break up days (which are half school days) and time slots for end of term reports to be done. Assessments and new concepts cannot continue until the last day of each term; as a teacher, this is impractical. This leads to simply cramming content knowledge into each learner as opposed to allowing the learner to develop with the content knowledge. Learners are not learning. From my perspective, they are merely products in a factory being mass produced and pushed through the system without any concept of what it is to learn (even more so, to enjoy learning) or how to question and grow. I ultimately consider this system to be one that is failing the learners, the teachers and in turn the country; therefore the need for teacher agency is necessary to counteract this situation.

I see myself as a rebellious professional. I have been studying to be the best teacher I can be for eight years now and I do not feel I could or should let anything or anyone de-professionalise me. This way I am accountable and responsible for the knowledge I impart. I do not want to not be liable. I cannot find it in myself to blame the officials of the Department of Basic Education as they are not the ones that are in the classroom on a day to day basis. I have the influence, and being an agent provides the power to make a difference. Therefore, using CAPS as a guideline is what I currently base my preparation on. I do not adhere to the prescribed allocations of concepts and time. Although I ensure that all concepts are covered accordingly by the end of each year, I do so in a manner suitable for the learners who have time to develop themselves within each concept. I consider how and when I teach particular

concepts with regard to my context. I expand when expansion is needed. I teach creatively, I reinforce, I consolidate. CAPS does not allow the time for this to occur yet expects it to.

To me, teacher agency puts you in control of what and how you teach. Teachers are the vehicles to impart knowledge in a successful manner. Agency allows teachers to use their ideas in order to be effective in their teaching. Teacher agency gives teachers freedom to question and adapt. Consequently, I consider that teacher agency may be perceived as a river. Rivers all meet in the ocean and the final destination for a teacher is the same as the ultimate goal of the Department, however, the journey getting there is different. This study draws on the work of researchers who share the same interest and who offer recommendations to this field of concern. Although teacher agency is clearly a concept widely researched, I maintain that it requires further research in the context of the CAPS policy implementation in South Africa.

Contextual reasons for doing the study

It can be said that South Africa is caught up in a curriculum craze (Ramrathan, 2010). Since democracy, there have been various curriculum policies. These iterations constantly changed the perspectives from which one has to teach.

The introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), through the Curriculum 2005 (C2005) implementation process in the early parts of our democracy, has seen a complete transformation where teachers were given greater say in what gets taught, how it gets taught and where it gets taught through a learner centred education (Chisholm, 2003). The school curriculum was then revised in the form of Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) and later to National Curriculum Statement (NCS). Here, teachers still had a wider scope to influence on what gets taught, how it gets taught and where it gets taught, all guided by the national curriculum statements and peer collaboration. The most recent reform, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) has been introduced into the school education system over the last three years. CAPS is characterised by a rigid curriculum structure that specifies what needs to be taught, when in the year it should be taught and how it should be taught (Department of Basic Education, 2011). CAPS highlights the concern that this rigid structure seems to have marginalised teachers to the extreme as they have very little say in how and what they teach in their classroom, removing autonomy and the sense of agency.

Policy implementation struggles are not limited to South Africa. There is a large gap between policy formation and effective policy implementation world-wide. In order to understand South Africa's predicament, it is imperative to rely on international research. The first possible explanations for this gap are offered by Van Horne and Van Meter (1977). Although this literature is over three decades old, it is relevant to the curriculum implementation dilemma occurring in schools today. Okoroma (2006) additionally made use of these explanations in order to understand unsuccessful curriculum implementation in Nigeria.

Van Horne and Van Meter (1977) have provided three general explanations for unsuccessful implementation of programs. The first being an inefficient communication process; it is recognisable that effective implementation requires implementers to know their expectations. However, as messages pass through any communication network, distortions are likely to occur resulting in either misunderstandings or simply, a lack of understanding. This is where inconsistencies and incompatible requirements are produced Van Horne & Van Meter (1977). The second explanation is a factor of incompetence. The ability to implement policies may be hindered by factors such as incompetent staff, insufficient information and political support, inadequate financial resources and impossible time constraints Van Horne & Van Meter (1977). Lastly, due to policies and programs which rely on humans for implementation, intellectual conflicts are the third explanation. Implementation of policies may fail due to those whom are responsible for implementation refusing to carry out obligations. These explanations may be seen as additional implications for the ever changing education systems in South Africa. Teachers lack the understanding and support needed in order to implement policies successfully.

With the understanding that the above explanations may be applicable to South Africa, South African classrooms are additionally affected by diversity which in turn influences curriculum implementation. Education White Paper 6 highlights the diversity in South African schools; it emphasises inclusion of all learners in educational institutions. Nel (2013) expresses immense concern for embracing diversity at school level. They have found that diversity in South Africa is a much wider concept than it is in classrooms in other parts of the world.

> [South Africa's diversity] becomes even more pronounced when the
> impact of the following extrinsic barriers to learning is taken into account:
> socio-economic deprivation resulting in (amongst) developmental delays;
> inaccessibility of the curriculum due to the inability to access the
> language of learning and teaching, the inability of the education system to

support schools effectively in times of societal change; and the lack of family and school partnerships and community-school partnerships (Engelbrecht, 2013, p. 33).

Engelbrecht (2013) refers to teacher agents as being multi-level teachers. They feel that a key strategy for responding to the needs of learners with diverse learning styles and needs is through curriculum differentiation. "This involves the processes of modifying, changing, adapting, varying and extending teaching methodologies, teaching strategies, assessment strategies and the content of the curriculum (UNESCO, 2004:13; DoE, 2011:7 in Engelbrecht, 2012, p. 36)".

Through literature, it will become clear that the diversity of learners and the diverse teaching context in South African schools necessitates a nuanced approach to education and therefore a fixed, rigid curriculum structure may not be appropriate. This understanding necessitated a research study, providing this study with an effective purpose.

Although not many solutions are provided and only explanations are offered for this concern, I wish for my study to bring forth not only the reasoning behind the phenomenon but to contribute to possible suggestions on how one might counteract the issue. Samuel (2008) validates this by stating that instead of criticising teachers who are caught in the above mentioned policy implementation predicament, researchers need to recognise the need to understand the lives of teachers in order for teachers to understand their own lives and develop accordingly.

Therefore, this research study hopes to benefit teachers who encounter policy implementation predicaments by not only providing explanations for the phenomenon but by additionally providing practical ways to counteract their dependence on the policy and to further make use of their autonomy in the classrooms.

Rationale based on literature review

There are many authors who share the same concerns as I do such as Blignaut (2007), Gitlin and Margonis (1995), Campbell (2012), Priestly, Edwards, Miller and Priestly (2012), Giroux (2010), Robert and Bullough (2011), Craig (2010), Msibi and Mchunu (2013) and Vaughn (2013). These authors question the value of having a curriculum policy that is impractical and additionally they do not support the removal of autonomy from a teacher's field.

Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2012) have studied that in the United Kingdom teacher agency has been removed and replaced with prescriptive curricula. I feel that this is the very case in South Africa, especially when one considers Ramrathan's (2010) perspective on the changing curriculums, along with the transformation of teacher autonomy going from being in existence to barely existing, over the course of democracy. Just as Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2012) place emphasis on the emerging tendency to construct teachers as agents of change in the United Kingdom, such shifts need to occur in South Africa too. There are countless authors (Gitlin and Margonis, 1995; Blignaut, 2007; Craig, 2010; Giroux, 2010; Bullough, 2011; Campbell, 2012; Priestly, Edwards, Miller and Priestly, 2012; Msibi and Mchunu, 2013; Vaughn, 2013) who question the value of having a curriculum policy that is impractical. Additionally, they do not support the removal of autonomy from a teacher in the process of curriculum implementation.

Although the literature review provides some understanding into the implementation of a prescribed curriculum and its theoretical influence on teacher agency, no solutions and suggestions are offered. It is to be simply accepted that teachers have to teach the set curriculum in order to be successful in the eyes of the educational departments; I oppose this stance as there are numerous factors determining successfulness. Additionally, although Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Apple (1993) provide a theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding teacher agency in curriculum, there is a practical gap as only theoretical and conceptual understandings are provided; ignoring practical understandings. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) provide great insight as to what influences agency and how teachers teach, yet it does not refer to the manner in which teacher agency is utilized when restricted by a curriculum. In addition, Apple (1993) offers support on understanding the basics of curriculum through state theory; however, theory relating to the context of implementing a national curriculum is limited, especially in relation to South Africa. I feel that my study may attempt to bridge this gap, bringing forth new ideas, concepts and theories around the phenomenon of how teachers teach within a prescriptive school curriculum.

Purpose of study

Having argued for the need to do this study, the purpose, then, is to explore the relationship between CAPS, a prescribed curriculum and teacher agency in Primary Schools, with special reference to mathematics.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. How do teachers teach within the Curriculum and Assessment Policy framework?
2. What teacher agency do teachers deploy in their teaching within the Curriculum and Assessment Policy framework?
3. How might teachers explain their teaching practices within the Curriculum and Assessment Policy framework?

OVERVIEW OF DISSERTATION

The function of this chapter is to provide an overview of the format of this dissertation. It clarifies the purpose of the study and defines the rationale behind it. The background of this study provides the personal, contextual and literature based trajectory for understanding teacher agency within a prescriptive curriculum. It is evident, through personal experience and theory, that there is a conflictual issue between teacher agency and a prescriptive curriculum. This study questions teacher agency as one can see in the design of the critical questions of this study.

Chapter two presents a review of literature in the field of study. Here, I focus on understanding curriculum and its struggle, CAPS as teacher agency's competitor, South Africa's possible downfalls in building a relationship with teachers and the struggle between teacher agency and curriculum reform in South Africa. The literature provides greater understanding on the battle teacher agency faces, especially when it comes to a South African national curriculum. It furthermore expresses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to understand teacher agency and its struggle with a national curriculum.

Chapter three provides the research design and methodology that informs the study. Here, 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.

Chapter four offers the analytic findings that substantiate the study. Documents were analysed, interviews were conducted and a self-study was enacted in order to generate the findings and statistics for this study. Additionally, this dissertation presents a discussion on the findings linking reality with theory.

Lastly, chapter five presents the overall conclusions on the findings of this study. It offers a synthesised discussion regarding teacher agency and its competitor, CAPS. It is in this chapter where I provide the academic space to introduce a theory in order to understand teacher agency in practice as literature provides a theoretical understanding of teacher agency. This chapter further provides recommendations that I feel are practical, which amalgamates challenges with solutions.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION A: LITERATURE REVIEW

TEACHER AGENCY VS CAPS: THE EXISTING STRUGGLE

As Ramrathan (2010) suggests, South Africa is caught up in a curriculum craze. Tracing the curriculum changes since the arrival of our democracy, several iterations of the school curriculum have been implemented across the schools in South Africa. The introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), through the Curriculum 2005 (C2005) implementation process in the early parts of our democracy, has seen a complete transformation where teachers were given greater say in what gets taught, how it gets taught and where it gets taught through a learner centred education (Chisholm, 2003). With critiques (Jansen, 1998; Jansen & Christie, 1999; Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012), strong opposition and the review of OBE through C2005, the school curriculum was revised in the form of Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) and later to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). In these iterations of school curriculum, the teachers still had a wider scope to influence what gets taught, how it gets taught and where it gets taught, all guided by the national curriculum statements and peer collaboration.

These newer iterations of the school curriculum were further subjected to critiques (Harrop-Allin & Kros, 2014; van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull & Armstrong, 2011) and reviews (Chisholm, 2003; Catholic Institute of Education, 2010) which resulted in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) being introduced into the school education system over the last three years. CAPS is characterised by a rigid curriculum structure that specifies what needs to be taught, when in the year it should be taught and how it should be taught (Department of Basic Education, 2011). It brings forth the concern that this rigid structure seems to have marginalised teachers to the extreme as they have very little say in how and what they teach in their classroom, removing autonomy and sense of agency.

Personally, I have found that teachers are fast becoming frustrated with their sense of professionalism being subconsciously withdrawn from their entitlement. Although there are numerous factors influencing this notion, my concern lies with teacher agency and whether or not teachers are able to make use of their agency skills, especially during the implementation process of a prescribed curriculum, in this case, that of the CAPS curriculum. I understand teacher agency to be through the state of being an agent of, in and for education. However,

with a prescriptive curriculum policy being the platform from which one has to teach, teacher agency seems to be greatly hindered as teacher professionalism is apparently disregarded, restricting that agency. Therefore, it is in this domain that I focus my study. That of exploring the state of restrictiveness that teachers teaching within the CAPS framework may be experiencing. This literature review seeks to deeply understand teacher agency and its conflict with prescriptive curriculums in order to embark on the journey of exploring this phenomenon first hand, regarding South Africa's current prescriptive curriculum, CAPS. This aligns itself with the cause Michael Apple has been fighting for throughout his educational career – educational justice (Brown, 2011). This study therefore serves as a platform for recording and documenting the challenges teachers face, as Apple (2010) suggests, regarding South Africa's prescriptive curriculum, CAPS.

Understanding curriculum and its struggle

In order to understand the existing struggle in South Africa between CAPS and teacher agency, it is imperative to understand curriculum and its influence. Curriculum is never as straight forward as we would hope it to be. There are aspects that one may never consider, such as the fact that what is not taught is in fact teaching something (Ahwee, Chiapppone, Cuevas, Galloway, Hart, Lones, et al., 2004). There are four key concepts in curriculum that need to be understood in order to understand curriculum as a whole. These concepts are the official curriculum, the experienced curriculum, the hidden curriculum and the null curriculum.

In my understanding, the official curriculum may be referred to as the formal or approved curriculum as this is the curriculum that has been authorised and put in practice by those in power of the country/state. It is the educational programme that all schools should teach and adhere to. In fact, it is generally what the public assumes is being taught. Quinn (2010, p. 616) confirms this by stating that the official curriculum can be defined by "the way curriculum itself has been traditionally understood: as the course of study, body of courses, or program of training at a school or university." The formal curriculum tends to be influenced by politics because those in power are in fact the endorsers of this curriculum, however, "the official curriculum promises to hold continuing and contested interest and importance in the field" (Quinn, 2010, p.617).

In spite of the above mentioned curriculum being one that is authorised and formal, the experienced curriculum may differ from the official curriculum. In my view, the experienced

curriculum could be dubbed the 'understood' curriculum as it is what each learner experiences and learns inside the classroom. The concept of the experienced curriculum highlights how learning may be from how a topic is taught or by how the classroom is set up. It is not a set curriculum, but is rather the underlying messages that are taught by how and what one teaches. Erickson and Pinnegar (2012, p. 361) define the experienced curriculum to be "how the child responds to, engages with, or learns from the events, people, materials, and social or emotional environment of the classroom… The experienced curriculum can be difficult to observe. Marsh (2009, p. 2) substantiates the above statement by informing us that the experienced curriculum "refers to what actually happens in the classroom." Therefore, one can see that through interaction and engagement, a child can learn more from the set curriculum that was formally planned. With this understanding of the experienced curriculum, the next two key concepts in curriculum may be seen as sub sectors of this curriculum as they express what is taught indirectly.

The hidden curriculum can be referred to as the silent, implicit curriculum. I would define it as the informal educational programme that implicitly teaches pupils things that will be carried with them throughout life. These could very well be *life skills* or just simple social rules. Eisner (2002, p. 90) agrees with this by expressing that the lesson taught by the implicit curriculum are "among the most important ones that children learn." Personally, I have realised that the hidden curriculum has taught us what we thought we 'naturally' knew. McLaren (1998, p. 186) believes that the hidden curriculum is in fact the unintended outcomes of the schooling process and "may never be recognized or identified, and even if they are, they may never be formally acknowledged."

As one could possibly note, the above three concepts in curriculum are based on what should be taught and what is taught through teaching. The last concept is about what is taught by not teaching. Thus, Ahwee et al (2004, p. 36) highlight that "we teach something by not teaching." In my opinion, the null curriculum could be better understood as the ignored or untaught curriculum. It is an educational programme that formally does not exist. However, by choosing not to teach a concept, this is in fact teaching something to those who are not learning it. With this, Eisner (2002, p. 97) expresses that "what schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach." A basic, and possibly the most obvious lesson taught through the null curriculum could very well be that the topic ignored is not important or is seen as worthless. Ahwee et al. (2004, p. 37) suggests this by stating that the "null curriculum often takes the form of the purposeful and deliberate exclusion of the perspectives, issues,

and histories of particular populations and cultures." If such topics are excluded, children will never learn that they exist and therefore will not consider them important enough to know.

