

**Teachers' understandings of the concept of
learner-centredness in the Revised National Curriculum Statement:
A Case study of two Durban township high schools**

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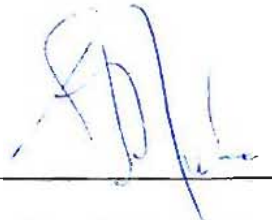
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Siyanda Frederick Mfeka, declare that, except for the quotations that have been duly acknowledged and referenced in the text, and such help as I have acknowledged, this dissertation is wholly my own work, and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

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ABSTRACT

The qualitative case study reported in this dissertation outlines the principal findings of an investigation on four teachers' understandings of the concept of learner-centredness in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in two Durban township high schools. The RNCS as the name suggests, is a revised National Curriculum that is both implemented and trialed in the General Education and Training band of schooling in South Africa. One of the features of the RNCS is its learner-centred pedagogy.

The purpose of the research was to investigate teachers' understandings of the concept of learner-centredness in the context of outcomes-based education and the RNCS. The ways in which the meanings they assign to the concepts, as well as their perceptions of their roles and identities in enacting learner-centred pedagogy in their classrooms as shaped by the context in which they operated was investigated

A major finding of the study is that teachers' understandings of the concept of learner-centredness tend to be influenced by the context in which they work in terms of the school culture, as well as their understandings of their new roles and identities in the context of the RNCS. This means that, in part schools' cultural and social processes play a major role in shaping and reconstructing both the experiences and roles of teachers in the context of educational innovation. This has implications for the content and processes of teacher professional development and in-service education programme, as well as the organisational development of schools in preparation for curriculum change.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the study

1. 1 Introduction

The last ten years have witnessed a wave of changes in education policy, particularly curriculum policy for South African schools. In 1995 the National Department of Education introduced Outcomes-Based Education and Training to be implemented in schools. This educational innovation went through a few permutations before it was declared operational, as National Curriculum Statement and its branding became known as Curriculum 2005 (C2005). The brand name is derived from the original year of implementation of National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in all the Grades which was declared by Prof. SEM Bhengu, the then Minister of Education, to be the year 2005.

There have been many criticisms about the process of implementing C2005. Jansen's (1997) seminal critique titled "Why OBE will fail?" is a case in point. One of its most vehement criticisms that relates to this study is that curriculum change is based on flawed assumptions about what happens inside schools; how classrooms are organized; and what kinds of teachers exist within the education system. On the basis of these assumptions, a 'cascade model' of in-service education which identified one teacher per school for retraining was adopted, reflecting the belief that teachers would each understand the curriculum along the lines of a single homogenous paradigm.

As a result of many similar criticisms and a noticeable 'curriculum non-change' in most schools, a ministerial project committee was set up to review the progress and

effectiveness of C2005. After the review, the committee recommended amongst other things that the curriculum be streamlined and modified to make it more accessible to teachers. Further, it recommended a clear description of the kind of the learner the resultant Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) envisaged in terms of the knowledge, skills, value and attitudes at the end of General Education and Training (GET) band. This learner will be imbued with the values to act in the interest of a society based on respect for democracy; equality; human dignity; social justice; appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Thus, the main features of RNCS were specifically reviewed so that pedagogical efficacy would manifest in the classrooms.

The RNCS has in large part retained intact the principles, purposes and thrust of C2005 by affirming the commitment to OBE. Central to these is a commitment to learner-centred pedagogy as a sub-principle of Outcomes-based Education (OBE). The principle was one of the five animating principles of the then National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The other four basic principles are; social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity; a high level of skills and knowledge for all; progression and integration; and clarity and accessibility (RNCS Overview, 2002). Thus, the General Education and Training (GET) schooling is a whole qualification for schools based on the extent to which the five principles including learner-centredness are achieved through the Grade 9 outcomes and assessments. This study therefore aimed in part to investigate the ways in which teachers understand and enact learner-centredness to enable learners to achieve the envisaged GET qualification in the schools studied.

This study was motivated by my observation that, while many teachers and educationists agree that learner-centred pedagogy is a good principle and, that learners would benefit from it, nobody seems to understand what the concept means or how it is to be implemented. Evidence from schools-based research also suggests that like many of the classroom level changes required by OBE, learner-centredness has failed to materialise in many classrooms across the country (Jansen and Christie, 1999; Christie, 1999; Malcolm, 2000; Broadie, 2000; Ensor, 2001; Graven, 2002; Hoadly, 2002; Mahomed, 2002; Harley and Wedekind, 2004). Moreover, effective in-service training and professional development of teachers for their new roles in the context of this pedagogy is yet to be developed.

This dissertation examines how learner-centred pedagogy as a central principle of the Revised National Curriculum Statement is experienced and understood by teachers in schools. In particular, the ways in which four teachers in two Durban township high schools understand and enact this concept was investigated. This chapter introduces the study and outlines the historical background and direction of curriculum change in the General Education and Training band in South Africa, as well as the underlying assumptions of the RNCS.

1.1.1 Curriculum Change in the General Education and Training Band

The formal introduction of the RNCS in the Foundation Phase (Grades R to Grade3) and Intermediate Phase (Grades 4, 5, and 6) occurred in 2004, and 2005 respectively. In 2005, during the writing of this dissertation, schools were expected to be trialing the new RNCS materials for the Senior Phase (Grades 7-9) in preparation for the implementation

dates to be confirmed. In addition, the implementation of a new secondary curriculum for the Further Education and Training (FET) band is planned for 2006. This is based on the assumption that after trialing, learners and teachers will be ready for the first Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) in the year 2008. This implies that the success of FET in 2008 relies heavily on successes of trialing (pre-implementation process) that is supposed to be taking place in the Senior Phase, specifically the Grade 8 of 2004. This study therefore considers this phase of schooling as a critical juncture in school curriculum change, in South Africa, and accordingly focuses on it.

1.1.2 Beliefs and Assumptions underpinning RNCS in South Africa.

It is inarguably true that the main thrust of the South African educational reforms adopt a socio-political perspective. One of the reasons that are usually given to justify this tendency is that in attempting to expunge apartheid social ills and social inequalities, policies inadvertently manifest socio-political implications. The Manifesto on values, education and democracy is a case in point. It identifies ten fundamental values contained in the country's Constitution for consideration in educating a child: democracy, social justice and equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu, an open society, accountability, respect, the rule of law and reconciliation (RNCS Overview, 2002). It is not immediately clear whether this faith in the redemptive qualities of the new curriculum recognises the degree to which the economic constraints; individuality; the in-service model in use; and contexts of learning and teaching contribute in reproducing the status quo. Moreover, it is not clear how the new curriculum is 'indigenised' by local teachers in the context of historically established social relations and other 'silent changes that are difficult to capture' (Chisholm, 2004).