With this knowledge on the key concepts in curriculum, it is plain to see that education is not as simple as some perceive it to be. There are in fact aspects that one may never consider, yet these aspects are significant in understanding exactly what is being imparted through the taught and untaught. With reference to the following literature review, CAPS is the official curriculum, being the formal framework from which one has to teach. I understand the experienced, hidden and null curriculum to be affected by the teacher and his/her agency as they influence what is being taught and the manner in which teaching takes place. It may further be questioned that the nature of the official curriculum may influence the experienced, hidden and null curriculum as teachers, who are people with feelings, attitudes, perceptions and opinions, which are in the position to implement the official curriculum during their time of employment.

CAPS' competitor: Teacher agency

Teachers are professionals and I feel that they are responsible for maintaining that title, whether it is a title formally granted or not. In order to be accountable, agency needs to be practiced. Campbell (2012) confirms that teacher agency is the governing of one's professional practice. To govern infers that one needs to be in control. This concurs with Naidoo (2012) when she articulates agency to be the ability to analyse, interpret and adapt reform using discretionary reasoning. In order to have discretionary reasoning, again, requires one to be in control. Fundamentally, one having agency can best be described as being a vehicle through which reform takes place. In the context of this literature review, teachers are the vehicles to impart knowledge in a successful manner. I understand agency to put teachers in control of what and how they teach. Agency therefore allows teachers to use their ideas in order to be effective in their teaching during the implementation of an official curriculum.

Campbell (2012) refers to agency as human agency and describes the state of agency being an idea that empowers individuals to make "free and independent choices, to engage in autonomous actions, and to exercise judgement in the interests of others and oneself" (p. 183). With the above mentioned conceptions of agency, one can therefore embark on understanding the term teacher agency in terms of teacher professionalism. Msibi and Mchunu (2013) describe what being a professional teacher is and it ties in perfectly with what teacher agency represents.

A professional teacher (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013) is one who supports, understands and promotes learners diverse in their needs. In relation to South Africa, it is a country diverse in cultures, religions and races. Populations within classrooms truly represents Archbishop Desmond Tutu's coined phrase of a 'rainbow nation'. In order to be a teacher in this country, the teacher needs to understand the needs of every learner, accepting that no one child learns in the same manner; this culture of diverse learning needs to be catered for. Campbell (2012) adds to this by expressing that teacher agency is not solely about the teacher, but it too is about the learners and their agency as they are also "autonomous human beings" (p. 184). With this, it highlights the need for proactivity. Being proactive entails one to be anticipatory. Teachers need to be prepared for, intercede in or manage any anticipated occurrence or situation, especially a negative or difficult one. Proactivity therefore aligns itself with key features of teacher agency.

Agency is unquestionably a notion in dire need of practice during a process of curriculum reform. Ramadeen (2014) validates this by stating that "teachers in South Africa are on the front lines of changing curriculum brought about by transformation and reform that the country is currently experiencing" (p. 2), as additionally mentioned by Ramrathan (2010), therefore, agency is required. I take the stance that teacher agency refers to teachers being an instrument through which curriculum is imparted. I recognise that teachers should have the choice whether they would like to be drums, beating content into the cognisance of learners, or flutes, creating an appealing tune attracting learners to the field of knowledge; thus learning and developing simultaneously.

Teacher agency gives teachers freedom to question and adapt to curriculum reform (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; Craig, 2010; Campbell, 2012; Naidoo, 2012; Msibi & Mchunu, 2013). Reform, especially in South Africa, is a concept that should be anticipated by all teachers. Since democracy transpired in South Africa in 1994, emphasis has been on the redress of the inequalities of the past. The South African government manipulated a programme of restructuring the education system on principles of equity, human rights, democracy and sustainable development (Ramdass, 2009). With this, many changes within the education system have occurred. It is therefore up to teachers to be proactive in the career they have chosen, to analyse, interpret and adapt reform using discretionary reasoning (Naidoo, 2012) inhibiting curriculum reform's dictating manner over teacher agency.

The struggle between teacher agency and a prescriptive curriculum

Policy implementation struggles are not limited to South Africa. There is a large gap between policy formation and effective policy implementation world-wide. In order to understand South Africa's predicament, it is imperative to rely on international research. One of the first possible explanations for this gap are offered by Van Horn and Van Meter (1977). Although this literature is over three decades old, it is relevant to the curriculum implementation dilemma occurring in schools today. Okoroma, 2006, additionally made use of these explanations in order to understand unsuccessful curriculum implementation in Nigeria.

Van Horn and Van Meter (1977) have provided three general explanations for unsuccessful implementation of programs. The first being an inefficient communication process; it is recognisable that effective implementation requires implementers to know their expectations. However, as messages pass through any communication network, distortions are likely to occur resulting in either misunderstandings or simply, a lack of understanding. This is where inconsistencies and incompatible requirements are produced (Van Horne & Van Meter, 1977). The second explanation is a factor of incompetence. The ability to implement policies may be hindered by factors such as incompetent staff, insufficient information and political support, inadequate financial resources and impossible time constraints (Van Horne & Van Meter, 1977). Lastly, due to policies and programs relying on humans for implementation, intellectual conflicts are the third explanation. Implementation of policies may fail due to those, who are responsible for implementation, refusing to carry out necessary obligations. These explanations may be seen as additional implications for the ever changing education systems in South Africa. Teachers lack the understanding and support needed in order to implement policies successfully.

With the understanding that the above explanations may be applicable to South Africa, South African classrooms are additionally affected by diversity which in turn influences curriculum implementation. Education White Paper 6 highlights the diversity in South African schools; it emphasises inclusion of all learners in educational institutions. Engelbrecht (2013) expresses immense concern for embracing diversity at school level. They have found that diversity in South Africa is a much wider concept than it is in classrooms in other parts of the world.

> [South Africa's diversity] becomes even more pronounced when the
> impact of the following extrinsic barriers to learning is taken into account:
> socio-economic deprivation resulting in (amongst) developmental delays;

inaccessibility of the curriculum due to the inability to access the language of learning and teaching, the inability of the education system to support schools effectively in times of societal change; and the lack of family and school partnerships and community-school partnerships (Engelbrecht, 2013, p. 33).

Engelbrecht (2013) refer to teacher agents as being multi-level teachers. They feel that a key strategy for responding to the needs of learners with diverse learning styles and needs is through curriculum differentiation. "This involves the processes of modifying, changing, adapting, varying and extending teaching methodologies, teaching strategies, assessment strategies and the content of the curriculum (UNESCO, 2004:13; DoE, 2011:7)" (Engelbrecht, 2013, p. 36).

Through literature, it will become clear that there is a policy implementation gap due to the diversity of learners and the diverse teaching context found in South African schools. This necessitates a nuanced approached to education and therefore a fixed, rigid curriculum structure may not be appropriate.

It can be understood that "the capacity of teachers to use professional discretion in their pedagogical and curricular practices exists not always easily, alongside their accountability to the state, which generally maintains the overall authority for education policy" (Campbell, 2012, p. 183). According to policy makers, teachers are agents; however they are agents whose choices and actions exhibit those of the curriculum frameworks in which they work (Campbell, 2012). Therefore, how free are teachers really?

It needs to be emphasized that who one is as an individual, greatly influences how one teaches and how willing one is to adopt reform. I feel that teacher identity prevents the filtration of policies into classrooms. Regarding a teacher as a human enables one to realise that emotions and personalities, may result in teachers resisting change due to the fact that they are tired of modifying what and how they teach, especially when there is a lack of support. They may not only be tired of constant change, but they may resist change due to being insulted by a policy stating that how they teach is perhaps incorrect. Thus Blignaut (2007, p. 54) maintains that "some teachers are deeply upset when they encounter reform that inform them that the way they have taught for 10 or 20 years was `wrong'."

Blignaut (2007) feels that a key factor facilitating the gap between policy and practice is imbedded in policy outcomes that are clashing with teachers' identities as specialists in

education. When consulting an educational policy, Blignaut (2007, p. 56) states that one could find that "teachers' views of knowledge, teaching and learning generally were not congruent with those outlined in curriculum policy." In agreement with Blignaut (2007), this brings forth the argument of how teachers' identities are at stake, and this is why policy lacks permeation, because teachers translate policy, employing their agency, to suit their dogmas and way of teaching, almost ignoring what the policy actually wishes to achieve. This is a clear example of how official curriculums influence the experienced, hidden and null curriculums.

Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2012) have studied that in the United Kingdom teacher agency has been removed and replaced with prescriptive curricula. I feel that this is the very case in South Africa, especially when one considers Ramrathan's (2010) perspective on the changing curriculums, along with the transformation of teacher autonomy going from being in existence to barely existing, over the course of democracy. Just as Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2012) place emphasis on the emerging tendency to construct teachers as agents of change in the United Kingdom, such shifts need to occur in South Africa too. There are countless authors (Gitlin and Margonis, 1995; Blignaut, 2007; Craig, 2010; Giroux, 2010; Bullough, 2011; Campbell, 2012; Priestly, Edwards, Miller and Priestly, 2012; Msibi and Mchunu, 2013; Vaughn, 2013) who question the value of having a curriculum policy, such as CAPS, that is impractical. Additionally, they do not support the removal of autonomy from a teacher in the process of curriculum implementation.

Blignaut (2007) argues that often curriculum reformers make the mistake of thinking that excellent curriculum models would initiate their own demand, meaning that reform would just automatically take place in the manner in which it was designed. However, what is not understood is that it is extremely challenging to put ideas into practice, especially if implementation is to occur through those that were not part of the drawing up process. This brings forth the concern that creating change, particularly in the classroom, is difficult if participants in change are unaware of how to effectively carry through that change.

Blignaut (2007) expresses a similar idea in that curriculum change requires meaning making by teachers to occur, however the challenge lies with how those "involved in change can come to understand what it is that should change, and how it can be best accomplished, while realising that the *what* and the *how* constantly *interact* and reshape each other" (p. 50). Consequently, Gitlin and Margonis (1995) validate this by stating that "teachers' active

engagement in the reform process [is] one of the key factors in successful reform efforts" (p. 379). However, the question is how involved are teachers during the conceptualisation process of planning a new curriculum? Habitually, teachers are required to guarantee changes during the implementation of the curriculum within their respective schools and classrooms. Such changes demand teachers to take agency. Without teacher agency, the result will ultimately be a process of non-implementation of reform. This is a concept argued by Bantwini (2011) and Jansen (2002) when change is not implemented due to poor planning on behalf of all parties involved in policy-making.

Furthermore, Bullough (2011) states that one of the major problems regarding teacher agency is that there is a false assumption that teachers can be prescribed in advance and therefore almost anyone can teach. I think that this is a defining implication of a prescribed curriculum devaluing teachers as professionals, ultimately hindering agency. Priestly et al. (2012) state that an educational policy needs to be designed to be more flexible, taking into account the different contexts in which teachers are to teach as well as teacher agency, ultimately considering "teachers' proactive and projective engagement with the policy in question" (p. 37) .

A one-size-fits-all curriculum is counter to the idea of teacher professionalism. Teachers should have the agency to adapt the curriculum to the needs of their learners. Within prescriptive curriculums, it is evident that teachers are not given due consideration when it comes to analysing and understanding the complex process of educational change (Giroux, 2010). "Teaching remains prescriptive and content driven" (Harrop-Allin & Kros, 2014, p. 72).

Teachers need to be considered during the process of developing and implementing educational change. Craig (2010) reiterates this by describing teachers as catalysts as they are in fact the ultimate curriculum makers.

> Teachers as curriculum makers is an image that acknowledges the teachers as a holder, user, and producer of knowledge, a self-directed individual who takes the curriculum as given and negotiates it in active relationship with students to address needs as learners and, to the extent possible, meet the requirements outlined in stated curriculum documents (Craig, 2010, p.867).

Craig (2010) emphasises that curricula and teachers need to interact with each other in order to be successful. This is relevant to South Africa and its current curriculum, CAPS, as Msibi and Mchunu (2013) studied the very concept and found that possible failure of the curriculum policy is based on the fact that curriculum change is assumed without adequately addressing the issue of teacher professionalism. Vaughn (2013) validates this through her study of 'teacher proof' curricula. Vaughn's (2013) case study showed that teachers found it challenging to follow their vision once they experienced the imposing nature of a prescriptive, teacher proof curriculum. The study further demonstrates "how complex it can be in current contexts to enact one's vision as an educator and to demonstrate a sense of agency" (p. 131). However, when teachers do find their agency, by bending the rules prescribed by the curriculum policies, it is within this buried context that agency is most seen to flourish (Campbell, 2012).

This section can be concluded with the idea that teacher professionalism needs to be regarded during the process of curriculum reform in order for teacher agency to occur. Teacher professionalism and teacher agency may be regarded as one as teacher agency is the personal practice of professionalism itself. Considering teacher professionalism recognises teachers as individuals who support, understand and promote learners who are diverse in their needs and ambitions. Additionally, it recognises teachers as individuals who are committed to the progression of the profession itself as well as further having the capacity to master one's own knowledge base, while instantaneously learning from others (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013). In order for a country's education system to progress, it could be agreed that agency is unquestionably a notion in dire need of practice during a process of curriculum reform.

South Africa's possible downfalls in building a relationship with teachers

Jansen and Blank (2014) embarked on a journey of research in order to result in a manual that offers advice on how to fix South Africa's schools. In order to provide solutions and guidance, a critical question needs to be answered. One of their critical questions were "What are we [South Africa] doing wrong?" (p.54). These authors highlight how there are numerous policies, projects and programmes that aim to change South African schools yet after 20 years of democracy and educational reform we statistically remain at the bottom when compared to other developing countries. There clearly is a problem. Jansen and Blank (2014) distil it down to the fact that while change is occurring, "systemic change is not happening"

(p. 55). Systemic change is change that transpires in all facets and stages of the educational process. It is change that involves all of the people included; learners, teachers, parents, administrators and community members. This brings forth my argument of curriculum change having to include teachers in order to allow for some form of progress during the expected curriculum implementation stages to occur.

Jansen and Blank (2014) bring forth numerous faults on the Department of Educations' behalf. The first underlined fault is that schools and teachers are overburdened with "complex policies and demanding curricula" (p. 57) instead of providing enough desks, competent teachers and clear timetables; priorities in the eyes of the authors. I concur with this idea because if curriculum makers were working hand in hand with competent curriculum implementers, teachers would reclaim their professionalism and the education system would thrive. However, this is not the case. Sending teachers on countless workshops and spending millions on textbooks which are not context sensitive does not form the relationship needed, especially when a curriculum is demanding and prescriptive. Unfortunately, teachers in South Africa do not have to be competent in order to fulfil the duties of what the curriculum makers require (Harrop-Allin and Kros, 2014). Jansen and Blank (2014) concur with my idea of workshops not necessarily being successful as one of their other noted mistakes for the Department of Education is that there is too much focus on the generic training of teachers when what should be provided is development and support inside the classroom in the real contexts of where and how teachers work. This will definitely provide insight and allow teachers to exercise their agency as they would be provided with the development and support to do so.

The fact that teachers are resources should be realised. Teachers are not only resources unto themselves, but to their schools, their learners and to the education departments of the world. It has been found that within 'Schools that Work', a term used by Jansen and Blank (2014), teachers are expected to be agents. They are expected to adapt to their learners and be creative; ensuring that true teaching happens daily in order for true learning to occur. A principal interviewed during Jansen and Blank's (2014) research, expressed his view point on his teachers, however, I feel that his view can definitely be a blanket statement about teachers who exercise their agency.

> There is no resource that beats a teacher. In a teacher there is everything. A teacher can even improvise when the resource is not

available. They will do anything. They will move mountains. They are also highly inspired to see their kids succeed in life. Yes, we do have some limited resources. But more than anything else, the resource that we can rely on is a human resource – my teachers (Mtshali in Jansen & Blank, 2014, p. 143).

All in all, "complexity kills capacity" (Jansen & Blank, 2014, p.85). The more complex the change, the more challenging it is to encourage teachers to change. Freedom to be agents is disintegrating. Educational reform, throughout democratic South Africa, has been a constant which teachers are relentlessly having to adopt and adapt to.

During the early iterations of school curriculum, teachers still had a wider scope to influence what gets taught, how it gets taught and where it gets taught, all guided by the national curriculum statements and peer collaboration. However, the introduction of the current curriculum, CAPS, is different in that it restricts teachers as it is characterised by a rigid curriculum structure that specifies what needs to be taught, when in the year it should be taught and how it should be taught (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This recent policy goes so far as to provide lesson plans to assist teachers (Jansen, 2011). Jansen (2011) publically makes known his frustration, frustration I am sure many competent teachers of South Africa share.

> Is this not what teachers were trained to do on day one of their four-year teacher training programmes? What kind of teacher cannot develop a lesson plan? How can a detailed lesson plan in one school simply apply across the cultural, resource and linguistic contexts of another school? What does this do to teacher autonomy and professionalism when the state develops your lesson plans in detail? This is extremely dangerous (Jansen, 2011, p. 90).

The errors behind formulating CAPS are evident. Yes, it may be argued that CAPS has come in to support and guide teachers with its rigid, prescriptive nature, however, it has not considered or specified what teachers. Who is it actually designed for? Teachers with degrees? Teachers whom are poorly qualified? Teachers who lack experience?

The nature of CAPS is creating a shift in the mind set of teachers. Teachers no longer feel they may make use of their agency due to the fact they are not considered as human beings during curriculum development. Instead, teachers are considered as tools to simply get the job done. Schools are seen as factories, businesses, where one needs to impart as much

knowledge as possible between clocking in and clocking out. This concurs with Gough (1999) when he proposes an industrial mindset when it comes to prescriptive education policies. (Gough, 1999) suggests that most education establishments are still regulated by a systematic reasoning that favors orderly and predictable processes resulting in stable output. In these systems, curriculum documents operate as homeostatic devices standardizing the diverse inputs of students and teachers by bringing them within closed circuits of corrective feedback in order to maintain stability and equilibrium (Gough, 1999). However, equilibrium can have the opposite effect. Change should be systemic. I feel that the manner in which teachers can individually create and promote change positively should be encouraged.

The struggle between teacher agency and curriculum reform in South Africa

Drawing on the above understandings, I feel that my research into teacher agency offers an important focus for South Africa as curriculum reform appears to be a consistent concept in this country (Ramawter, 2011; Naidoo, 2012). Understanding the influence of this change is paramount for teachers.

There is much research conducted regarding prescribed curriculums and their influence on teacher agency, however, my study seeks to make it more contextual and specific. Since the inception of democracy in South Africa in 1994, emphasis has been on the redress of the inequalities of the past. The South African government manipulated a programme of restructuring the education system on principles of equity, human rights, democracy and sustainable development (Ramdass, 2009). With this, many changes occurred, especially with regard to curriculum. With CAPS being the most recently proposed and implemented curriculum, after 20 years of democracy, I wish to understand its practicality or impracticality and influence on teachers, as teachers are indeed the ones who have to implement all curriculums on behalf of their respective education departments.

As mentioned above, a one-size-fits-all curriculum is counter to the idea of teacher professionalism. The CAPS curriculum is, however, viewed as not being sympathetic to contextual variations, largely because of its prescriptive nature. This prescriptive nature of CAPS and the notion of teacher professionalism seem conflictual and it is within this conflictual terrain that I seek to explore through this dissertation. Moreover, it has been expressed that "research is being undermined by theoretical positions that cannot explain the problems of policy reform within the third world" (Jansen, 2002, p. 246) and therefore, I

recognise the need for such research to occur in South Africa, ultimately providing my study with an affirming purpose.

Jansen and Blank (2014) confirm that the largest percentage of the national budget in South Africa is spent on education. Education is clearly something that government prioritises. However, I feel that not understanding the relationship between teachers and curriculum is a hindrance to a country's educational success. Harrop-Allin and Kros (2014) blatantly states that "CAPS intends to supply a curriculum that can be followed by even poorly educated teachers" (p. 71). Firstly, there should not be poorly educated teachers in the field of educating the nation; the idea that this is accepted by government automatically removes professionalism from this chosen career path. Secondly, with the mind-set of curriculum developers in South Africa, being that there may be teachers who are incompetent, agency is automatically null and void for all South African teachers as curriculum developers do not feel that it is an option for teachers to make use of their own agency and therefore limit the opportunity to do so. CAPS has come in to support and guide teachers but it has not considered or specified what teachers it caters for. Who is it actually designed for? Is it labelling all teachers as the same? CAPS is not contextual.

As a result, CAPS is characterised by a rigid curriculum structure that specifies what needs to be taught, when in the year it should be taught and how it should be taught (Department of Basic Education, 2011). I feel that this rigid structure seems to have marginalised teachers to the extreme as they have very little input as to how and what they teach in their classroom, removing autonomy and a sense of agency. I consider that teachers' autonomy cannot be removed if teachers are the faces of reform. Eisner (2000) concurs and firmly believes that teachers are pivotal to the improvement and amendment of schooling and they therefore need to have a considerable role to play in influencing the direction, content and form of the changes being designed. Teachers are stakeholders (Eisner, 2000). With this, teachers need to be regarded as curriculum makers (Craig, 2010) in the process as policy change affects teacher identity (Jansen, 2001) which in turn, I feel, affects teacher agency.

Through personal experience and through studies conducted by researchers in the field of teacher agency, it is evident that curriculum reform can be a fundamental manipulating factor limiting the concept of teacher agency if curriculum policy is too prescriptive (Blignaut, 2007; Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; Campbell, 2012; Priestly et al., 2012; Giroux, 2010;

Bullough, 2011; Craig, 2010; Msibi & Mchunu, 2013; Vaughn, 2013). Complexity does not aid in thorough implementation and understanding (Jansen & Blank, 2014).

Although not many solutions are provided and only explanations are offered for this concern, I wish for my study to bring forth not only the reasoning behind the phenomenon but to contribute to possible suggestions on how one might counteract the issue. Samuel (2008) validates this by stating that instead of criticising teachers who are caught in the above mentioned policy implementation predicament, researchers need to recognise the need to understand the lives of teachers in order for teachers to understand their own profession and develop accordingly. Therefore, much more research is to be conducted in order to understand the lives of teachers who wish to or who are currently exercising their agency within a prescriptive curriculum.

In summary

Through reviewing literature, the relationship is evident between teacher agency and prescribed curriculums. It is challenging exercising agency when change is not systemic and when a curriculum does not provide the freedom to teach effectively in diverse environments. Teachers have to regain their professionalism and be agents by adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of their learners. When teachers do find their agency, by bending the rules prescribed by the curriculum policies, it is within this buried context that agency is most seen to flourish (Campbell, 2012).

My understanding of being an effective teacher is therefore through the state of being an agent in education; governing one's practices to not only extend oneself, but also those in one's surroundings, namely one's learners. However, with a prescriptive curriculum policy aiming to be 'teacher proof' greatly hinders teacher agency as teacher professionalism is apparently restricted. It should be accepted that without teachers, curriculum implementation will not happen and therefore teachers need to be respected in the process. Teachers are resources.

Although once stated by the 31st president of the United States of America, Herbert Hoover, that "children are our most valuable natural resource" (1932)[1], it should be remembered that teachers and their agency are in fact the resource that make children valuable for the future.

[1]Herbert Hoover, address at Des Moines, Iowa, October 4, 1932 retrieved from http://www.quoteland.com/author/Herbert-Hoover-Quotes/1500/

SECTION B: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This study employs two frameworks to analyse data as the focus is on teacher agency and curriculum. The theoretical frameworks that were used are those of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Samuel's (1998) models of teacher agency. The conceptual framework that was utilized is that of Apple's (1993) notion on curriculum. The structure of this section will unveil the theory before the concept to allow for clear consolidation of teacher agency and curriculum.

Theoretical frameworks

The purpose for applying two frameworks to this study is to allow for one to have two lenses focused on this study in order to provide different perspectives and definite clarification on teacher agency as a whole. Both frameworks were derived by the relative authors within the same year, however Emirbayer and Mische (1998) conducted their study in America and Samuel (1998) in South Africa; both unaware of each other's indispensable studies. This is relative to my study as I wish to bridge the gap between international and national research within the 21st century with regard to teacher agency and curriculum. It is resourceful to be aware of and build a bridge with existing knowledge to demonstrate South Africa's perspectives in relation to that of international perspectives.

 The first theoretical framework for teacher agency would be that of Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) Chordial Triad. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) conceptualised agency as being a temporally embedded process of social engagement informed by the past, oriented toward the future and engaged with the present. Temporal is a term that is either of or relating to time as one can see when referring to phrases such as past, present and future. These authors base their theory on the premise that influences from one's past, present situations and future possibilities influence the way one teaches. These constructs are explained in detail in the next section. These authors felt that many theorists failed to differentiate agency as a systematic category in its own right and therefore, agency's true complexity could not be attained. Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) dimensions allow for researchers to not lose sight of the different ways in which agency shapes social action. This is especially relatable to education, as education is all about creating social change, social justice and/or any other social issue for that matter.

Coincidentally, with the same thought pattern, Samuel (1998) developed a model which he labelled the Force Field Model of Teacher Development. This model simply outlines and clarifies the conflicting and competing forces that threaten teachers' identity and agency. This model aims to create an understanding of the complexity of the forces that "push and pull teachers' roles and identities in different directions" (Samuel, 2008, p. 11). Although this model does not explicitly state that it is a temporally embed process, there are clear associations with the past, present and future within in each force.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) refer to their theory as the Chordial Triad. Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2012) provide their perspective on this theory stating that agency should be understood as a relationship of influences from the past, future and present therefore, bringing forth the three dimensions; the *iterational* (past), *projective* (future) and *practical evaluative* (present) dimensions. All three play a role in teacher agency but the degree to which they contribute varies. Additionally, all three are also influenced by each other and never act alone. Similarly, Samuel's (1998) Force Field Model of Teacher Development equates to the above mentioned dimensions in that the forces must not be viewed as one single power or force. They are separate forces that influence each other which in turn influence teachers' identity and agency. Samuel's model holds four forces. They are the forces of one's biography, the forces of one's context, the forces of one's institutional setting and the forces of programmatic impact. Throughout the remainder of this chapter it will become clear that in the same way that Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) theory's dimensions vary in the degree in which they influence teacher agency through past, future and present influences, the same goes for Samuel's (1998) forces. The remainder of this section will seek to marry the two theories while clarifying how agency is shaped throughout a teacher's life looking at past, present and future influences.

The past

Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) first dimension is the *iterational* dimension. It builds on what has happened in the past (this can refer to achievements, understandings and/or patterns of action). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) state that this dimension helps to support and nourish identities, interactions and institutions over time. This is where life and professional histories play an integral part in what we are and what we do. Correspondingly, Samuel's (1998) force of *biography* refers to how one's history of teaching and learning provides rich experience and a great foundation for one's identity and ensued agency. In life, when challenges seem

too tough to deal with, Samuel (2008) argues that it is a natural state of mind to find refuge in one's background, biography, where people are often reminded of who they are and where they come from. This realization often motivates and inspires. The past is therefore a powerful dimension and/or force that can be said to influence teachers and their agency in the classroom. What we have experienced, shapes what we do today, especially as teachers.

The future

Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) *projective* dimension is driven by or linked to the purpose of bringing about a future that differs from the present or the past. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) state that this is where conventional structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to the teachers' hopes, fears and desires for the future. Future possibilities need to be constructed through reflection. Future possibilities need to be considered in order for change to occur. Teachers are influenced by the future as they have to prepare for it. When referring to curriculum, lessons and teaching cannot take place, objectives cannot be achieved and positive impacts cannot occur if teachers do not formulate plans to do so. The future needs to be considered for such plans to take place. This brings forth Samuel's (1998) *programmatic* force. He states that "the programmatic force is a more explicit charge which declares the sequence, content and direction that the teaching/learning practices will follow" (p.13). This force fortifies the quality of teaching and learning as it is sustained by being equipped for the future.

The present

Everything in life can only be acted out in the present, therefore leading us to Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) last dimension called *practical evaluative*. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) state that this dimension refers to practical and regulated decisions made in response to daily demands, challenges and uncertainties of constant changing circumstances. This dimension refers to teachers having to respond to demands and possibilities of the present. Adaption, adoption and adjustments are constant requirements of teachers as they are placed in an ever changing environment where there are classrooms filled with children with diverse needs, curriculum transformation demands and a lack of teaching resources. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) further substantiate that practical evaluation is essential when understanding teachers as agents as newly imagined projects, that are labelled ideal, have to be "brought down to earth within real world circumstances" (p.994) and implemented effectively; teachers need to

practically evaluate the present to do so. "A rule doesn't [just] apply itself; it has to be applied" (Taylor, 1993, p. 57).

Samuel (1998) provides two forces to follow this notion; *contextual* forces and *institutional* forces. Contextual forces refer to the context/environment a teacher finds themselves in. Environments differ daily and may be influenced by many factors such as political or cultural dynamics. A teacher's role within an environment is dependent on the context one finds themselves in. Here it is clear to see how the present shapes teacher agency. Furthermore, institutional forces may be seen as a direct influence on contextual forces as it is the lived biography of institutional settings that teachers find themselves in. Institutional forces may be simply referred to aspects such as the ethos of an institution. Additionally, "it includes the inspiration that may be offered by charismatic leaders, with vision and direction, with theoretical and passionate insight towards realizing quality education" (Samuel, 2008, p. 13). It can be argued that without contextual and institutional forces, a teacher may not be able to find themselves within the practical evaluative dimension within Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) Chordial Triad. One's context and environment's ethos influences decisions on a daily basis, decisions that are left to the agency of a teacher.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Samuel (1998) emphasise the importance of context (which is always social) and structure (the element of time). The combination of context and time results in researchers thinking about teacher agency as not just referring to the individual but also about the transformation of context-for-action over time.

This can be linked to my study, as I seek to understand teacher agency and how it is restricted by a prescriptive curriculum. Teacher agency is influenced by the past as seen within the *iterational* dimension and the forces of biography; the future as seen within the projective dimension and programmatic forces; and the present as seen within the practical evaluative dimension, contextual and institutional forces.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for a curriculum, chosen for this study, would be that of Apple's (1993) coalition of neo-conservatism and neoliberalism influencing national curriculum as we know it today.

It must be known that education is profoundly connected to the politics of culture (Apple, 1993). The curriculum is never merely an impartial assemblage of knowledge, somehow

appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of someone's vision of legitimate knowledge (Apple, 1993). Although influenced by American history, I feel that Apple's conceptual framework of curriculum is relevant to understanding national curriculum in other continental contexts.

Neo-conservatism is guided by the vision of a strong state. Neo-conservatism aims at providing the educational conditions believed necessary for increasing international competitiveness, profit and discipline (Apple, 1993). The influence of this vision can be seen in a number of educational policies and proposals, however the one that is recognisable is seen through the movement at national level to raise standards and to declare both teacher and student competencies via national testing; locally known as ANA.

Neo-conservatism deposits responsibility for crisis in the economy on the schools. One of its key successes has been to transfer the blame of unemployment and underemployment, for the loss of economic competitiveness and for the supposed breakdown of traditional values and standards in the family and education *from* economic, cultural and social policies and the outcomes of influential groups *to* the school and other public agencies. This has influenced the social acceptance of anything public as being the centre of all evil and anything private being the centre of all that is good (Apple, 1993).

In contrast, neoliberalism is guided by the vision of a weak state; a state pretending to be weak by offering little critique. Neoliberalism is supported by a society that lets the 'invisible hand' of the free market steer all aspects of social interaction and is seen as both proficient and autonomous (Apple, 1993). This is where governments do not intervene, allowing society to function, reaching their point of equilibrium independent to the state.