The Manifesto also identifies sixteen strategies for familiarising young South Africans with the values of the Constitution. These find their expression in the RNCS and include among others: nurturing a culture of communication and participation in schools, freeing the potential of girls as well as boys, ensuring equal access to education, infusing the classroom with a culture of human rights, ensuring that every South African is able to read, write, count and think, role-modeling: promoting commitment as well as competence amongst educators and so on (RNCS Overview, 2002). One of the major challenges facing schools and teachers is how these desired values, beliefs, principles and strategies can be interwoven across both the planned curriculum and enacted curriculum in bringing about the kind of the learner that is envisaged.

In its recommendations the Review Committee suggested among other things that critical and developmental outcomes, learning outcomes and assessment standards be regarded as the RNCS main features and thus its main foundations. In turn, the outcomes and assessment standards emphasise ‘participatory, learner-centred, and activity-based education’ (RNCS Overview, 2002: 12). From a pedagogic standpoint, this is meant to place the learner at the centre of most curricular considerations. It is therefore my contention that both as an emphasis and a philosophy, learner-centred education aims to interweave those pedagogic strands that are meant to bring out the kind of the learner that is envisaged and ultimately the ‘democratic national character’ that is sought in our country. Unfortunately, in Chisholm (2004) literature with accounts of disjunctions between policy and practice; and major limitations in changing class as well as the vast webs of practices in the *post-apartheid* education system abounds.

Proceeding on the beliefs and assumptions underpinning RNCS, the kind of learner that is envisaged is premised on teachers' requisite pedagogic content knowledge to orchestrate suitable learning environment in which learners will be imbued with the values to act in the interest of the society, based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life, social justice, knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of the twenty first century (RNCS Overview, 2002). In short, the kind of learner that is envisaged is predicated on the kind of teacher that is envisaged to enact the learner-centred pedagogy in the classroom. This teacher is qualified, competent (to fulfill the various statutory roles such as mediators of learning and teaching, interpreters and designers of learning materials), dedicated and caring, lifelong learner, Learning Area and Phase specialist, assessor and so on (RNCS Overview, 2002). However, for most schools and teachers it is not clear whether teachers are adequately trained to understand and implement learner-centredness in their classroom. It is also not clear what teachers think, and how they experience their new roles in educating the kind of the learner that is envisaged in the classrooms. This case study aimed to investigate these issues in the two schools studied.

1.2 Rationale and Motivation for the Study

There are three major motivational factors for undertaking this study: personal experiences and academic reason; the apparent curriculum non-change in schools as a result of misrepresentation of the new curriculum processes by teacher trainers; and assumptions in the RNCS materials about learning and teaching that exist in schools.

Firstly, during my Masters coursework I wrote an assignment titled "Analysing the beliefs and assumptions on which OBE is based in South Africa". While doing a

literature review for that assignment it became clear to me that learner-centred education was given centrality in the RNCS. For example, Malcolm's (2000) metaphor of learner-centred education as "a central plank" of the NCS provided a powerful insight of this centrality. Writings by Fullan (1991), Young (1992), Tann (1993), Aaronsohn (1996), Sugrue (1997), Jansen (1997), Jansen and Christie (1999) Shkedi (1998), Malcolm (1999, 2000), Ritchie and Wilson (2000), Muller (2001, 2004) Chisholm (2004) and others increased my interest to learn more about the challenges of curriculum change in general, and of the challenges teachers face in their attempts to implement learner-centredness in their classrooms. In particular, I was interested in how they understand the central principles of the RNCS, the most important being learner-centred pedagogy.

Secondly, my observation and experience as a teacher in a high school suggest that for most teachers, Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) is a concept that holds the RNCS together. In fact, in the RNCS Natural Science (2003), learner-centred education is postulated as a sub-principle of OBE that must be reinforced throughout curriculum development. According to Harley *et al.* (2004) learner-centred education has its roots in particular history of educational contestation that is relatively independent of OBE. I can therefore, infer from these insights that naïvely felt assumptions and conflation of central principles and concepts (pedagogical content knowledge) of the RNCS are widespread in schools. I have already mentioned that there have been well-documented criticisms about the process of implementing C2005, in particular the way in which it has been misinterpreted by teacher trainers (Jansen, 1997; Muller, 2001, 2004; Christie and Jansen, 1999; Harley and Wedekind, 2004). Meanwhile most teachers in schools are complaining

about learners' lack of basic reading and writing skill in OBE classrooms. Yet, most are not aware of the requirement to adopt a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning. For me, the ways in which they understand and enact this principle would influence what they do and how they do it in their classrooms. This in turn would impact on the outcomes of their activities, including whether children can read or not. Hence, this study was also motivated by a need to articulate a better way of understanding learner-centred pedagogy and its practice.

Thirdly, the success of RNCS is premised on the new learning materials to emancipate the full humanity of each learner, through outcomes-based education and transformative pedagogy. Or to put that another way, the tenor of outcomes sought has developmental assumption about a desired point of direction (the kind of the learner that is envisaged) as well as learner-centred learning with several starting points with constant movement in all directions. Clearly, there is no theoretical support for one prescribed learning material in the envisaged learner-centred learning and teaching in the RNCS. The study was an effort to investigate particular understandings that teachers have about some of these assumptions and learner-centred pedagogy, and how these might translate into classroom practice and outcomes.

1.3 Focus and purpose of Inquiry

This study focuses mainly on teachers' understandings of the concept of 'learner – centredness', their experiences and perceived roles in enabling learner-centred education in their classrooms. Many researchers and writers in the field support the idea that

teachers use an organising principle to understand curriculum statements. Others have coined curricula organising principles as a “major idea” (Gudmundsdottir, 1991); a “curriculum script” (Doyle, 1990); or a “curriculum potential” (Ben-Peretz, 1975). The value of using the organizing principles is that they are central in managing both the planned curriculum as well as the enacted curriculum. The study therefore, aimed to investigate the kinds of organising principles or curriculum scripts the teachers were using when thinking about or in attempting or in enacting learner-centredness in the context of the new curriculum.

1.4 Research Questions

In declaring an interest in investigating teachers’ understandings of learner-centredness in the RNCS, one is faced with the task of formulating the aspects to be focused upon. To frame the proposed study, three questions were asked;

1. *How do teachers at the school understand learner-centredness in the RNCS?*

In terms of purpose and scope of the study, the inquiry is seeking to gain a better insight of how teachers understand learner-centredness in the RNCS against the background of school context that is shaping their teaching experiences and roles. The basic idea is that teachers’ understandings can be interpreted within a consensus on norms that determine what counts as a concept of learner-centredness in the RNCS and literature in relation to the presupposed curriculum trialing in schools. For this reason, teachers’ curriculum scripts needed to be understood from inside schools and from the interpretative point of view of their perceived roles and experiences.