Due to the above two concepts being unable to work harmoniously, a coalition was developed retaining aspects from both concepts forming what is currently known as a national curriculum. Apple (1993) writes that this coalition has the "capacity to connect the emphasis on traditional knowledge and values, authority, standards and national identity of the neoconservatives with the emphasis on the extension of market-driven principles into all areas of our society advocated by neoliberals" (p. 230). Thus, a national curriculum is formed; obsessed with scrupulous national standards and a system of testing that is performance driven. A national curriculum may be viewed as a tool for accountability, to help countries establish benchmarks to evaluate schools. With all schools teaching the same content across a nation, norms and standards are more easily recognised when compared.

Consequently, while advocates of a national curriculum may see it as a means to create "social cohesion" (Apple, 1993, p. 231) and to give all schools the capability to improve by being able to measure themselves against objective criteria, the effect will be the opposite, I feel, due to it prescriptiveness. This brings forth my concern.

In closing

Although the literature review provides some understanding into the implementation of a prescribed curriculum and its theoretical influence on teacher agency, no solutions and suggestions are offered. It is to be simply accepted that teachers have to teach the set curriculum in order to be successful in the eyes of the educational departments; I oppose this stance. Additionally, although Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Samuel (1998) and Apple (1993) provide theoretical and conceptual frameworks for understanding teacher agency in curriculum, there is a contextual gap. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Samuel's (1998) models provide great insight as to what influences agency and how teachers teach, yet it does not refer to manners in which teacher agency is utilized when restricted by a curriculum. In addition, Apple (1993) offers support on understanding the basics of curriculum through state theory; however, theory relating to the context of implementing a national curriculum is limited, especially in relation to South Africa. I feel that my study may attempt at bridging this gap, bringing forth new ideas, concepts and theories around the phenomenon of how teachers teach within a prescriptive school curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

"Research differs from everyday observation because in research observation is planned and systematic" (Durrheim, 2002, p. 29). With this, I feel that in order to successfully respond to a research question through the generation of data, I need to have a plan in order to ensure that my collection and analysis of data is systematic and not erratic.

Methodology selected for a study must be appropriate and relevant to responding to the research question. This study seeks to understand how teachers teach within the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) framework, to further understand the teacher agency teachers deploy in their teaching within the CAPS framework as well as provide explanations for the agency teachers' use within the CAPS framework.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will unravel and justify the epistemology, approach, methodology, participants, data generation and analysis avenues I intended on using during this study. I further address issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues as well as the predetermined methodological constraints of the study.

Epistemology

With the focus being on how teachers make sense of their teaching practices within a restrictive curriculum, as noted in the CAPS curriculum, the most appropriate epistemological stance to take in this study would be an interpretive epistemology. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) define the interpretive epistemology to be subjective as data is influenced by personal accounts of individuals. The interpretative paradigm seeks to understand behaviour and humanistic relationships internally. There is in depth research that occurs within this paradigm as the researcher wishes to fully understand concepts through thorough interaction with participants as they wish to grasp the meaning which informs human behaviour (Taylor & Medina, 2013).

The interpretivist epistemology is inter-subjective knowledge construction, meaning that knowledge, meanings and understanding are co-constructed within contexts. In this study, the knowledge, meanings and understandings of the CAPS curriculum are deeply located within the subjective experiences of the teachers as they make sense of the curriculum and themselves in the context of their school situation. Hence, the interpretivist paradigm was

deemed the most appropriate epistemological stance for this study. Taylor and Medina (2013) further reinforces my epistemological stance by expressing how this paradigm facilitates researchers to construct prolific understandings of the experiences of teachers and their relationship with their contextual surroundings.

Combined with the descriptive and explanatory research design, this paradigmatic stance allowed me, as the researcher, to interact with participants on a level where I generated an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through my deep engagement with my participants. The interpretive paradigm emphasizes the concern for the individual (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011); and this study emphasizes concern for teachers and their agency. With this being my focus, Guba and Lincoln (1994), as cited in Christiansen (2010, p. 23), express that "results are not 'out there' waiting to be found or discovered, but they are created through interpretation of data". Hence my engagement with the participants allowed me to draw findings created through the interpretation of the data, which constituted the next level of interpretation, located within the subjective interplay between the data and myself, firmly locating this study, therefore, within an interpretivist epistemology.

Research approach

Research either requires qualitative data, quantitative data or both forms of data collection. In this study, I intended doing a qualitative study through narrative and thematic analysis. Bertram (2010) states that qualitative data are textual, verbal or graphic data through which one can retrieve in-depth descriptions on the related topic under investigation. This was my intention. I aspired to understand the way teachers teach along with their adaptation to CAPS and therefore, a qualitative study provides that platform for me to do so effectively. In this study I worked with textual and verbal data, produced through interviews with participants, as I explored how teachers adapt their teaching within the CAPS curriculum. Textual and verbal data provided my study with a holistic understanding of teacher agency and how it was utilized, if at all, within a prescriptive curriculum.

Methodology

Understanding teaching practices are largely possible within a context of application. Hence, context would be an important construct in this research. Three potential research methodologies would have been appropriate to guide this study. They include case studies, ethnographic and narrative methodologies, all of which are context related. Case studies place

focus on portraying, analysing and interpreting the uniqueness of authentic individuals and circumstances through attainable accounts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Ethnographic and narrative methodologies lie with describing, understanding and explaining a specific situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In addition, I as a practicing teacher am interested in exploring my agency within the CAPS curriculum framework. Consequently, the most appropriate methodology would be a multiple case study methodology, one of which would be that of my own. Teachers would, therefore, be the case studies, while the site of their teaching would be in a single school, thereby keeping the contextual variations to a minimum.

A multiple case study is the observation of two or more cases reflecting the same phenomenon in order to improve validity and reliability (Anisimova & Thomson, 2012). In this stance, the first case is a Grade 6 mathematics teacher and the second a Grade 4 mathematics teacher (self-study). Their cases differ with regard to the grade they are influenced by to teach, however their cases are rooted by the same phenomenon of having to exercise their agency within the CAPS curriculum framework. Anisimova & Thomson (2012) further propose that a multiple case study research method can contribute to research that has implications for both theory and practice. Through the understanding of my practice as a teacher within the CAPS framework and that of an experienced teacher, the phenomenon of teacher agency, through exploring teachers' adaptive qualities, would be elevated as the central phenomenon of this study. Relying on the principles and guidelines of self-study, the research on myself would form one of the case studies envisaged in this study.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) validate my assertion of utilizing the case study method. Case studies expose, examines and translate the "uniqueness of real individuals and situations through accessible accounts" (p. 129). It captures the complexity and "situatedness of behaviour" (p. 129). Case studies further contributes to action and intervention which is useful to my topic as it gives insight into teachers' agency within a prescriptive curriculum, which not only aids researchers in understanding the lives of teachers but to assist teachers to understand their own lives and develop accordingly (Samuel, 2008). Multiple case studies therefore present and represent reality, facilitating my study to exhibit and exemplify reality in the lives of teachers in contemporary South Africa.

In addition to this study providing the platform for researchers to understand the lives of teachers, it will also aid teachers to understand their own; one of the teachers being myself. I

shall be conducting a self-study as one of the case studies. Leaning on Adams-Legge's (2006) perspective, I too believe that despite any frustrations one might have in trying to understand and change an education system, the one thing you know you can try to improve and change is yourself. Through self-study, as a teacher, you become more aware of your actions and further question those actions in a venture of seeking understanding. "Self-study research allows you to openly ask questions about your teaching practice… It allows you to plan, enact, and assess your efforts and examine the impact of your efforts" (Adams-Legge, 2006, p.5) on not only your students' lives but the impact you have on the teaching community as a whole. Lassonde, Galman & Kosnick (2009) validates this by stating that self-study focuses on the improvement on both the personal and professional lives of teachers. However, in spite of a self-study appearing independent in nature, it entails that you work with someone else; a critical friend (Adams-Legge, 2006; Smith, (2006); Lassonde, Galman & Kosnick, 2009). "As teachers raise their own questions generated from their practice, critical friends serve to mediate, provoke, and support new understandings" (Adams-Legge, 2006, p.5). Self-study requires collaboration in order for beneficial critique and adequate support to be provided. The purpose for self-study is to question your belief system; a critical friend offers that platform.

In total, in making use of self-study within my multi-case study allows for, not only aiding, but also in understanding educational reform. Adams-Legge (2006) argues for the very reason that self-study is useful:

> Self-study research contributes to personal knowledge and to the knowledge base of teaching and education. Self-study research is for your personal and professional development. But self-study also provides the opportunity for you to contribute to the knowledge base of teaching. Teachers are contributors of knowledge. They are doers and knowers about the world of teaching who make decisions every minute of their teaching day. Teachers constantly encounter and resolve dilemmas… (p.14)

The multi-case study method utilized in this study will hopefully provide teachers and researchers a new perspective on professional accountability, accountability that is inherently exposed through teacher agency.

However, there are strengths and weaknesses that accompany this research method. Nisbet and Watt (1984) state that, unless readers apply the results to their circumstances, the results of this method may not be generalized. However, due to the fact that the results are written in non-academic language, it is immediately intelligible making it more easily understood by a wider audience. This is suitable to my study as I wish for all teachers to be able to understand the theory behind agency and how it can be used and possibly how it is restricted by a prescribed curriculum. It can furthermore be relatable to international contexts as prescribed curriculums are not subject to South Africa only.

Participants

The selection of the participants was through a purposeful sampling process. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) indicate that this style of sampling refers to when the researcher hand picks the cases to be included based on their individual judgment on who would possess the particular characteristics being sought. My participants have been chosen for a particular purpose (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The purpose being that of exploring the state of restrictiveness that teachers teaching within the CAPS framework are experiencing.   Hence, part of the selection process is to select participants who are teaching within the CAPS curriculum and have experienced a state of restrictiveness in their teaching practices.

Teddlie and Yu (2007) validate purposive sampling by expressing how it allows for representativeness to be achieved, comparisons to be made and for unique issues to be focused on. In this study, the focus was on understanding teachers' experiences of teaching within a restrictive curriculum and to explore how they deployed their teacher agency during their educational practices. The representativeness and comparative analysis was an important element in the selection process as I need to include participants who had experienced other forms of school curriculums with a view to comparing their experience of the old and the new to provide a relative account of their teaching practices. The individualized issues and unique teaching practices of teachers provided the vantage points in analysing the phenomenon to illuminate and inform future teaching practices located within a restrictive curriculum.

Due to the scope of this study, two primary participants were purposively selected, one novice teacher (under 5 years teaching experience) and one experienced teachers (more than 5 years teaching experience) from a single school. The novice teacher was myself and formed the self-study component of the multi-case study. As indicated, a critical friend within a self-

study design is crucial to challenge my perspectives and to illicit the data within the context of data fidelity, ethics and trustworthiness (further elaborated on in section 3). Hence, an experienced teacher from the selected school was recruited as the critical friend. Adams-Legge (2006) states that as the teacher-researcher embark on their self-study, questions will be generated from their practice, however, "critical friends serve to mediate, provoke, and support new understandings" (p. 5). I therefore, made use of a critical friend, who holds a wealth of knowledge regarding intermediate phase content knowledge and its relation to CAPS. My critical friend not only conducted interviews with me, but also collaborated, bringing forth our perspectives and reframing our understanding on the phenomenon at hand.

I had chosen novice and experienced teachers as I was also exploring adaptive qualities as influenced by experience on a new curriculum on the one hand and new exposure not influenced by experience on the other. The novice teacher sets the Mathematics for her grade yet teaches all subjects, the critical friend sets English and Social Sciences as well as oversees Social Sciences content set across all grades and the second experienced teacher set and teaches Mathematics across her grade. All three participants are employed within the intermediate phase at a primary school on the Bluff (KZN). Table 1 summarises the profiles of the participants.

TABLE 1: PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME OF PARTICPANT	GENDER	PURPOSE IN STUDY	AGE	YEARS OF TEACHING	POST LEVEL	ADDITIONAL TITLES	PHASE
Grade 4 Teacher		Novice perspective/Self Study	Between 20&30	4	Level 1 Educator	Grade Coordinator	
Grade 6 Teacher	Female	**Critical friend**	Between 30 & 40	23	Level 1 Educator	Grade Coordinator	Intermediate
Grade 6 Teacher		Experienced perspective	Between 50 & 60	35	Level 1 Educator		

The research was conducted at one primary school in Durban (KZN) on the Bluff. It is where I am currently employed and therefore, this site of research has been chosen purely for convenience. Access to the participants and research site has been the main driver for selection and is practical.

Data generation

In order to generate the empirical data for the study I made use of document analysis and semi structured interviews.

In addition to interviews, Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the practicality of data collection from non-human resources; documents. Documents and records have the appeal of always being readily available as well as factual. In an opposing viewpoint, documents may be misrepresented or misinterpreted, may be selective, lack objectivity or they may simply be deceptive (Finnegan, 1996). However, this brings forth my validity for utilizing both document analysis and semi structured interviews. Documents simply represent data; it may not speak for itself. Therefore, following up with interviews allows participants to justify or declare what their documents represent.

Furthermore, Yin (2009) substantiates that due to case studies' diverse nature of data collection, many case studies rely on a mixed methods approach. Referring to documents is just a single manner in which one can provide synchronized legitimacy within a case. It demands the ability of the researcher to "handle and synthesize many kinds of data simultaneously" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, pp. 299-300). This ultimately promotes the generation of a case study archive of evidence that consists of two main kinds of collection; first being the actual data that is recorded and organized through document analysis and second being the researcher's continuous analysis or narrative on the facts (Yin, 2009).

I intended to make use of the CAPS policy document for mathematics, both participants' daily forecasts, term planning schedule and journals for data analysis. The CAPS policy document for mathematics stipulates exactly what is to be taught, how long it is to be taught for and when in the year it is to be taught. The daily forecasts and term planning schedules were to be used to indicate whether the participants are adhering to the CAPS document or adapting the CAPS policy to suit the context of their classroom/needs of their learners. What was changed, how it was changed and why it was changed was intended to come to light,

shedding insight to the agency deployed. However, the challenge that came forth was the fact that my participant did not keep forecasts, planning schedules and/or journals. She simply planned from the CAPS policy document, ensuring she covered the content, however, in her own manner. I therefore produced a forecast/termly schedule for the participant to complete in order for the data to still be generated. Additionally, I completed the same generated forecast/schedule to ensure validity. I therefore made use of the CAPS policy document for mathematics and the generated forecasts/schedules only. This produced the data I felt necessary for this study.

The reason for using forecasts/schedules was to compare whether there were any differences or similarities between what the participants taught and what the CAPS policy for mathematics prescribes. This is vital in understanding if agency took place. Where changes were evident, participants were questioned. During my self-study, and with the help of my critical friend, I answered similar questions to that of my participant. This provided the data, from the document analysis process, a voice. The voice being the semi-structured interviews. The interviews provided the platform for the participants to provide reasoning for their actions.

Originally, it was planned that there would be numerous 30 minute interviews per participant as one does not know how long it will take to ensure all data needed is collected. However, both participants fell ill during the data presentation process; where both were hospitalized for surgery and exempted from returning to school for a term. This contested with the manner in which the data for this study had to be generated however, I overcame this challenge by doing the following:

1. I communicated with my critical friend by means of electronic mail and Facebook Messenger (social networking).
2. I communicated with my participant through her partner, who conveniently works at the same participating school, through written communication.
3. I formulated a written interview, through which my participant was able to respond to, in the comfort of her own home. This allowed for minimal misinterpretation to occur as it did not require for me to transcribe any audio conducted interviews. As the participant responded, I would read through the responses and question further.

Through research it became evident that the challenge was a blessing in disguise as the alternative interview method proved more convincing than the original method for this study

with regard to validity. Field and Morse (1989) and Arksey and Knight (1998) present several approaches to avoid transgressions that may occur during interviews. Many similarly include avoiding making the interviewee uncomfortable and leading them into providing answers that you aspire to produce. By not being present during the interview process, no such biasness could occur. Additionally, although the studies' focus were between teacher and learner dialogue, Grugeon and Hubbard (2006) and Adey (2004) both state that providing more time to answer questions produces more efficient answers. Allowing participants to answer questions in the comfort of their own home, without the stress of having to answer verbally to the proposed questions, they were able to read questions, think about it and respond in the most competent manner possible. They could retract statements, further validate statements and question me for clarification prior to submitting their answers for this study. I found this useful and advantageous as I received answers to my research questions that were both relevant and to the point.