2. What are teachers' experiences of a learner-centered pedagogy in the RNCS?

Research studies in curriculum change suggest that teachers' thinking about the curriculum stems from the fact that they all have a 'personal curriculum story to tell' (Tann, 1993). However, these stories often do not coincide with those of curriculum writers. Other available studies have shown that what teachers think tends to influence what they do in their classrooms (Clark and Petersen, 1980). It is for this reason that this study investigated the thinking and personal experiences of the teachers in enacting or attempting to enact learner-centred pedagogy in their classrooms.

3. What do teachers see as their roles in enabling learner-centredness in their classrooms?

As mentioned earlier teachers' understandings of the curriculum determine what they actually do in their classrooms. From this premise follows a pedagogical assumption that teachers' day-to-day routines that unfold in their classrooms are always situated in a larger context and a tacitly understood framework of norms, experiences, and values that give meaning to all activities occurring in schools (Windschitl, 2002). This has implications for the conceptions of their roles and how they handle pedagogic processes in the classrooms. As such, these influence how they see their roles as well as the roles of learners in the teaching and learning situation. Therefore, the study investigated the ways in which the teachers understood their roles in enabling learner-centredness in their classrooms.

I used the above three questions to investigate and describe how teachers at the two schools understood learner-centredness in the RNCS in relation to contexts in which they operate.

1.5 Organisation of the Report

This chapter has introduced the study and outlined its rationale and focus. In the second chapter, literature related to the conceptual and theoretical framework used in the case study is reviewed. The chapter provides the connecting point between the RNCS assumptions and beliefs; and the envisioned practice of learner-centered teaching in the classrooms. The third chapter presents the research design and methodology that was adopted in the inquiry. In the fourth chapter the findings and their analysis are presented, and the main findings outlined. In the last chapter, chapter five, discussion of the summary of the findings and implications of the findings are highlighted.

CHAPTER TWO

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 Introduction

This study investigated the ways in which four teachers in two Durban township secondary schools understood the concept of learner-centredness in their classrooms; and the ways in which they understood and therefore, enacted their roles in the context of a learner-centered curriculum. As stated in Chapter One, three research questions frame the study:

1. How do teachers at the school understand ‘learner-centredness’ in the RNCS?
2. What are teachers’ experiences of a learner-centred pedagogy in the RNCS?
3. What do teachers see as their roles in enabling learner-centredness in their classrooms?

The last chapter introduced the study, outlined its rationale and identified the research focus and question. The purpose of this chapter is to review local and international literature related to the above questions. From this review, conceptual and theoretical frameworks that have informed data collected and analysis in this study will be discussed.

2.2 Conceptions of learner-centredness

Although there might be a genuine commitment to learner-centred education in the RNCS, the document does not clearly identify what this means. There is no comprehensive definition of the concept on which teachers might base their understanding and practice. Instead, the policy refers vaguely to developmental processes

and roles of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment that are calling out for practical, fundamental and reflexive competences of teachings ‘to move the education centre of gravity towards the learner’ (Entwistle, 1970). To enable an appropriate conception of learner-centredness in the RNCS it would be useful to discuss briefly how learner-centred ideals came about in South Africa.

It may be true, that in its current form learner-centred education (LCE) or learner-centred pedagogy is associated with Deweyanism and early liberal-minded agenda in United States of America. However, as reviewed by Muller (2004) ‘the philosophy of pedagogical learner centredness’ was initially imported into South Africa in 1930s. Although thirty years later, it was revived owing to the progressivism of the English Plowden Report (Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (CACE)) in the 1960s (Sharp and Green, 1975), it still had very little impact because of *Apartheid* education policies which mainly promoted traditional teaching and its Christian National education ideology. In its deliberation the report declared that “at the heart of educational process lies the child” Plowden Report (1967: 9). This line became a slogan that has hitherto been used by the progressives (Sugrue, 1997) all over the world. Suffice it to say that learner-centred education lies on the ideological spectrum of progressivism. In this study attention is paid only to the progressivism aspect of learners ‘as active participants in their own education’.

In South Africa the only form of learner-centredness that existed and survived the *Apartheid* education policies is that which sought refuge in the private schools and Model

C schools (Muller, 2004). Towards the end of *Apartheid* and at beginning of the debates around school curriculum policy in early 1990s, it was given a new lease on life as the better alternative in Peoples' Education (Kraak, 1998). Mention has been made that in its revived form learner-centred education has become in words of Malcolm (2000) the 'central plank' of C2005 and RNCS.

In the RNCS, learner-centred education is framed by five principles: outcomes-based education; social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity; a high level of skills and knowledge for all; progression and integration; and clarity and accessibility (RNCS Overview, 2002). The assumption seems to be that learner-centred curriculum (both as core-curriculum and extra-mural curriculum) will reflect these characteristics and that teachers will understand what these mean and how they are to be enacted in practice. On the contrary, there have been well-documented evidence that teachers have 'a rather shallow understanding of the principles of C2005 and OBE' (DoE, 2000) and that they have difficulties to enact learner-centredness in the RNCS in schools (Brodie, 2000; Ensor, 2001; Graven, 2002 and Hoadlley, 2002).

Earlier, Zais (1976) wrote that learner-centered curriculum designs draw from two basic characteristics that differentiate it from those classified as subject-centred. The first set of characteristics takes their organisational cues from the individual learner rather than from the content. The second characteristic is derived from the belief that learner-centredness is not pre-planned but evolves as teachers and learners engage on the tasks of outcomes set. In both instances "the organisation of the curriculum for a particular group of learners

will depend upon the concerns, topics or problems that they center on; and the sequence will depend on where the learners are and how far they can go with the problems and situations that arise” (Stratemeyer, Hamden, McKim and Passow, 1957: 104).

Informed by this history, it is my contention that the RNCS is underpinned by principles that are essential for working towards the learner-centred aims of the education. These principles somewhat prefigure the kind of the learner-centred pedagogy that is envisaged in the RNCS. In a way, they offer a space within which to organize, manage and explain learner-centred pedagogy. On that score, one might concur with Muller’s (2004) assertion that the National Qualification Framework (NQF) driven learner-centredness in the RNCS has both organisational and administrative characteristics. This implies that teachers in developing learning programmes will have to use a single conceptual vocabulary meant for all modes of learning (DoL and DoE, 2003) while paying attention to the five principles of the RNCS and use activities, participation, assessment, processes and ways of teaching and learning materials that offer learners opportunities to explore them. They are collectively sensitive to learner-centredness in the RNCS and intrinsic to the pedagogy that aims to bring out the kind of the learner that is envisaged. Although these five principles are highly interrelated, each requires deliberate attention and focus. This dissertation offers only a brief description of these principles in the RNCS.

2.3 Teachers’ Experiences and Tools for Understanding the Curriculum

It is a central premise of this study that teachers possess multiple and subjective experiences and that the ways in which they conceptualise, describe and explain these

inform their understandings and enactment of curriculum, including that of a learner-centred pedagogy in the RNCS. Scott (1992) and Hennessy (1993) contend that teachers' experiences are a source of knowledge which offers them more visionary tools. Hence different individuals (teachers) use different "visionary tools" to describe and explain their experiences. These 'visionary tools' can include daily individual's own set of ideas used to understand and make meaning of curriculum realities. McNamara (1991) calls this view 'vernacular pedagogy', while Gudmundsdottir (1991) calls it the "curriculum story". Jansen and Christie (1999) refer to it as the 'defining features or a major symbolic identifier' of the new curriculum. For Fullan (1991), these are 'subjective multidimensional realities' that exert daily influences on teacher functions. Therefore, this study investigates and attempts to make sense of teachers' 'visionary tools' in expressing their own personal curriculum theory.

2.4 Learner-centred pedagogy

In order to understand the concept and practice of learner-centred pedagogy, it is important to distinguish between it and what is known as 'traditional teaching' or content-focused pedagogy; didacticism; transmission; teaching as telling; teacher-centred (Bullaough, 1992; Samuelowicz and Bain, 1992). The following operational definition was useful in guiding my understanding of traditional teaching, mainly used in the old National Education Department interim core syllabus, *NATED Report 550*. This refers to:

Any teaching in which the focus is on the content, about which the teacher is understood to be expert, and which must be "covered" in such a way that students will be able to show that they have acquired a certain body of knowledge. Student activity is that of watching and listening to the teacher. Students speak when called on in response to teacher questions.

Student conversation with other students is generally unauthorized (Aaronsohn, 1996: 177).

Aaronsohn's (ibid: 177) distinguishes this from learner-centred teaching, which she defines as:

Any teaching in which the focus is not on the teacher as performer, rescuer, or repository of wisdom, nor on the content as given material that must be covered, but on students' interaction with accessible, meaningful content, with one another, and with the teacher as facilitator of that interdependence. Process is an essential part of the content in this form of instruction.

In available literature, learner-centred pedagogy has been variously labeled, namely as 'developmental' (Blyth, 1965); 'craftsman teaching' (Gracey, 1974); 'individualistic' (Ashton, 1995); 'informal teaching' (Bennet, 1976); 'child-centred' (Entwistle, 1970); and 'process teaching' (Blenkin and Kell, 1983).

Thus, the ways in which the teachers in the two schools understand and use these distinctions in their enactment of the curriculum in general, and its learner-centred pedagogy, was the focus of this study.

For much of my own teaching experience, I have been trying to figure out how to teach in ways that all learners would equally benefit from. Not so long ago, I had intuitive thoughts and loose concept of differentiation as my 'visionary tool' of learner-centredness in the RNCS. This stems from tensions between balancing individual and group aims of education in the classroom. Reflecting on my own classroom experiences, I am perhaps at a stage now where I can safely say my own learner-centered conception

is somewhat evolving owing to a re-learning process and reconceptualisation that informed this study. For this reason, this study aimed to investigate the ways in which the teachers in the two schools are learning and re-learning their roles as necessitated by OBE and learner-centredness.

2.5 Conceptualisations of teachers and learners in learner-centred Curriculum

In the previous section I tried to distinguish between learner-centred pedagogy and content-focused pedagogy to highlight their conceptualisations of teachers and learners in curriculum. In this section I present an overview of some of the characteristics of teachers' and learners' roles in a learner-centered curriculum.

2.5.1 Teachers' Roles

As mentioned earlier, one of the many roles of the kind of teacher that is envisaged in the RNCS is to orchestrate a learner-centred pedagogy. To organise a learner-centred pedagogy involves “a plan of intentional action, encompassing the necessary activities and procedures, target, context and amount of time for that action. Developing such a plan also requires knowledge, in the case of instruction and subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogical content knowledge” (Reinhold, 1999:51). Following the theory of a ‘reasoned action’, the intention of the teacher is determined by outcomes set as a behavioral control. However, all the well-intentioned roles envisioned for learner-centred pedagogic processes and actions are meaningless if they reside outside the constructed identity of both the teachers and learners, and thus remain untheorised. For the teachers’ roles to reside within their constructed professional identity a certain level of theorising of personal experiences is necessary to set forth the process of *conscientisation*, which

Freire (1986) describes as a process of both reflection and action. Likewise, the National Department of Education (DoE) has mandated an Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) for the school-based teachers, to enable them to determine their strengths and weaknesses as way to set forth a process of reflection and action in enacting the RNCS.

The pedagogic framework of the RNCS therefore calls for teachers to reconceptualise their roles and to shift away from teacher-centred pedagogy to more learner-centred pedagogy. This shift refers to teachers' still having to focus on how to teach their subject or specialised knowledge but also having to develop expertise in assessment design, small group work, counselling and tutorial skills and use of IT and other resource-based learning facilities. Teachers' other envisioned roles are 'managers of learning, phase specialist and researchers' (RNCS Overview, 2002); 'coaches of learners to become managers of their own learning or life-long learners, nurturers of learners' (Aaronsohn, 1996), and to create a safe environment for learner growth, by interweaving the core principles of the RNCS into lessons and learner experiences. Clearly, the envisioned roles and competence transcend pedagogy and assessment and focus on enabling learners to learn by arranging and integrating school knowledge with everyday life and the world of work (Gultig, 2002). This implies that in learner-centred teaching, teachers need to find ways to follow where everyday life and the world of work lead the learners.

Hounsell (1979) posits that a shift towards a more learner-centered teaching must be seen as corollary for the concept of 'learning to learn'. The shift towards the latter, calls for teachers who implement it as a learner-centred teaching strategy not only to change their

teaching activities, but also their assumptions about teaching and learning (Waeytens, Lens and Vandenberghe, 2002). In their new activities, both the learners and teacher are considered as “active constructors of their own understanding” (Murphy, 1993:12). A pedagogical implication for this is that teaching should include techniques and strategies to process subject material.