Credibility and trustworthiness

Often the terms validity and reliability are used during research, however within a qualitative study, one must move away from these terms (Maxwell, 1992, Guba and Lincoln, 1989 and Mishler, 1990) and lean towards utilising terms such as authenticity, credibility and dependability. Within a qualitative study, "we as researchers are a part of the world that we are researching… hence other people's perspectives are equally as valid as our own" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, pp. 180-181). Therefore, the qualitative study's validity is not based on the data or methods, instead it is based on the meaning that participants provide to data and the interpretations drawn from the data generated (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). This therefore requires the researcher to be as honest as possible to the reporting of the data that was produced (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995).

In addition, trustworthiness is the concept used by Guba and Lincoln (1994) for qualitative data, and due to the framework of this study being interpretive, my study needs to be as reliable as possible. Guba and Lincoln (1994) further express that in this paradigm, the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability needs to be used. I ensured that the information obtained was transferable and dependable and although I am not generalising, I intended for the content found in my study to be relatable to other schooling contexts and therefore useful to other researchers in the field.

In this study, I have ensured credibility and trustworthiness by making use of a multiple methods approach during my data generation stage, using both document analysis and interviews. This approach ensures rich data to be gathered as it is safeguarded by triangulation; triangulation being the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of any feature of human behaviour (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Furthermore, during the data analysis and discussion chapter of this study, I have honestly reported on the data generated, ensuring its fidelity. Moreover, the credibility of my study is reinforced due to my taking into account the comments of my critical friend during the data analysis and discussion chapter (Mlambo, 2012).

Purposive sampling additionally strengthens my case as I sought to find knowledgeable participants whom were able to impart in-depth understanding on the phenomenon. In addition, authenticity is said to be achieved through fairness which is the balanced representation of multiple realities. I feel that this is achieved through the realities of novice and experienced teachers being represented in my study. More so, the data I collect will not be altered in any manner. Lastly, I have accounted for any bias and possible circumstances that may have affected the data in any way under limitations of the study.

I feel that my research design, research method, paradigm, sampling, data collection tool and data analysis strategy ensures trustworthiness as I used more than one voice to understand teacher agency and the implications this phenomenon faces when restricted by a prescribed curriculum. Triangulation was monitored by making use of a multiple case study approach as well as by utilizing more than one method of data generation. During the process, I deliberately reflected the reality and lived experiences of my participants, in the most authentic way possible, in order to answer the key questions of this study.

Ethical issues

Before I initiated this study, I sought permission from the Department of Education to conduct my research. Additionally, I ensured I received permission from all participants, including the participating school, before commencing the data generation process. Both my participant and critical friend received consent letters informing them of the study outlining their voluntary participation and what their participation would entail. Furthermore, it was made clear that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason they deem fit. Additionally, I declared that their identities would be concealed by my making use

of pseudonyms (Participant A and Critical Friend). Declarations were then signed containing participants' signatures, my signature as well as an impartial witness' signature. Supplementing the above, at the end of each interview, the participant signed declaring her acknowledgement that the answers are that of her own and that she willingly accepted to participate in the study.

Researcher bias

Largely due to the fact that this study includes a self-study during the research process, I had to attempt to minimize research bias best I could. A characteristic of self-study is its transparency (Adams-Legge, 2006). Not only are self-study researchers explicit and honest in their findings, but they are additionally open to critique, allowing critical friends to enhance the process by asking probing questions and providing alternative perspectives. I adopted a critical friend with experience to assist the research process and to ensure that my views and assumptions are not only forced into the findings of this study but to additionally substantiate or reject notions that arise. Additionally, I felt that the use of including a case study in the research process would prove fruitful to ensure more than my own perspective would be evident. Throughout the data analysis and discussion chapter, my self-study findings are openly declared along with any opposing viewpoints. The point of this study was not solely to discover the answers to the research questions, but it was a journey of self-discovery too, therefore honesty was at the forefront of all discussions that followed.

Limitations and challenges of the study

Data generation challenges

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, obstacles arose during the data production phase of this research. Both my critical friend and participant were hospitalized and absent from school for a term each in order to recover. This put my study on hold while I planned an alternative manner in which I could still produce data. I communicated with my critical friend by means of electronic mail and Facebook Messenger (social networking). I communicated with my participant through her partner, who conveniently works at the same participating school, via written communication. Instead of 30 minute verbal interviews, I formulated a written interview, through which my participant was able to respond to, in the comfort of her own home. This process delayed the data collection plan as both participants were recovering and therefore participated in the process when they felt well enough to contribute. This took

longer than anticipated and put me under pressure to not only analyse their responses but to create the discussion necessary to this study.

Additionally, my participant did not have any record of her planning or schedules. Fortunately, I discovered this prior to her departure for surgery and I therefore produced a forecast/termly schedule for the participant to complete in order for the data to be generated. Additionally, I completed the same generated forecast/schedule to ensure validity. I therefore only made use of the CAPS policy document for mathematics and the generated forecasts/schedules instead.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Having presented, in the previous chapter, the processes followed in producing the data, I now present, in this chapter, the analysis of the data. This chapter seeks to present the findings of the data generated from two teachers in one school in the Bluff area of Durban.

While three participants took part in this study, two were the main source of information and the third, being a critical friend to the self-study aspect of the study. Having a self-study component to this study, I was the novice teacher and my views and experiences of teaching within the CAPS curriculum was channelled through a critical friend. The critical friend was an experienced teacher teaching in the same school. The second teacher was an experienced teacher teaching in the selected school. The findings are similar yet robust in answering the key questions of this study. While the study is situated within the nexus between the CAPS curriculum and teacher agency, questioning the battle between the current curriculum and teachers in South Africa provides deeper understanding on teacher agency. The data generated serves to substantiate what has been stated in the literature review chapter. With the goal to deeply understand teacher agency, we need to familiarise ourselves with the frustrations teachers hold with regard to the current curriculum, CAPS, in order to understand the overall struggle that exists between teachers' agency and that of a prescribed, rigid curriculum. Hence, this chapter privileges the teachers' frustration about their experience of the CAPS curriculum with a view to understanding how they feel about their professional status as a teacher with respect to teacher agency.

Before I divulge the findings of this study, it is imperative to recognise the participants and participating school as they play an integral part in the formation of the generated data.

Description of the case study participants

In this section, I present a detailed description of the participants that formed the multi-case study. This description is useful to make sense of the relational analysis between the participants and their biographies and to contextually understand their views on the CAPS curriculum as experienced.

Participant A:

The participant chosen for the case study is one of experience. She is a white, female with 35 years' experience and is currently a Grade 6 Mathematics teacher. She has taught in most grades, however mostly in Grade 6 and 7. Within the 35 year teaching period, she has taught in an independent school in Swaziland for 2 years. She has been exposed to teaching all subjects, however, for the past 10 years her focus has been on mathematics. Participant A has been exposed to 7 curriculums during her years of teaching, CAPS being one of them. Throughout her career, she has studied further; her most influential aspect having majored in curriculum studies. She has additionally specialised in the teaching of mathematics as she has further achieved a distinction in the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) Mathematics. She understands the relevance of mathematics and enjoys motivating her learners so that they develop a love for her subject.

Participant B: (self-study)

I am a white, female novice teacher with this year being my fourth year in the field. I have taught at two public schools in Durban. I have only taught Grade 4 full time, however I have experience through locum work and teaching practice where I have taught from Grade 4 up to Grade 7. This year I was promoted to head of grade, both the youngest and one with the least experience at my school. At my current school I am in control of preparing the mathematics for the grade, however I teach English, Afrikaans, mathematics, natural sciences/technology, history, geography and life skills. My first year of teaching required me to prepare English, technology and art as well as teach it across the grade. I am currently doing my Masters in Education where I am majoring in Teacher Development and Curriculum Studies. I have a Bachelor of Education Honours Degree where I majored in Educational Leadership and Management. I have been exposed to two curriculums, CAPS being one of them. I firmly believe that teaching is a passion and not simply a job to get by. Teaching is not just a career to me, but a calling to not only have a positive influence on a child's education and academics but also to be a role model, contributing positively toward overall life skills and character development. In order to do so, I feel that teachers need to have a grip on their profession as well as understanding curriculum in order to implement it successfully and efficiently.

Critical friend:

The critical friend is a white, female teacher who currently prepares and teaches English and Social Sciences in Grade 6. She is also a grade co-ordinator. She has 23 years of experience.

For 20 of the 23 years, she taught all subjects in Grade 5. She has additionally taught isiZulu in Grade 7. She has her Bachelor Degree in Primary Education. She has been exposed to 6 curriculum changes during her teaching career, CAPS being one of them. She believes that her goal at the end of the year is to not only educate children with a curriculum but to provide them with the knowledge and principles necessary to become better people in today's society. Teachers have a unique opportunity to have a positive impact on a child's life and their future.

School:

The participating school is an ex-model C school on the Bluff. It admits learners from Grade 4 to Grade 7. There are four classes per grade, ranging from 30 − 36 learners per class. The learner demographics are mixed with the school population comprising of white, black, coloured, Indian and Asian learners. The staff is predominantly female, with one male sports co-ordinator. This year, the school employed a male Grade 6 teacher, however, he is transferring to a high school next year for personal reasons. The school prides itself in being the best primary school in its area and boasts a lengthy waiting list for learner enrolment yearly. Each classroom is equipped with either black or white boards, a smart interactive board, a laptop for the teacher and an air-conditioner in each class. The participating school offers many sports in its extra-curricular programme. It has its own swimming pool, media centre and computer room (where the ratio of computer to child is 1:1). Additional to the extensive teaching resources, there is a principal that promotes teacher agency. She has an open door policy and encourages teachers to be creative in their field by adapting policy to best suit the learners.

The remainder of this chapter serves to analyse and discuss the findings of this study. Due to the self-study nature of this research, I have included extended extracts of my engagement with the critical friend to allow for a nuanced understanding and actions in contexts as a platform for the clarification of judgements in a non-threatening manner (Barter & Renold, 1999). I feel that it enables one to define situations in one's own terms, whether it be from a personal perspective or from a reporting position.

Data analysis

This study lends itself with Apple's (1993) views, in that as a teacher, and as a citizen of a country, one cannot solely create political changes especially when it comes to education

policies. One cannot enforce review, one cannot implement a boycott, and one cannot simply work alone. As members of an educational community, we need to stop when we identify challenges within a policy and record our findings in the hope that all findings compound and are heard, leading towards a possible review. With the understanding that since democracy, all curriculums have been under review, I feel that CAPS will reach that moment. This chapter therefore serves as a platform for recording and documenting, as Apple (2007) suggests, the challenges teachers face, regarding South Africa's prescriptive curriculum, CAPS.

In this study, I intended doing a qualitative study through narrative and thematic analysis. Therefore, through self-study, the aid of a critical friend and the use of a participant in the form of a case-study, themes emerged while data was produced. Using these emerging themes, I then have worked with the data to form the subsections of this chapter, introducing the themes that contribute to answering the research questions of this study. The objectives of this study were to understand how teachers teach within the CAPS framework, to understand the teacher, agency teachers deployed in their teaching within the CAPS framework and to provide explanations for the agency teachers' use within the CAPS framework.

In order to understand the teacher agency teachers deploy, we need to understand both teacher agency and the circumstances that require teachers to utilise such agency, generating two themes: Recognising teacher agency and Quantity over quality. With the intention to understand how teachers teach and deploy their agency within a prescriptive curriculum as well as to provide explanations for the agency teacher's use, we need to understand why such precautions had to occur. CAPS needs to be understood, bringing forth the last theme: CAPS was revealed as being prescriptive. These themes will unpack what teacher agency entails and how it is applied within a prescriptive curriculum.

Recognising teacher agency

Teacher agency can best be described as being similar to professionalism. To be a professional, one must display agency; to display agency in a field, one should be considered a professional. Campbell (2012) confirms that teacher agency is the governing of one's professional practice. To govern infers that one needs to be in control. This concurs with Naidoo (2012) when she articulates agency to be the ability to analyse, interpret and adapt reform using discretionary reasoning. In order to have discretionary reasoning, again, requires one to be in control. Agency puts teachers in control of what and how they teach. Agency

therefore allows teachers to use their ideas in order to be effective in their teaching during the implementation of an official curriculum.

I found myself reminded by a quote, that I once read, that articulates that if a child does not learn the way you teach then you should teach the way they learn. Children, in my context, do not learn the way CAPS expects us to teach, I therefore adapt, adopt and neglect in order to try and teach in the way they learn. **(Self)**

Through data generation, I have found that teacher agency may be recognised in three ways: through adoption, adaption and neglect. The following conveys examples, revealed through data generation, where adoption, adaption and neglect took place. Due to the professionalism held by the participants, not only do they adopt, adapt and neglect, they are able to justify their actions. The underlying reason is for the benefit of their learners.

Adoption as an aspect of teacher agency

All participants indicated that there is a current curriculum policy, called CAPS that the Department of Education requires all teachers to abide by. CAPS is characterised by a rigid curriculum structure that specifies what needs to be taught, when in the year it should be taught and how it should be taught (Department of Basic Education, 2011). In order to adapt to a policy, one needs to fundamentally adopt that policy, therefore, CAPS is the policy that has been adopted nationwide. However, this policy has not been adopted by choice; many teachers are dissatisfied with its structure. When asked to describe CAPS with one word, Participant A said, *"impractical"*. She further voiced that *"the intended curriculum is impossible to deliver. The actual curriculum, as envisaged by the educator, is more realistic and achievable"*.

With the current curriculum policy, there is hardly any time to teach. Schools are like factories. There is a clock in and clock out time where as much work needs to be completed while on the premises; however, a factory that neglects quality control. (Self)

This concurs with Gough (1999) when he proposes an industrial mindset when it comes to prescriptive education policies. He (Gough, 1999) suggests that most education establishments are still regulated by a systematic reasoning that favors orderly and predictable processes resulting in stable output. In these systems, curriculum documents operate as homeostatic devices standardizing the diverse inputs of students and teachers by bringing them within closed circuits of corrective feedback in order to maintain stability and

equilibrium (Gough, 1999). However, equilibrium is the opposite effect of what is transpiring in reality, therefore directing some teachers towards adaption and neglect.

Adaption and neglect as aspects of teacher agency

This study generated data by focusing on the Mathematics CAPS curriculum. By reviewing tables 4.1 and 4.2, it will become clear how the mathematics policy has been primarily adapted by the two participants. The policy was adopted as all topics are covered by the participants, however policy adaption is evident when comparing allocated time and actual time spent on topics.

The tables present the statistics after analysing documents of the two participants. The tables show a comparison of what CAPS prescribes to be taught along with its time allocation and what the two participants actually teach along with their time allocations. It is clearly evident that time allocations differ. This depicts the above mentioned control that characterises professionals; teacher agents.

Table 4.1: OVERVIEW: YEAR COMPARISON TABLE – GRADE 4 (*self*)

TOPIC	CAPS ALLOCATED TIME FOR TOPICS		ACTUAL TIME SPENT ON TOPICS
Mental Mathematics (10 minutes daily)	30 hours		27.5 hours
Whole numbers: counting, ordering, comparing, representing and place value (3 digit numbers)	2 hours	19 hours	37 hours
Whole numbers: counting, ordering, comparing, representing and place value (4 digit numbers)	3 hours		
Number sentences	6 hours		
Numeric patterns	8 hours		
Whole numbers: addition and subtraction (3 digit numbers)	8 hours		10 hours
Whole numbers: addition and subtraction (4 digit numbers)	23 hours		6 hours
Whole numbers: multiplication and division (1 by 1 digit)	4 hours	9 hours	18 hours
Whole numbers: multiplication and division (2 by 1 digit)	5 hours		
Whole numbers: multiplication (2 by 2 digit)	5 hours		4 hours
Whole numbers: division (3 by 1 digit)	7 hours		6 hours
Properties of 2D shapes	9 hours	21 hours	7 hours
Symmetry	2 hours		
Viewing objects	2 hours		
Transformations	6 hours		
Position and movement	2 hours		
Properties of 3D shapes	9 hours	15 hours	10 hours
Geometric patterns	6 hours		
Time	6 hours		12 hours
Data handling	17 hours		9 hours
Capacity/volume	6 hours		7 hours
Common fractions	16 hours		17 hours
Length	7 hours		3 hours
Mass	6 hours		5 hours
Perimeter, area and volume	7 hours		5 hours
Probability	2 hours		2 hours
Revision	18 hours		10 hours
Assessments	12 hours (for all subjects)		11 (just Mathematics)
Total	**240 hours**		**176 hours**

Table 4 .2: OVERVIEW: YEAR COMPARISON TABLE – GRADE 6 (*participant*)

TOPIC	CAPS ALLOCATED TIME FOR TOPICS	ACTUAL TIME SPENT ON TOPICS
Mental Mathematics (10 minutes daily)	30 hours	12 hours
Whole numbers: counting, ordering, comparing, representing and place value (6 digit numbers)	2 hours	6 hours
Whole numbers: counting, ordering, comparing, representing and place value (9 digit numbers)	3 hours	2 hours
Number sentences	6 hours	3 hours
Numeric patterns	9 hours	5 hours
Whole numbers: addition and subtraction (5 digit numbers)	7 hours	7 hours
Whole numbers: addition and subtraction (6 digit numbers)	8 hours	3 hours
Whole numbers: multiplication (4 by 2 digit)	5 hours	3 hours
Whole numbers: multiplication (4 by 3 digit)	5 hours	2 hours
Whole numbers: division (4 by 2 digit)	8 hours	4 hours
Whole numbers: division (4 by 3 digit)	7 hours	3 hours
Properties of 2D shapes	12 hours	9 hours
Symmetry	2 hours	3 hours
Viewing objects	3 hours	3 hours
Transformations	6 hours	3 hours
Position and movement	2 hours	1 hour
Properties of 3D shapes	10 hours	8 hours
Geometric patterns	6 hours	2 hours
Time	4 hours	2 hours
Data handling	19 hours	8 hours
Capacity/volume	5 hours	2 hours
Common fractions	15 hours	18 hours
Decimal fractions	10 hours	15 hours
Length	5 hours	2 hours
Mass	5 hours	2 hours
Perimeter, area and volume	7 hours	7 hours
Probability	2 hours	1 hours
Temperature	1 hour	1 hours
Percentages	5 hours	4 hours
History	1 hours	1 hour
Revision	18 hours	18 hours
Assessments	12 hours (for all subjects)	8 hours
Total	**240 hours**	**168 hours**

The most noticeable change is that the actual hours spent on topics do not consistently correlate with the hours set by CAPS. There are numerous topics that the policy intends to be covered within an academic year, and although all topics are covered by both participants, the amount of time spent on each varies. This is largely due to the fact that the total amount of hours available to teach is far less than what CAPS allocates and prescribes. CAPS prescribes 240 hours, however, in reality all those hours are not available for teaching. This is due to numerous reasons. Firstly, the number of hours per term do not correlate with what CAPS states is available (this will become evident further on in this chapter through tables 4.3 and 4.4). Secondly, CAPS does not consider public holidays, sports days and galas, fundraisers, break up days, prize-giving's and examination weeks. This alone deducts numerous hours from the 240 hours that is supposedly available. With all the deductions, Grade 4 only has 176 hours to teach annually, and Grade 6 only has 168 hours to teach annually. 240 hours of mathematics needs to be completed during the time both teachers have available. Agency is therefore needed in order to make this possible. Adaption needs to take place with the aim for this to occur. It should be noted that adaption cannot occur without neglect. Although topics were not abandoned, time allocations were, introducing an adjustment to a policy to suit its purpose in this context.

With reference to the tables, the grade 6 teacher focusses less on mental mathematics, addition and subtraction, geometric patterns, capacity/volume, data handling, length, mass and percentages. The topic that receives the most attention is fractions. I additionally place emphasis on fractions, as well as whole numbers, number sentences, numeric patterns, multiplication and division and time. The topics that receive less focus are shapes and spaces (and all concepts related), addition and subtraction (3 and 4 digits), data handling and length. Two different teachers, in two different grades, have placed emphasis on many different topics. Through questioning, it is revealed that they do so to benefit their target market; the children in their classroom, in their specific grade.

It is evident that the grade 6 teacher participant (Participant A) instructs for half or less than half of the prescribed hours for the topics she teaches the least. She validates her actions by stating the following:

...spending time on mental maths is meaningless unless the questions are discussed, especially the tricky ones. This will then go way beyond the allocated 10 minutes per lesson. It will thus swallow a great deal of notional time in the 5 prescribed content areas. I also believe it is essential to develop a love and appreciation for the beauty and eloquence of maths. This goes beyond the prescribed content but I devote time to it. I also do extension work which is essential in order to engage logic and problem solving.

Through experience, data handling and shapes and space are easier to grasp, therefore I would rather utilise the time children are expected to spend on these topics by mastering the concepts children tend to battle in. (self)

Coincidentally both, the participant and I, place emphasis on fractions. However, we place emphasis for different reasons. Participant A implies that fractions are "*one of the most significant yet badly taught concepts.*"

This grade 6 maths teacher, holding a wealth of mathematical knowledge in her brain yet holding a text book that represents a fraction of that, shows passion through her frustration. She does not view topics that she has to teach as one entity, she recognises their use and connection in the larger scale of the mathematical world. Due to this discernment, she refuses to let her learners suffer. (Reflection on participant)

She further states how she feels that the understanding of fractions not only influences the topic itself, however it aids the understanding of other concepts too. "*It impinges on their ability to perform addition and subtraction in the intermediate phase and* [if] *they do not grasp the relationship between fractional parts on a whole they cannot visualise multiplication or division. This impacts later on their ability to do algebra in terms of simplifying algebraic expressions and equations.*"

Participant A's engagement with policy certainly aligns itself with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) *projective* dimension as she seems to be driven by the purpose of bringing about a future that differs from the present or the past. Additionally, this brings forth Samuel's (1998) *programmatic* force as influences the direction of teachers' practices. He (Samuel, 1998) states that "the programmatic force is a more explicit charge which declares the sequence, content and direction that the teaching/learning practices will follow" (p.13). The link is that CAPS declares the sequence of content that teachers are to follow; this represents preparation

for the future. However, teacher agents may be seen as using such content as a guideline creating their own sequence to ensure a future that differs from the present or past. This force fortifies the quality of teaching and learning as it is sustained by being equipped for the future. In this case the programmatic force is that of the CAPS curriculum.

In contrast, I place emphasis on fractions due to what has happened in my past.

Throughout school, I was never really good at maths. In particular, I battled with fractions; and every year my maths teachers either whizzed through it leaving majority of us confused or simply implied that we had to figure it out ourselves. I had to go for private extra lessons in order to pass the section in my exams. It was at my private lessons where I thought, "Why could my teacher not explain it like this?" I therefore do not wish to grant my learners with the same injustice. Fractions tend to be a confusing topic and so I try to break it down as best as I can. In order to break it down and work slower for the children to grasp every aspect, I need to spend more time on the topic. As a professional, I am using what I experienced in the past to influence how I teach today. (Self)

Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) iterational dimension and Samuel's (1998) force of biography imply that a teacher's past helps to support and nourish identities, interactions and institutions over time. This is where life and professional histories play an integral part in what we are and what we do.

The most significant time allocation changes are in Table 4.1 where 37 hours are spent on whole numbers, number sentences, numeric patterns as opposed to the prescribed 19 hours and 12 hours are spent on time as opposed to prescribed 6 hours.

Learners arrive in grade 4 without fully understanding numbers. When you do not understand a number as a whole, concepts around numbers will never fully make sense. (Self)

Being able to tell the time is a life skill. Not only is it a life skill, I have found it to be the hardest skill to teach children. I remember as a child how much time my parents spent trying to teach me how to tell the time, on top of what I was being taught at school. I am aware that parental involvement is minimal today and so the time I would expect children

to be taught/revised at home, I try and make up for it at school. It is impossible to successfully teach time in 6 hours. I do not even teach it successfully in 12. (Self)

Here, one can see the past, present and future is considered, lending on all Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) dimensions and Samuel's (1998) force fields. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Samuel (1998) emphasise the importance of context (which is always social) and structure (the element of time). The combination of context and time results in researchers thinking about teacher agency as not just referring to the individual but also about the transformation of context-for-action over time.

This can be linked to my study, as I seek to understand teacher agency and how it is restricted by a prescriptive curriculum.

Quantity over quality

CAPS has been deemed, by the participants, to favour quantity over quality, however agency, as the participants claim, favours the latter. With the objective to understand the teacher agency teachers deploy, we need to additionally understand the circumstances that require teachers to utilise such agency.

All participants indicated that they adapted, adopted and neglected curriculum policy in one way or the other. All participants, being South African teachers, adopted the new curriculum policy, CAPS. However, it was not taken and implemented as is. In order to implement the policy successfully per grade, the curriculum policy was modified and in some areas, certain aspects were neglected completely.

As one will discover, through document analysis and the below statistics, the main change is the fact that hours do not correlate with what CAPS prescribes. Here, neglect had to take place in order for adaption to occur. Participant A and B both adapted the hours spent on certain topics, therefore neglecting policy makers' prescriptions. This is due to two main reasons:

- Teaching time lost
- Teaching time needed to teach effectively

Teaching time lost

Although CAPS prescribes that a certain amount of hours per term should be dedicated to teaching certain subjects, the policy does not take into account public holidays, break up days, examination weeks (where all teaching is put on hold to cater for all subjects that need to be examined), fundraisers, sports days and orientation days. Additionally, CAPS allocates teaching hours that differ from the actual hours present in each term.

As seen in Tables 4.3 and 4.4, in term 1, CAPS allocates an extra hour than what is available. In term 2, CAPS allocates 2 hours less than what is available and in Term 3, 3 hours less. In term 4, CAPS allocates 10 hours more than what is available. This instability is the starting block for confusion and frustration expressed by teachers. Therefore, due to time lost as a result of bad planning of the curriculum policy, teachers have to readjust their time in the classroom in order to teach concepts as effectively as possible. To an average person it is impossible to teach 53 hours of Maths within a 43 hour term where the school actually only provides 30 hours to do it in; however teachers need to be accountable and make it possible. Therefore, agency is crucial. Teachers, professionals, need to know what to adapt, adopt and neglect.

Participant A validates this by stating that the main reason for modifying the hours taught per topic is due to "*the actual loss of contact time regarding the prescribed timetable, [this is] due to factors that impinge on instructional time [such as] teacher absenteeism, "fun days", public holidays, etc. Notional time is 6 hours but my allocation is 5 ½ hours per week. I easily lose 15 hours of the 60 hours per term.*"

The following two Tables further dissect the statistics by representing the hours CAPS proposes we have to teach Maths each term, the hours each term is actually allocated, the hours the participating school provides for teaching and the actual hours the participants spend on teaching Maths. With this factor, teachers need to utilise their agency to plan accordingly. This links with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) *projective* and *practical evaluative* dimensions and Samuel's (1998) *programmatic* force. Teachers are influenced by the future as they have to prepare for it. When referring to curriculum, lessons and teaching cannot take place, objectives cannot be achieved and positive impacts cannot occur if teachers do not formulate plans to do so. The future needs to be considered for such plans to take place. This brings forth Samuel's (1998) *programmatic* force. He states that "the programmatic force is a more explicit charge which declares the sequence, content and

direction that the teaching/learning practices will follow" (p.13). This force fortifies the quality of teaching and learning as it is sustained by being equipped for the future. If teachers do not contain an ounce of agency, no such planning can take place.

Table 4.3: Grade 4 statistics: MATHS 2015 *(self)*

	TEACHING TIME CAPS ALLOCATES	TEACHING TIME THE TERM ALLOWS FOR	ACTUAL TEACHING TIME IN PARTICPATING GRADE	ACTUAL TEACHING HOURS TEACHER INCURS
TERM 1	52 hours	51hours	47 hours	47 hours
TERM 2	53hours	55 hours	44 hours	46 hours
TERM 3	52 hours	55 hours	50 hours	50 hours
TERM 4	53hours	43 hours	30 hours	33 hours

Table 4.4: Grade 6 statistics: MATHS 2015 *(participant)*

	TEACHING TIME CAPS ALLOCATES	TEACHING TIME THE TERM ALLOWS FOR	ACTUAL TEACHING TIME IN PARTICIPATING GRADE	ACTUAL TEACHING HOURS TEACHER INCURS
TERM 1	52 hours	51hours	50 hours	51 hours
TERM 2	53 hours	55 hours	44 hours	40 hours
TERM 3	52 hours	55 hours	50 hours	42 hours
TERM 4	53 hours	43 hours	30 hours	34 hours

Teachers are meant to teach. My definition of teaching is to engage with learners on their level, building on what they know, developing their confidence to adopt and adapt new knowledge. In order to do this one needs to be creative and relevant, one needs to have time to engage, teach and reinforce and to further reteach where any misunderstandings took place. I feel that with the current curriculum policy there is hardly any time to teach, especially in the manner above. I feel the policy contradicts what the actual department demands. We are expected to get through so many topics in specific time frames yet produce worthy results during Annual National Assessments. In Grade 4, learners come through without the ability to read properly yet we need to rush through concepts that they

can hardly pronounce? It just does not make much sense to me. I am not given the time needed to teach quality education, this restriction is highly frustrating. (Self)

With this, as much as teachers who practice their agency wish to complete all topics that the policy prescribes, certain topics need to be neglected in order to cope.

Teaching time needed to teach effectively

As a result of teaching time lost due to the above mentioned factors, hours per topic need to be adjusted. Additionally, CAPS allocates particular hours to be spent on particular topics which are either unrealistic or impractical. The evidence in the statistics displays that the hours spent on particular topics are inconsistent with what CAPS prescribes; this is an indication of teacher agency. Teacher agents do not only make decisions based on their insights but additionally to accommodate learners' needs.

The accommodation of learners' needs

From the perspective of a Grade 4 teacher, hours are adjusted due to the fact that I feel some topics require more time than others. I additionally adjust the hours to suit the needs of the learners. (Self)

The highly structured curriculum seems ideal in an ideal world where variances are minimal amongst learners, but the reality is that SA has such a diverse learner population making an ideal curriculum impractical – hence teachers rely on practicality rather than on idealism – making the CAPS curriculum practical commensurate with the diverse nature of the learners and the variances of teaching contexts.

Campbell (2012) adds to this by expressing that teacher agency is not solely about the teacher, but it is also about the learners and their agency as they are "autonomous human beings" (p. 184). Modifying the curriculum to suit the learners is a definite mark of agency as it is the learners who need to benefit from the curriculum the most; teachers who utilise their agency understands this. Participant A concurs as she states that her "*topics per term are adjusted, depending on diagnostic, conceptual understanding displayed by the learners.*"

An example of adjusting hours to suit the needs of the learners can be seen in Grade 4.

When the children enter Grade 4, they are critically lacking in their foundational concepts of whole numbers concepts, multiplication and division. I therefore spend more time on

these topics initially as they set the foundation for the majority of the other topics that need to be taught. With large amounts of focus on these topics in term 1, this minimises the time to complete other topics prescribed. I therefore swap topics around. I do not neglect topics, however, I do not teach them all when they should be or necessarily for the time periods prescribed. (Self)

<u>An adjustment of hours based on the insights of teachers</u>

I honestly feel that in Grade 4, foundational concepts are far more important than emphasising shapes, learning how to read bar graphs and learning how to tally. Shapes are something that the children are taught before they reach Grade 4 and often complain that it is too easy. Data handling is another topic that children grasp quickly, especially at the Grade 4 level. I do understand that these topics are essential to learn about, however, I do feel that the goals can be achieved in a shorter time period. Therefore, the balance of time can be spent on topics where children battle. I do not feel that these two topics should hold as much value as the time indicates it does. (Self)

The active participant of this study fervently feels that CAPS should be taught by educators who have a passion for their subject and thus will deliver it professionally. She stresses that no prescribed recipe can beat this. She feels that all subjects should be taught by specialist teachers. The skeleton outline of the curriculum should be sufficient to guide any professional teacher. Formal assessments control what has been taught. She constantly says that maths must be taught by educators who have expertise in the subject as this eliminates incorrectly taught concepts, especially in the lower grades.