One of the myths among teachers is that the RNCS or OBE is not preplanned, and that all that a teacher does is to facilitate learning by engaging learners on the tasks of set outcomes. In contrast, the RNCS Natural Science’s (2003) assertion that curriculum is to be implemented in schools by means of Learning Programmes, also stipulates that a Learning Programme is a phase-long plan that specifies the scope for teaching, learning and assessment and is a “structure and systemic arrangement of activities that promote the attainment of Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards for the phase” (RNCS Natural Science, 2003: 2). A Learning Programme, in turn, is translated into year long, Grade specific work schedules and shorter activity-long lesson plans and assessment. This implies that teachers have a particularly important roles to develop, sequence and flesh out curriculum framework rather than being the end user.

Obviously, such conceptions of the teacher and the classroom require a highly trained and competent teacher, and as available research in the country suggests, the South African education system has not been successful in training for curriculum change in general, and for the new roles enshrined in the RNCS and other policy documents. The question

this study attempted to address involved the ways in which teachers understand and translate these roles into practice in their classrooms.

2.5.2 Learners' Roles

As regards the kind of the learner that is envisaged in the RNCS, the document stipulates that learners' roles include life long learning (reading, writing and counting), independent and critical thinking, problem-solving, planning of investigations, constructing knowledge etcetera (RNCS Natural Science, 2003). These roles are meant to manifest in a number of individual and social relationships, as learner and teachers negotiate meanings and construct knowledge in the classrooms. In addition, roles of the kind of teacher that is envisaged in the classroom will have to demonstrate a sense of democratic values such as equality, human dignity, life and social justice (RNCS Overview, 2002). It is therefore, important that both learners and teachers know about their curriculum roles and expectations in order to make a conscious effort to live by them. Therefore, this study investigated the ways in which the teachers understood their roles in enabling the kind of learner-centred pedagogy that is envisaged.

In addition, there are new developments in learning such as “reflexive learning” (Guille and Young, 1999) which are also making a claim for learner-centred education. In terms of ‘reflexive competences’ for learners in the RNCS, learners are expected to demonstrate an ability to integrate or connect performances and decision making with understanding and ability to adapt to change and unforeseen circumstances and explain the reasons behind the actions (Policy Handbook for

Educators, ELRC, 2001). For such competence to be achieved teachers need to orchestrate a situation in which learners can demonstrate an ability to integrate or connect their roles and decision making to adopt or change or explain their actions. In doing so, while teachers maintain a critically reflective posture of what is happening in the classroom, a high priority is given to learners.

When these roles have been considered, important questions are asked, such as: How well do learners participate and make sense of the enacted learner-centred education and messages implicit in it? In the final analysis learners' roles are measured or judged by categories derived from a normative view of learning and teaching in Common Task Assessment (CTA) and role of a teacher as a 'seer' (Ayers, 1993) of the resultant outcomes would change as the range of strategies to help the learners develop and achieve outcomes at a high level are deemed necessary.

2.6 Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

A fundamental question for any study that sets out to investigate aspects of teachers' thinking in relation to learner-centredness in the RNCS concerns the assumptions that we make about teachers, learners, teaching and learning. As stated earlier, teachers' thinking about the curriculum stems from the fact that they all have a 'personal curriculum story to tell' (Tann, 1993). However, these stories do not always coincide with those of curriculum writers because of daily multidimensional subjective realities of change and context in which teachers operate. 'Daily subjective realities' of teachers are also very well documented (e.g., House and Lapan, 1978; Huberman,

1983; Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975 and Rosenholtz, 1989). Fullan's (1991) study illustrates:

Teachers are uncertain about how to influence students, especially about non-cognitive goals, and even about whether they are having an influence; they experience students as individuals in specific circumstances who, taken as a classroom of individuals are being influenced by multiple and differing forces for which generalizations are not possible; ... the rewards are having a few good days, covering the curriculum, getting a lesson across, having an impact on one or getting a lesson across, having an impact on one or two individual students (success stories); they constantly feel the critical shortage of time (Fullan, 1991: 33).

Therefore, this study is informed by the notion that teachers in the schools will experience similar or particular 'daily subjective realities' or personal stories to tell that are related to their understanding of; and enactment of the curriculum in general; and learner-centredness in particular. As more specific phenomenon of interest, teachers' experiences (as a source of knowledge which offers more visionary tools), are aspects of individual and social constructions that may prevent theoretical ideals of learner-centredness in the RNCS from being realised in practice in schools.

Three frames of reference are used to describe teachers' understandings of the concept of learner-centredness in the RNCS. They are teachers' understanding as visionary tools; contextual experiences and perceived roles. The three-part descriptive model reflects a continuum from individual to social constructions of school's operative curriculum and daily subjective realities that shape teachers' practices and how they each make sense of learner-centredness in the RNCS.

So far, the National Department of Education seems to assume that teachers will understand that Outcomes-based Education is a learner-centred, result-oriented design based on the belief that all learners can learn and that it has capacity to meet the needs of all learners irrespective of race, ethnicity gender and religious conviction. But exactly what does this mean? What sorts of theoretical perspectives are teachers needed to base their conceptual clarity of learner-centred education in the Revised National Curriculum Statement? As mentioned earlier, in the overall policy of learner-centered education in the RNCS, there are different purposes which are not well defined to enable a good understanding and implementation.

The major influences on curriculum change in South Africa that gave birth to the RNCS came from several theories that are located within the epistemology of transformation that includes interesting paradoxes (Skinner, 1999). It would be useful therefore to start by identifying some of those theoretical locations. I am also aware of the overlap and tensions of these theoretic locations. In this study attention is paid only to three of these conceptual and theoretical perspectives namely; social constructivism; multiculturalism and social justice.

2.6.1 Social Constructivism

Maxwell's (1996) assertion that a useful theory is one that tells an enlightening story about some phenomenon and one that gives new insight and broadens understanding, is a useful one. It seems such an enlightening story cannot be taken for granted among conceptions and theories that ideally inform learner-centredness in the RNCS.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this section is to try to articulate a theoretical framework that includes social constructivism as one of the perspectives in investigating how learner-entredness in the RNCS is enacted by teachers in schools against the background of institutional forces (daily subjective realities, curriculum stories, and other silent changes that might be difficult to capture) that influence their teaching experiences.