We both rearrange when topics should be taught and how long each topic should be taught for. In Grade 4, I do not teach time, data handling and properties of 2D shapes in Term 1, instead I do it in Term 2. This opens up 21 hours to spend on what I, as a teacher agent, feels holds more importance and that is whole numbers, number sentences, number patterns and the four operations.

In grades prior to Grade 4, children are just expected to learn their tables without completely understanding what they are doing when they multiply and divide. I therefore spend a good two weeks in term one just teaching the Grade 4s how to multiply and divide 1 by 1 digits. I do not feel that anyone (child or adult) can successfully learn something

they do not understand. I therefore, cannot expect my learners to multiply 3 by 2 digits and divide 3 by 1 digits without understanding how to do the basic 1 by 1 digit sums. In addition to this, if one does not know their basic tables, whether they know the more complex methods or not, final answers will be wrong without knowing how to formulate the process answers.

During this study, my critical friend kept reinforcing the fact that one needs to consolidate and build a strong foundation of understanding numbers before one can move onto any other section. At the participating school, Grade 4 is the entry grade and therefore learners come from different feeder schools which results in all learners being at different educational levels. This is a result of teacher agency, or possibly a lack there of, in the previous schools. Topics are either neglected or methods differ greatly to what needs to be taught in Grade 4. Therefore, one needs to recap and co-ordinate all the learners. This takes control. Control being an attribute of teacher agency.

Besides swapping topics around per term, time spent on particular topics varied. Where it is evident that hours allocated by CAPS are less than what the participants actually taught per topic, indirectly places importance on those topics. As previously stated, unknowingly, fractions was a topic that both participants lay emphasis on during the year. Participant A's reasoning aligns itself with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) *projective* dimension and Samuel's (1998) *programmatic* force as she looks at bringing forth a future that differs from the present, a future where learners may truly understand the four operations holistically due to the comprehending of fractions. Participant A teaches fractions for 18 hours as oppose to the 15 hours that CAPS prescribes. She explains that this is due to the fact that fractions is "*one of the most significant yet badly taught concepts.*"

Participant A goes on to say:

> *Unless a learner has a very well developed understanding of what a fraction is they cannot find the LCM or HCF therefore they cannot find equivalent fractions or simplify. It impinges on their ability to perform addition and subtraction in the intermediate phase and because they do not grasp the relationship between fractional parts on a whole they cannot visualise multiplication or division. This has an impact later, on their ability to do algebra, in terms of simplifying algebraic expressions and equations.*

My focus lies with fractions due to my past, which aligns itself with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) first dimension called the *iterational* dimension and Samuel's (1998) force of *biography*. This is where life and professional histories play an integral part in what we are and what we do. It is how one's history of teaching and learning provides rich experience and a great foundation for one's identity and derived agency. Although I only spend 1 hour more than the prescribed time on this topic, I use that hour for assessing and corrections and the full 16 hours for teaching.

I feel that it can be understood that as a teacher, one holds a professional title, especially if and when agency is demonstrated. It is evident that CAPS and professionalism are conflicted. With constant curriculum policy changes in South Africa, it is clear that teachers are meant to portray professionalism and exhibit their specialised knowledge and skills in order to ensure implementation. However, the constant curriculum change de-professionalises teachers as it does not consider the teachers as implementers whom have to consider the context that they are in, in order to adapt polices to suit the needs of their learners.

CAPS revealed as prescriptive

Data generated presents that a national curriculum is ideal. Data generated poses that a national curriculum has not considered the diverse identities of teachers whom have to implement the curriculum, nor the diverse needs of the learners whom are meant to be educated and whom have to essentially benefit from the policies.

Ideality meets reality

South Africa's history has heavily influenced the education system bringing forth ever changing curriculum policies. In 1997 outcomes-based education was introduced to overcome curricular divisions of the past. In 2000, this was reviewed initiating RNCS Grades R-9 and the NCS Grades 10-12. Implementation challenges resulted in yet another review in 2009 which introduced the formation and implementation of CAPS with its aim to provide clearer specification of what is to be taught and learnt on a term-by-term basis.

I agree with creating a curriculum that caters to the diverse needs of a country and to rectify the past by eradicating any divisions. However, I do not believe in policies chopping and changing, creating no constant for teachers and learners to depend on. There are

terms and concepts expected to be taught in CAPS that I did not even learn in matric. Perhaps the mentality is that the more we teach the better our nation will become? (Self)

Participant A expresses that CAPS is one of 6 curriculum policies she has been exposed to which validates Ramrathan's (2010) suggestion of South Africa being caught up in a curriculum craze. Tracing the curriculum changes since the arrival of our democracy, several iterations of the school curriculum have been implemented across the schools in South Africa. How are teachers expected to keep up with the constant changes? The reality is the fact that they are not. Participant A conveys that "*CAPS is 1 of 6 curriculum policies that I have been exposed to. Curriculums are not understood by teachers. The intended curriculum is impossible to deliver.*"

It is difficult for teachers to have a firm understanding of the curriculum due to its ever-changing nature. We teach by what we know through experience. Whether it be our past experiences during schooling or by learning from mistakes on a day to day basis. I feel that by listening to complaints in the staff room about curriculum polices, teaching has become a notion of trial and error – try it, if it works, great! If it doesn't, try something else. (Self)

Due to this lack of understanding, the curriculum is almost impossible to deliver in the manner in which the Ministers of Education expect it to be executed.

Participant A states the following:

> *The curriculum is too structured. The time frames are unrealistic and the assumptions too vast in terms of developmental nature of maths conceptual cognition. The principles which underpin the curriculum are far-fetched, especially when the educator has no knowledge or experience of what underpins the curriculum in terms of its philosophy.*

CAPS is hiding behind fancy terminologies for basic concepts. CAPS is not placing emphasis on teaching quality education; it lies with teaching quantity. This leaves teachers, children and parents confused. There is no time to rectify the divisions of the past if the future generations cannot read, write, comprehend, apply knowledge and contribute towards, what is meant to be, a developing country. **(Self)**

Through data generation, it is evident that teachers' frustrations lie with the fact that CAPS insists that teachers teach as many concepts as possible within a year; this is where the quantity aspect of this subsection comes in. However, teachers oppose this and wish to focus on fewer topics, perhaps, in order to ensure foundational concepts are retained, certifying quality over quantity.

Despite the fact that implementers are seemingly not considered during the production process of curriculum policies, implementers need to consider the policy in order to make something ideal become practical. This dilemma therefore brings forth the need of teacher agency, where "*the actual curriculum, as envisaged by the educator, is more realistic and achievable. CAPS should be taught by educators who have a passion for their subject and thus will deliver it professionally. No prescribed recipe can beat this*" (Participant A).

"*The skeleton outline of the curriculum should be sufficient to guide any professional teacher*" (Particpant A); guide being the operative word in the previous statement. This suggests that some autonomy should be given to the teachers to structure the lesson or sections of Mathematics in line with their contexts and/or their learners learning process. Participant A therefore argues for structure, in the form of curriculum outlines, and these outlines would then guide a professional teacher in facilitating teaching and learning. Therefore, CAPS should be taken as a flexible framework which enables teachers to adapt to each individual classroom situation and learner needs.

Inconsideration towards implementers

It can be understood that as a teacher, one holds a professional title, especially if and when agency is demonstrated. It is evident that CAPS and professionalism are conflicted. With constant curriculum policy changes in South Africa, teachers are meant to portray professionalism and exhibit their specialised knowledge and skills in order to ensure implementation. However, the constant curriculum change de-professionalises teachers by removing autonomy.

As stated in the literature review chapter, it can be understood that "the capacity of teachers to use professional discretion in their pedagogical and curricular practices exists not always easily, alongside their accountability to the state, which generally maintains the overall authority for education policy" (Campbell, 2012, p. 183). Therefore, according to policy makers, teachers are agents; however they are agents whose choices and actions exhibit those

of the curriculum frameworks in which they work (Campbell, 2012). Therefore, how free are teachers really?

Through the experience of the participants, the errors behind formulating CAPS are evident; the hours allocated are impractical and the content is too vast to teach effectively. Yes, it may be argued that CAPS has come in to support and guide teachers with its rigid, prescriptive nature, however, it has not considered or specified what teachers require. Who is it actually designed for? Teachers with degrees? Teachers who are poorly qualified? Teachers who lack experience? Teachers who are considered unable to make curriculum decisions? CAPS is not clear as to what kind of teacher it is proposed for as not all teachers fit into its design.

The CAPS policy document for mathematics intermediate phase consists of 297 pages. It is split into 4 sections. The first section provides the introduction and background for the policy. This is where an overview is provided for each phase with reference to allocation of hours and general aims. The second section goes into more detail as it defines time allocations, provides aims, skills and indicates specified content to be taught. Section 3 further clarifies the content that needs to be taught by stipulating what each grade, within the intermediate phase, needs to be taught per term. Section 4 outlines assessment: an introduction, types of assessment, recording and reporting guidelines and the necessitation for moderation. It cannot be opposed that CAPS is not prescriptive. The manner in which CAPS presents it almost emphasises that if one veers off track, then errors will be made. With all the allocated hours (more than what is available), and specified content, it does not provide teachers with the space to think for themselves. It is simply a matter of checking the boxes.

This again brings forth Campbell's (2012) view that although teachers are professionals, their professionalism is accountable to the state and "generally maintains the overall authority" (p. 183) of the education policy in practice. A prescriptive curriculum, such as CAPS can be said to have been designed for teachers that are not considered to make curriculum decisions. An example would be inexperience locum tenens, whom Participant A suggests. With this, the curriculum labels all teachers as the same and this is not the case.

As stated in the literature review chapter, Blignaut (2007) feels that a key factor facilitating the gap between policy and practice is imbedded in policy outcomes that are clashing with teachers' identities as specialists in education. When consulting an educational policy, Blignaut (2007, p. 56) states that one could find that "teachers' views of knowledge, teaching and learning generally were not congruent with that outlines in curriculum policy." In

agreement with Blignaut (2007), this brings forth the argument of how teachers' identities are at stake, and this is why policy lacks permeation, because teachers passionate about their professionalism translate policy, employing their agency, to suit their dogmas and way of teaching, almost ignoring what the policy actually wishes to achieve.

If curriculum makers were working hand in hand with competent curriculum implementers, teachers would reclaim their professionalism and the education system would thrive. (Self)

Regardless, teachers are to endeavour to cover all the concepts prescribed, even if it is in a different order. Adopt and adapt. Be creative and be willing to change the goal posts to suit the needs of the learners. One cannot be as rigid as the guidelines prescribed by CAPS if one wants to be an effective and successful teacher; not the teacher that a prescriptive curriculum anticipates. Teachers who take their professionalism seriously and act upon their agency are able to warrant success in their curriculum, yet are still accountable to the state.

CAPS is characterised by a rigid curriculum structure that specifies what needs to be taught, when in the year it should be taught and how it should be taught (Department of Basic Education, 2011). It brings forth the concern that this rigid structure seems to have marginalised teachers, who take their professionalism seriously and act as professionals, to the extreme as they have very little say in how and what they teach in their classroom, removing autonomy and the sense of agency. This type of curriculum is derived from what Apple (1993) refers to as a coalition of neo-conservatism and neoliberalism; resulting in a national curriculum. Apple (1993) writes that this coalition has the "capacity to connect the emphasis on traditional knowledge and values, authority, standards and national identity of the neoconservatives with the emphasis on the extension of market-driven principles into all areas of our society advocated by neoliberals" (p. 230).

Therefore, a national curriculum obsessed with rigorous national standards and a system of testing that is performance driven is in play. According to Apple (1993) national curriculum is viewed as a tool for accountability, to help countries establish benchmarks to evaluate schools. With all schools teaching the same content across a nation, norms and standards will seemingly be easily recognised when compared. Consequently, while advocates of a national curriculum may see it as a means to create "social cohesion" (Apple, 1993, p. 231) and to give all schools the capability to improve by being able to measure themselves against objective criteria, the effect is opposite due to it prescriptiveness. Data generated presents that

of a national curriculum which is ideal. Data generated poses that a national curriculum has not considered the diverse identities of teachers whom have to implement the curriculum, nor the diverse needs of the learners whom are meant to be educated and whom have to essentially benefit from the policies.

As a result of this, the ideal action for professionals is to stop and record the challenges we face in our daily lives (Apple, 1993) and then use our agency to adapt policy to suit our contexts and then further record our successes. By recording our challenges and successes, we can create a data base of reasons as to why a prescriptive policy is not effective, and further provide proof that teacher agency is more effective than prescriptive policies.

Conclusion

In this study, I conducted a qualitative study through narrative and thematic analysis. Therefore, through self-study, the aid of a critical friend and the use of a participant in the form of a case-study, themes emerged while data was produced. I worked with the data to form the subsections of this chapter, introducing the themes that contribute to answering the research questions of this study. The objectives of this study were to understand how teachers teach within the CAPS framework, to understand the teacher agency teachers deploy in their teaching within the CAPS framework and to provide explanations for the agency teacher's use within this framework.

The themes that emerged were ways to recognise teacher agency, the idea that agency promotes quality over quantity and CAPS promotes the latter. Furthermore, CAPS has been understood as ideal. It was discovered that in order to recognise teacher agency, one needs to identify whether adoption, adaption and neglect took place. The common evidence for this was through the differing time allocations that teachers spent on topics in comparison to what CAPS prescribes. It was understood that CAPS promoted quantity over quality by its never ending list of topics to be covered in minimal time. There is not enough time available for teachers to teach effectively, therefore, teacher agency counteracts this by ensuring that they have the time by adjusting their time allocations. Lastly, CAPS is viewed as ideal as it implies an inconsideration towards implementers. Implementers are meant to simply apply a curriculum regardless of their context. This is impossible as each school and classroom, nationwide, encounter different contextual conditions; a factor that a national curriculum does not consider.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although research on teacher agency in South Africa, with regards to CAPS, is limited, I find that this study has achieved its goal of bridging one of many gaps. From the findings and discussion, it is clear that teachers encounter frustrations with regards to the current prescriptive curriculum as it limits the use of their teacher agency. The understanding of teacher agency and its limits were understood through recognising how teacher agency is deployed. Through understanding this concept, it became evident that a prescriptive curriculum emphasises quantity over quality as it prescribes many topics to be covered in unrealistic time spans. Furthermore, this stresses the impracticality of a prescribed curriculum by highlighting how CAPS is ideal as it does not consider implementers during the drawing up process. The remainder of this section focuses on summarising the entire study by drawing conclusions from the aforesaid findings and proposing recommendations for actions informed by the stated conclusions.

Overall conclusions

The objectives of this study were to understand how teachers teach within the CAPS framework, to understand the teacher agency teachers deploy in their teaching within the CAPS framework and to provide explanations for the agency teacher's use within the CAPS framework.

In order to understand the teacher agency teachers deploy, we need to understand both teacher agency and the circumstances that require teachers to utilise such agency. This generated two themes: Recognising teacher agency and Quantity over quality. With the intention to understand how teachers teach and deploy their agency within a prescriptive curriculum as well as to provide explanations for the agency teacher's use, we need to understand why such precautions had to occur, CAPS needs to be understood, bringing forth the last theme: CAPS revealed as prescriptive. These themes will unpack what teacher agency entails and how it is applied within a prescriptive curriculum.

Recognising teacher agency

Through data generation and thematic analysis, it became clear that there were three ways to recognise teacher agency in practice. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) provide great insight as

to what influences agency and how teachers teach, yet it does not refer to manners in which teacher agency is utilized when restricted by a curriculum. In addition, Apple (1993) offers support on understanding the basics of curriculum through state theory; however, theory relating to the context of implementing a national curriculum is limited, especially in relation to South Africa. I feel that this study successfully attempted bridging one of many gaps, bringing forth new ideas, concepts and theories around the phenomenon of how teachers teach within a prescriptive school curriculum.