The primary focus here is on explicating a theoretical framework that is consistent with the concept and inquiry of learner-centredness in the RNCS, and not to defend it. And, inconsistent with the mandate to organise a learner-centred pedagogy that aims to “articulate, activate and energise rigorously, the South African perspective of transformation” DoE (1996a: 5, 1996b: 13, 38; and 1996c: 7), in schools teachers are struggling to realize the kind of the learner that is envisaged. Or put another way, teachers in schools are struggling to realise the vision of learners constructing their own knowledge and, by implication, so the desired perspective of transformation is somewhat compromised. A greater challenge has been lack of articulation between the conceptual, pedagogical, social and other planes of the constructivist teaching experience (Windeshitl, 2002), in so far as the mandate to activate and energise the envisaged social transformation.

To gain a meaningful perspective of constructivism, to paraphrase Phillip (2000), is made difficult by the fact that the domain of constructivism has many poles that while they serve to delineate its landscape, they do not take the reader very far from the other forms of constructivisms. In my view, this is perhaps because different literatures within the

education domain of constructivism support various conceptions of learning and teaching that while they differ somewhat share many concerns, intentions and emphases that are meant to reform schooling so that education outcomes are more equitable for learners. It is therefore useful to explore briefly some section of the education domain in order to make sense of the broader conceptual and pedagogical planes on which to ground learner-centredness in the RNCS.

In this study the domain of constructivism is mapped into two opposite poles; namely Kenneth Gergen's social constructivist perspective and von Glasersfeld's so-called individualistic (cognitive) constructivist perspective (Howe and Berve, 2000). On one hand, Gergen's social constructivists advance a thesis about bodies of knowledge that have been built up during the history of humans. The main thrust of his thesis is that knowledge construction requires sociological tools rather than epistemological ones. Hence, he asserts that knowledge is socially constructed and that it is determined by sociological forces such as politics, ideologies, values, religious belief and economic self-interest.

To paraphrase one of the most direct antithesis between the Gergen's social constructivist view and von Glasersfeld's cognitive constructivist view, the traditional view of teaching that takes the individual learner as the 'unit of analysis' in epistemology is entirely mistaken because the correct 'unit of analysis' is the social group or culture. In this sense, social group is where learners acquire language, stock of concepts and other cultural artifacts to differing degrees more or less as they construct meaning. Thus, from social

constructivist perspective, a major role of schooling is to create the social context for mastery and conscious awareness of the use of sociological tools in order to enable intellectual development. This constructivism is aptly called social constructivism.

On the other hand, there is von Glasersfeld's cognitive constructivist, which advances a thesis about how individuals learn and about how those who teach them to learn ought to teach. The main thrust of this thesis is that the centre of interest is the psychological understanding of individual learners because this is the 'unit of analysis', in epistemological sense. For this reason, von Glasersfeld fundamentally rejects the notion of shared meaning as precondition for making new meanings because no grounds exist for believing the conceptual structures that constitute meanings or knowledge are held in common among different individuals. From cognitive constructivist perspective the role of schooling is to encourage personal intellectual experiences of learners because knowledge is not a mere copy of the external world, nor is it acquired by passive transfer from teachers to learners.

Taking his thesis further, he argues that teachers cannot be certain that any two learners will construct the same understandings, even if they use the same linguistic formulations to express what they have learned. It is a view that seems to entrap individuals in worlds of their own making, which leave little room for adult influence and peers who are part of it. As regards to the RNCS it is a world that is delineated and ruled by pedagogical principles, democratic processes and learner's rights. As such, it is somewhat nested within the social context.

A reader might conclude that the mentioned characteristics offer a sharp distinction between the two versions of constructivism especially on the basis of unit of analysis, and sociological tools and epistemological tools. However, going through the two poles of the domain of constructivism with a fine-tooth comb, one picks up deep strands that are ostensibly linked. A common strand that seems to run between the two poles is the assumption that all learners are born into linguistic communities, and in that way they become saturated with particular cultural, historical and social oriented ways of constructing meanings regardless of whether they can be shared or not held in common.

Following from a similar view the RNCS Overview (2002:20) states that “learners’ home language should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible”. As can be seen this linguistic priority serves ‘to move education centre of gravity towards the individual learner’ (Entwistle, 1970). It recognises the multiplicity of classroom voices that must be taken into account at the ‘chalk face or front line’ (Coffey, 2000) of an operative curriculum in which learner-centering is the aim education. In the current South African multicultural context, this means that teachers need to make distinctions between cooperative learning approaches with emphasis on interdependent decision affirming cultural orientation of groups, and the kinds of group work in which learners sitting together do essentially individual work as a way to accommodate cultural differences among learners. As regards to the two African schools this means that teachers need to acknowledge various Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). The latter refers to a body of knowledge which is embedded in various African philosophical thinking and social

practices through which the most learners make sense of and attach meaning to the world they live (RNCS Natural Science, 2003).

It follows therefore that constructivism in the context of learner-centredness in the RNCS has both individual and social components which are easy to identify, and yet, at the same time they are difficult to articulate in practice. The conceptual point is that neither cognitive constructivism is capable to dispose completely of its social component nor social constructivism is capable to create a neutral context to enable shared meanings. From this view follows an assumption that learning occurs as individuals contribute to and appropriate socially constructed ideas and knowledge (Howe *et al.*, 2000). It is this requirement built into the learner-centredness in the RNCS that makes the contrast between individual and social difficult to articulate in practice.

To overcome these conceptual and pedagogical difficulties others have focus on either cognitive constructivism or social constructivism, and some have used moderate social constructivism such as Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist perspective that knowledge is shaped by micro- and macro-cultural influences. But I still prefer a much broader perspective the two versions of constructivism provide. This is largely because the context in which I conducted this investigation necessitated that I understand not only construction by individuals but also construction of the self and others. For this reason, a more thoroughgoing view that does not interrupt the relevant landscape of constructivism was deemed necessary. The important point to note about my preference of a broader domain of constructivism is that the title in this section becomes a misnomer.

Nonetheless, to articulate and organise social constructivism does not mean simple application of sociological tools and focusing on the social components as unit of analysis. Instead, there are deeper conceptual underpinnings, ambiguities, contradictions and compromises that are part of enabling a learner-centred pedagogy in a constructivist setting. This study investigated the extent to which the four teachers understood these characteristics and distinctions.

2.6.2 Multiculturalism

A second framework utilised in this study is that of multiculturalism. According to Gay (1995:155):

Multicultural education shares many of the concerns, intentions, and emphases of other educational innovations designed to reform schooling so that its positive benefits and effects are more accessible, equitable and effective for a wide variety of student populations. Among these innovations are intergroup education, progressive education, humanistic education, child-centred education, citizenship education and the more recent developments in critical pedagogy (Gay, 1995:155).

A common pedagogic strand that runs throughout those innovations is their concern about conditions that characterise the complexity of the new classroom. What characterises the new classroom is summed up in Barnett and Hallam's (1999 : 146-147), who contend that a "conspiracy has grown up between both teacher and taught to ensure that pedagogical processes are as free as possible of unpredictability, stress, openness and multiple contenting voices". Also, as a result of freedom of movement around the country brought about by the end of Apartheid policies, not only have suburbs' classrooms have changed, but those in the townships have changed as well. Hence, the diversity of cultures, languages and socio-economic status within schools are increasingly and rapidly

making new demands on all schools and teachers (Paterson and Kruss, 1998). In turn the new cultural demands bear upon individual learners' unmet needs and interests which the schools must take into account.

The multicultural sensitivity of learner-centred curriculum is mainly intended to acknowledge the roles of each learner's interest and experiential background by allowing curricular considerations to vary from one school to another, one learner to another (Perold, 1995). However, as observed by Moletsane (1999) teachers in schools tend to continue to use 'assimilationist approaches' to fit learners into existing ethos and culture of the schools as a way to respond to classroom complexities to maintain the status quo. Manganyi (1991) writes that learners have to learn their way through the competing ontologies and epistemologies that are derived outside their 'cultural orbit'. This implies that children especially in majority society are excluded as a result of education that does not center on their unmet interests and needs. Therefore, teachers need to separate learners' need from their own (Aaronsohn, 1996) by centering attention on interest-serving conditions of learners, their needs, abilities, struggles and growth.

Referring to African-centred pedagogy in the United State of America, Murtadha (1995: 361) recalls James McDonald's (1988) notion of centering as the aim of education to highlight a need to enable learners who are marginalised in the provision of education.

He states that:

Centering as the aim of education calls for the completion of the person or the creation of meaning that utilises all the potential given to each person. It in no way conflicts with the accumulated knowledge of a culture; it merely places this knowledge in the base or ground from which it grows. As such,

centering is the fundamental process of human being that makes sense out of our perceptions and cognitions of reality (McDonald, 1988: 188).

Thus, centering as purpose of education pays attention to the instructional messages and implications for styles and characteristics of learning and teaching practice. In this sense it deemphasizes the normative pedagogy and encourages teaching and learning that form the basis for transformative pedagogy that is more affirming of differentiation and individualism (Murtadha, 1995). Then again, like Young (1992) I argue that even though teachers ought to deemphasize normative pedagogy, they are still engaged in a transmission of an ideology and those who believe that they are not, are merely themselves victims of an ideology. This begs the question: What sorts of educational ideology must teachers possess in order to deemphasize the normative pedagogy and teach in a more transformative pedagogy? This study in part, examined how teachers in the schools organised or attempted to organise a pedagogy that is more affirming of differentiation and individualism in their practice.

2.6.3 Social Justice

The RNCS Natural Science (2003: 6) stipulates that the principle of “social justice serves to remind all humanity (government and civil society), that the needs of all individuals and societies should be met within the constraints imposed by the biosphere, and that all should have equal opportunity to improve their living conditions”. This can be read simply to mean that one of the teachers’ responsibilities in school is to interweave a principle of social justice in their practice in order to adequately educate learners in their care. This might mean, therefore, that the principle of social justice that teachers must organise in their practice, aims to answer questions such as: Who are the learners in my

class? What are their hopes, dreams, and aspirations? What are their passions and commitments? What skills, abilities and capabilities does each one bring to the classroom? However, organising a learner-centred pedagogy in which the individual is the focus of attention is as teachers have shown, marked by role conflicts, even if the intentional action is desirable. Central to these role conflicts is the absence of appropriate ideological perspectives to inform the envisaged roles.

According to Ayers (1998) the fundamental message of the teacher for social change must be to hope for better life and struggle to understand and achieve that better life. In order to convey that message, teachers would need a “social justice conscience and a dialectic stance: with one eye firmly on the learners and the other eye looking unblinkingly at the concentric circles of context, historical, cultural and economic reality” (Ayers, 1998: xviii). The central paradox of the preceding is that while the individual learner is the focus of attention, it is the social cooperation in the class that enables a better learning experience than any learner would have if each one learned solely by his or her own effort. Ideally, participating in this form of social cooperation and regulation is meant to facilitate mutual proficiency which learners internalise as individual competency. For this reason, the notion of Vygostskian ‘zone of proximal development (ZPD)’ is considered when organising learners in order to orchestrate learner-centred pedagogy. Bruner (1989: 24) describe this zone as:

...the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined by independent problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

The pedagogical assumption of the ZPD is that if knowledge is acquired spontaneously in relation to social and firsthand experience forgetting is less likely. When examined closer, the nature of the social justice teaching that is sought in the RNCS offers an alternative to the rather isolated and rigid ways of learning and teaching, as well as an alternative to the lack of intrinsic motivation in some learners. In a very real sense, it is meant to provide a humane perspective of assigning development roles in the classrooms as well as an appropriate distribution of outcomes that highlight the individual differences. This study investigated and attempted to make sense of how teachers take account of learners' differences and assign appropriate outcomes to different learners.

Furthermore, social justice teaching is meant to arouse learners, engaged them in a quest to identify obstacles to their full humanity, to their freedom, and then to drive, to move against those obstacles (Ayers, 1998). As such, neither does it emphasise nor does it destroy natural inequality, but rather it serves as a learner-centred pedagogic lense through which to see where the potential given to each learner leads in the context they operate. This study also examined the ways in which teachers organised their thoughts and practice to reflect and act on natural inequalities in their classrooms.

Thus, this dissertation argues that in order for teachers to effectively implement a learner-centred pedagogy in their classroom, they need to be conscious of, understand and have the skills to use diverse learner characteristics to identify and implement appropriate teaching and learning strategies. The ways in which teachers in this study were conscious of, as well as able to address these characteristics of learners was the focus of this study.

2.7 Towards a learner-centred perspective

With so many interconnected theoretical lenses, a major challenge the study presented was how to interweave an appropriate learner-centred perspective. To overcome this challenge, a coalescence conceptual model was adopted. It combines notions of multiculturalism, social constructivism and social justice. It blends the ideas of multiculturalism's goal of social justice with the notions of learning through social constructivism. Gilbert (2002) calls this theoretical orientation Socio-Transformative Constructivism (STC). This coalescence conceptual model "is suggested as an alternative orientation to teaching and learning that takes into account how social, historical, and institutional contexts influence learning and access to learning in schools" (Rodriguez, 1998: 590).