This study has consequently given birth to an interpreted theory of teacher agency in practice that I feel is simple to understand. Throughout the literature review chapter, it has highlighted theories that are available in understanding teacher agency; however it questioned that indicators are ostensibly absent; therefore driving the data generation stage. The theory of teacher agency, relating to the context of implementing a national curriculum, is limited, especially in South Africa. Therefore, I feel that a theory stipulating indicators of teacher agency, within a prescribed curriculum, is required.

Although bold, I would like to coin my own concept of teaching within a prescriptive curriculum by classifying indicators of teacher agency into three phases. Phases indicate a distinct period or stage within a process of change. With reference to education, change is a constant therefore, categorising indicators of utilising agency within educational change into phases is appropriate.

With reference to South African education, curriculum policies are constantly changing, forcing teachers into a position to be a part of a process of change in at least one point in their career. It can be said that teaching is a constant battle between the Department of Education, curriculum policies and teachers. During this battle, teacher agency is either suppressed or expressed. In order to identify whether teacher agency has been expressed, adoption, adaption and neglect have to be recognised; forming what I call, the *teacher agency ternion*. Ternion is a term given to a group of three, and as one will discover through the explanation of the theory below, the three factors work collectively together, forcing these indicators to always be present in their group of three; *ternion*.

The *teacher agency ternion* includes three phases. The first being the *formal adoption phase*, the second being the *adaption phase* and the last being the *phase of positive neglect*. The first phase has to occur for the following phases to occur. The *formal adoption phase* is simply the acquiring of a new curriculum policy. This phase implies the moral duty of teachers to adopt

a policy prescribed by their department. The second phase is the most common revelation of teacher agency, the *adaption phase*. This stage reveals the transformation of a policy in order to achieve suitability by being adjusted to suit different contexts. This stage exposes teacher agency. The last phase, the *phase of positive neglect*, occurs in two ways. In lament terms, neglect is associated with negative connotations. However, within teacher agency, neglect is seen as positive. Teachers who are agents are professionals; therefore, abandoning topics should be to the benefit of their contexts. Disregarding topics due to ill-management is not classified as an indicator of teacher agency. Neglect must always be justified, enforcing its positive nature. Simultaneously, the second and last phase collaborates as adaption cannot essentially take place if something is not fundamentally neglected.

This may possibly provide the starting blocks for understanding teaching agency in practice, especially when restricted by a prescriptive curriculum policy.

Quantity over quality

Through data generation and thematic analysis, it has been realised that the battle between teacher agency and a prescriptive curriculum is that a prescriptive curriculum seemingly prioritises quantity over quality. There are many topics that need to be covered within a year with limited time spans, especially with reference to mathematics in the intermediate phase. This is impractical as teachers in South Africa do not have the time that CAPS states is available. CAPS suggests that there are 240 hours available for the teaching of mathematics within an academic year, yet Grade 4 only manages to teach for 176 hours and Grade 6 only manages to teach for 168 hours. This is due to many factors. The main reason being that CAPS allocates more hours than what is actually available each term. The second being that CAPS does not take into consideration school life: administration days, examination weeks, sports days, fundraisers, break up days, special assemblies, public holidays, school holidays, the list is endless. Tables 4.3 and Table 4.4 represent this argument. Due to the time constraint, teacher agents validated their agency as being a result of teaching time lost and therefore having to formulate a strategy in order to teach a curriculum as effectively as possible; therefore providing the opportunity for teachers to utilise their agency within a prescriptive curriculum.

CAPS revealed as prescriptive

The use of agency therefore brings forth the idea that a prescriptive curriculum is ideal. It is regarded as not taking both the reality of differing schooling contexts or teachers as implementers into consideration.

Evidence prevails when branding CAPS as prescriptive, especially when it comes to the mathematics curriculum policy. Data generated poses that a national curriculum has not considered the diverse identities of teachers whom have to implement the curriculum, nor the diverse needs of the learners whom are meant to be educated and who have to essentially benefit from the policies. CAPS is a national curriculum as it coincides with Apple's (1993) understanding of a national curriculum being viewed as a tool for accountability, to help countries establish benchmarks to evaluate schools. With all schools teaching the same content across a nation, norms and standards will seemingly be easily recognised when compared.

However, in South Africa, as profound as this may seem, it is ideal as no schooling context is the same, with the same resources, the same qualified, passionate teachers, nor with the same ethos. Each school and each teacher has to apply the curriculum the way they feel they know how in order to benefit their learners and schools with both their experience and qualification/s as reference. Each teacher deploys their agency, or lack there-of, resulting in differing results nationwide. Therefore, a national curriculum is not creating the platform it aspires to with regards to establishing benchmarks to evaluate schools. Although CAPS is the set national curriculum, it is prescriptive, putting teachers under pressure, ultimately resulting in teachers possibly deploying some form of agency, with particular reference to the mathematics policy. Schools are not teaching the same content across the nation simultaneously, therefore norms and standards are not easily recognised when compared. This is the battle between agency and a prescriptive curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations can be made:

Implementers as policy makers

CAPS has been regarded as ideal in theory and therefore, my first recommendation is to make CAPS ideal in practice. Due to the fact that teachers and their contexts differ nationwide, South Africa should be proud of a national curriculum that takes this into consideration.

Curriculums introduced, post democracy, are said to repair the damages of the past by eradicating curricular divisions. However, CAPS, I feel is creating more division because it is too prescriptive resulting in some teachers feeling incompetent and unable to implement, in others completely disregarding the policy and the adventurous adjusting the policy to suit the needs of their classrooms. Differing norms and standards, through different manners of teaching and implementing, are being set because varying schools and teacher identities were initially not considered during the policy making process.

Therefore, subject teachers across the country should all be involved in the drawing up of a curriculum policy. For example, with reference to mathematics; active mathematic teachers in each grade from each district should assemble to discuss what a mathematics curriculum policy should and should not comprise of per grade. Each grades' topics should build on the previous years' content, not be a repetition. The intermediate phase should be solely foundational concepts in order for the senior phase to adequately build complex concepts. Furthermore, realistic time allocations should be set. A policy should have topics that should be covered along with guidelines that teachers may follow, not stipulations that teachers must follow. Naturally, this will result in curriculum policies being simplified to not only allow teachers to teach competently, but to allow learners to learn efficiently.

Effective teachers, effective education

Through research, it is clear that a national curriculum is set with one teacher in mind. However, a prescriptive curriculum seems to not have the qualified, passionate teacher agents in mind, yet the poorly experienced and possibly underqualified instead. If it was considering qualified teachers with a passion for bettering the lives of pupils and furthermore the country, it would consequently not be so prescriptive stating exactly what should be taught, when it should be taught and how it should be taught, providing no time for learners to engage and remediate their errors. In order to engage with learners, their thoughts and discussions and further remediate, it would require more know-how from a teacher. Therefore, I feel, a

national curriculum was born to ensure all teachers teach in a robotic manner, without much thought to cater for those who cannot.

In order to counteract this, the country needs to ensure that it is producing qualified educators who are context sensitive and aware of how to utilise their agency. Professions such as doctors, nurses and lawyers are known to have to think on their feet daily, deploying their agency to suit the need of the varying contexts they find themselves. Children know that to become such professionals, they need to excel at school in order to be accepted at university level to be able to qualify. Teachers should be regarded with the same high esteem as their daily encounters in the classroom do not differ to those who are deemed professionals.

A teacher affects life, not only the life of a child but the life of a school and a country as a whole. If teachers are not educated, unqualified or poorly trained, an ever changing education system will not succeed. The admission criteria for prospective educators into teacher training institutions should be of a high standard. It should not be considered an easy career choice to pursue. In addition to this, the pass rate for teachers to qualify should also be of a high standard to ensure that quality educators are filtered into schools ensuring quality education being a result thereof. Quality education will be achieved through teachers recognising themselves as professionals able to use their agency to benefit the learning in their classrooms.

How other research could build on this study

CAPS is a newly implemented curriculum in South Africa which lacks research and review. This study therefore provides the platform for further review. Unanswered questions still remain as this was a small scale study. This research paper focused on teacher agency and how it is influenced, in South Africa, by a prescriptive curriculum, however, its conclusions may produce the following questions that may need further examination:

1. What kind of teacher was CAPS produced for?
2. Can prescriptiveness result in effectiveness with regard to curriculum, especially with teachers whom are unaware of how to deploy their agency?

In addition, this study can be extended by focusing on other subjects prescribed by CAPS to understand its effectiveness or possible failure in each learning area.

Contribution to educational research

Although literature review provides some understanding into the implementation of a prescribed curriculum and its theoretical influence on teacher agency, no solutions and suggestions are offered. It is to be simply accepted that teachers have to teach the set curriculum in order to be successful in the eyes of the educational departments as there are numerous factors determining their achievement. Additionally, although Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Samuel (1998) and Apple (1993) provide a theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding teacher agency in curriculum, there is a contextual gap as only theoretical and conceptual understandings are provided; ignoring practical understandings.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) provide great insight as to what influences agency and how teachers teach, yet it does not refer to manners in which teacher agency is utilized when restricted by a curriculum. This study provided a practical understanding of how to recognise agency under a prescriptive curriculum; through adoption, adaption and neglect.

In addition, Apple (1993) offers support on understanding the basics of curriculum through state theory; however, theory relating to the context of implementing a national curriculum is limited, especially in relation to South Africa. I feel that my study makes an attempt to bridge this gap, bringing forth new ideas, concepts and theories around the phenomenon of how teachers teach within a prescriptive school curriculum.

Closing words

If this study is to leave any reader with one thought, it should be that teachers are the ultimate resource within an education system. Without teachers, curriculum policies would not be implemented and educational departments would never be successful. Therefore, policy makers should include policy implementers during the drawing up process. If teachers are not provided the opportunity to discover their agency, then I fear for the future of teaching.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR PRINCIPALS

APPENDIX 2: APPROVAL LETTER FROM PARTICATING SCHOOL

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE LETTER AND DECLARATION FOR
             PARTIPANTS

APPENDIX 4: DATA GENERATION SCHEDULE

APPENDIX 1

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR PRINCIPALS

46 Thompson Road
Bluff
Durban
4052
(date) 2015

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR PRINCIPALS

My name is Taniqua A. Winter. I am a Masters in Education candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. My research topic is Teaching within a prescriptive school curriculum: Implications for teacher agency and professionalism.

The CAPS curriculum has now been offered within the school education system for three years. It is, therefore and opportune moment to explore how teachers experience this curriculum. Some teachers feel that the CAPS curriculum is quite prescriptive, while others feel that there is more guidance and support given to them. Having this anecdotal account, it is, therefore, necessary to research how teachers feel and experience the CAPS. Hence my research topic for my Masters studies. This study aims to explore teachers' agency through teaching within a prescriptive school curriculum.

My study is small and requires three participants at one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal. Your school has been selected through a purposive sampling of schools. The study will make use of observations, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Participants will be observed during teaching hours and further be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at the time convenient to them. The interviews will be of a conversational type, making reference to object, events, activities and learner performance of your school. The interviews will take place at a time convenient to each participant and will not disrupt the day-to-day functioning of their responsibilities and that of your school.

Please note that:
- Participant confidentiality is guaranteed as their inputs will not be attributed to them in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- Each interview may take up to 40 minutes and may be split depending on their preference.
- Any information given by each participant cannot be used against them, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- Each participant has a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. They will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Their involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

- If they are willing to be interviewed, they will indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not they are willing to allow the interviews to be recorded by the following equipment: audio recording, video recording and photographic imaging.

Your approval permitting my study to take place at your school will be appreciated. Upon approval, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interviews to be recorded by the following equipment: audio recording, video recording and photographic imaging.

I can be contacted at:

Email: taniquawinter@hotmail.com
Cell: 082 255 2346 / 031 466 1824

My supervisor is Prof. Labby Ramrathan who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
Contact details: email: ramrathanp@ukzn.ac.za,
Telephone 031-260 8065/ 0826749829

You may also contact the Administrative Office through:

Mr S. Mthembu	Ms Phumelele Ximba
Administrative Officer	HSSREC RO
Higher Degrees and Research	Telephone: 031 260 3587
College of Humanities	Email: ximbap@ukzn@ac.za
School of Education	
Edgewood Campus	
Telephone: 031 260 3888	
E-mail: Mthembu@ukzn.ac.za	

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

PARTICIPANT DECLARATION

I ………………………………………………………………………… (Full names of principal) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to my school being the site for the research.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my school from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I also understand and give permission for the use of the following recording devices during the interview and data production process.

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording		
Photographic equipment		
Video recording		

…………………………………………   ………………………

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL   **DATE**

APPENDIX 2

APPROVAL LETTER FROM PARTICATING SCHOOL
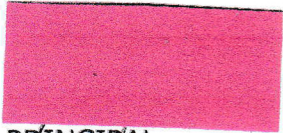
26th January 2015

Dear Taniqua

I permit you to use ███████████████ School as your site for research this year in order to complete your study titled:

Teaching within a prescriptive school curriculum: Implications for teacher agency and professionalism.

I accept all terms and conditions. You are able to voice record, use video recordings and photographic evidence to aid your research process.   I understand that I am able to withdraw my school as your site of research if I feel it is necessary to do so.

Yours sincerely

PRINCIPAL

APPENDIX 3

SAMPLE LETTER AND DECLARATION FOR PARTIPANTS

46 Thompson Road
Bluff
4052
(date) 2015

<u>Attention</u>: (Participant)
(School)
Bluff

Dear Madam

REQUEST FOR YOU TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am Taniqua Winter, a Masters student in the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree, I am conducting research on the phenomenon of Teacher Agency. I request you to take part in this research project as one of the participants. As this is a vital part of qualifying with a Masters in Education Degree, I have sought permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to conduct this research.

The title of my research project is: **Teaching within a prescriptive school curriculum: Implications for teacher agency and professionalism**

This study aims to explore teachers' agency through teaching within a prescriptive school curriculum. My study is small and requires five participants at one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal. The study will make use of observations, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at the time convenient to them. Each interview will be voice-recorded.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT
- There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.
- Your identity, as well as the school's, will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process.
- All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part.
- The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist us in concentrating on the actual interview.
- You will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Taniqua Winter; Tel: 031 466 1824; E-mail: taniquawinter@hotmail.com; Cell: 082 255 2346

The research schedule is attached herewith for you perusal.
Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.
Thanking you in advance.

Yours Sincerely,
Miss T. A. Winter

Declaration

I …………………………………………………………………………………… (full
name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and
procedures for the study: **Teaching within a prescriptive school curriculum: Implications
for teacher agency and professionalism.**

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I
understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in
the study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project should I so desire.

Signature of Participant: …………………….. Date: …………………….......

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: …………………… Date: …………………………

Thanking you in advance,

Miss T. A. Winter

APPENDIX 4

DATA GENERATION SCHEDULE

PARTICIPANT: In order to generate data for this study I will be making use of two methods; document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

Document analysis will take place first. I will be making use of public records (policy documents and text books) and personal documents (term planning, daily/weekly forecasts and if available, journals):
The objective of this method is to:

- Compare documents looking at similarities and differences
- Take note of changes/modifications made (where and how)

An interview will then follow the document analysis phase in order to provide you with the opportunity to justify your actions, gaining in-depth understanding of your level of agency in the classroom while teaching within a prescriptive curriculum framework. The interview will consist of the following questions, making reference to the data generated from the data analysis:

How do teachers exercise their professionalism?

- Changes made?
- Adapted? Adopted? Neglected?
- What do you focus on the least? Why?
- What do you focus on the most? Why?

How is CAPS and professionalism conflicted?

- Do do you feel restricted as a teacher? Explain.
- Do you feel restricted in the classroom? Explain.
- One word to describe CAPS
- Do you feel that you are a professional as a teacher? Why?
- How much do you have to adopt, adapt and/or neglect policy?

How free are teachers?

- What would you say is your biggest challenge as a teacher regarding curriculum?
- How do you try to counter it?
- What do you wish to do as a teacher but cannot? Why?

How to overcome prescriptiveness?

- We cannot get rid of CAPS; practically, what can we do to overcome prescriptiveness and regain professionalism?

Once we have completed the initial interview, a follow-up interview may be requested in order to substantiate any content further.