My preference to use a coalescence perspective rather than a single one is also in recognition of Aaronwitz and Giroux's (1991: 116) assertion that "no tradition ...can speak with authority and certainty for all of humanity". It became necessary, therefore, to situate the investigation of teachers' understandings, roles and experiences within a wider framework to enable a better 'way of practicing that is different from traditional ones' (Usher and Edwards, 1994) as well as interpretation and analysis. Thus, to reiterate the point made elsewhere, the study was premised on the notion that teachers possess multiple and subjective experiences and varied ways to conceptualise their understandings of the concept of learner-centredness. On that score, the study is situated within a larger and problematic postmodern framework, in asserting varied voices of participants. Also as part of the normative and ideographic approach to focus the study, a

distinction needed to be constantly drawn between the two main ‘grand narratives’ of teaching: traditional teaching (content-focused teaching) and transformative pedagogy (learner-centred teaching) (Sugrue, 1997).

It is these conceptual and theoretical locations, their tensions, subtleties and blending that have been influential in framing how I understand issues and debates that relate to learner-centredness in the RNCS. It is my belief that in the South African context, if teachers are serious about learner-centred pedagogy, their curricula should reflect a good understanding of these characteristics and contexts. In addition, it must include an understanding of the underlying philosophies among many other issues of educational importance. Thus, in investigating the ways in which teachers understand and enact learner-centredness in their classroom and what informs these, the contexts in which their teachings take place were examined.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has formulated a conception of learner-centered teaching by drawing primarily on the Revised National Curriculum Statement and secondarily on the literature. The chapter has identified the main differences between learner-centred pedagogy and traditional teaching in terms of their conceptualisations of teachers’ and learners’ roles; and presented a coalescence theoretical perspective that informed the study. The next chapter presents the research design and methodology that was used to collect and analyse data.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate the ways in which four teachers in two Durban township secondary schools understand and enact learner-centred pedagogy in their classroom. The last chapter presented a review of literature and framework that informed the study. From these, three research questions were identified and used to organize the inquiry:

1. How do teachers at the schools understand ‘learner-centredness’ in the RNCS?
2. What are teachers’ experiences of a learner-centred pedagogy in the RNCS?
3. What do teachers see as their roles in enabling learner-centredness in their classrooms?

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research design and methodology used in the inquiry.

3.2 Research Design and Methodology

To address the three research questions identified above, this inquiry adopted a case study design. This is because the case study is ideally suited to explore teachers’ understandings and to acquire an insight into their effects in contexts and cultures they operate. The case study involved a single round of data gathering to gain an insight and interpretations of particularly understandings of teachers’ conceptions of learner-centredness in the RNCS. In the following sections the case study design and the methodology are presented.

3.2.1 Case Study Design and Methodology

What make this inquiry a case study is its foci on instances, that is, its focus is primarily on the two secondary schools (classrooms) and secondarily on teachers as instances studied (Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemmis, 1983). To set up the case study design three main steps were considered. The first step involved the formulation of a researchable conception of learner-centredness in the RNCS and literature. The second step was considered for the inquiry to explore and describe the understandings, experiences and roles within which teachers as users of the RNCS have to work, in their schools. Also, it is common for a researcher to begin with the identification of an experience or 'area of every day practice' (Smith, 1987) that is taken as the experience whose determinants are to be explored and then go on to investigate the institutional processes that are shaping how individuals understand and implement the innovation.

Paralleling these preconditions, Merriam (1988) asserts that a case study is useful for investigators to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation (contextual understandings of learner centredness in the RNCS) and its meaning for teachers involved in the two high schools. This was meant for the respondents to highlight the importance of context (indigenised social relations and practices) in their construction of the concept of learner-centred pedagogy and enactment of appropriate principles in their practice.

In the third step of research design, I needed to enable respondents to move beyond mere words or sloganised terminology of learner-centredness in the RNCS or outcomes-based

education; in order to reflect on tensions, actions, dilemmas and counter arguments and claims. This was achieved by encouraging respondents to move away from mere ritual commitment to the concept and reflect on the socio-historical context in relation to their understandings, experiences and roles of the concept of learner-centredness in the RNCS.

Thus, the case study is set up as a bound case or system, within which issues are indicated, discovered or studied so that a full understanding of the case is possible (Adelman *et al.*, 1983). However, it is not possible to treat an individual teacher as a bound case or isolated from the host institution or school as isolated from the district. The difficulty is that educational change is not a single entity even if one would want to keep the enquiry at the level of the school (Fullan, 1991). The conceptual point in this case study design is therefore teachers' stories about the operative curriculum rather than planned curriculum. That is, what teachers actually experience and have to do as conditioned by the operative curriculum or 'hidden curriculum' of the schools.

According to Fullan (1991) there are at least three components or dimensions at stake in implementing any new programme or policy: (1) the possible use of new or revised materials (2) the possible use of new teaching approaches (e.g. learner-centred pedagogy) (3) the possible alteration of beliefs (e.g., pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programmes). In adapting Fullan's model I located qualitatively each informant's responses along the model to elicit their understandings, experiences and roles in enacting learner-centredness in the RNCS.

The study was deliberately exploratory and interpretative, as is characteristic of a qualitative investigation in case studies. In most instances the need for such a case study, arise out of a lack of basic information on new area of practice, such as, learner-centredness in the RNCS, in order to become familiar with the innovation (Fouche, 2000). Since the study aims to identify qualitatively different ways in which teachers understand and experience learner-centredness in the RNCS as a ‘reality’ in which they must operate in terms of deep and surface approaches of teaching, the inquiry warranted paying closer attention to teachers’ curriculum stories and meanings (Marton, 1986). Consequently, qualitative methodology was used. This involved using *semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires* to address the identified research questions.

3. 3 Research Setting and Sampling

As indicated in the title, there are two research settings for this case study. They are two typical overcrowded township high schools which are situated in the south of Durban. In both schools the learner population is African. The teacher–learner ratio in the classroom is about 1:75. The significance of the settings is twofold. Firstly, it highlights the effect of economic constraints in implementing school curriculum policies as both schools suggest a strong resolve to overcrowd classrooms. Secondly, as will be shown later, it highlights schools’ justifications for existing practices and how teachers disclaim other parts of the RNCS. Similarly, Harley *et al.* (2004: 202) have found that although teachers agree that “OBE is a good policy’ they also justify curriculum non-change in their schools by saying ‘it’s not for us’.

Yet, in these schools teachers are complaining that ever since the ban of corporal punishment children are not putting effort in their work. They also claim that the principle of progression in GET is blame-worthy for the crises. They do not see overcrowded classroom and school curriculum inertia as major cause for lack of discipline.

A verbal request was made to the four participants to take part in the study and letters were sent to request one lesson observation in each school and for each teacher.

Pseudonyms are used in this report to protect the identity of the teachers and the two schools. The two schools are referred to as Thulani High School and Moya High Schools respectively.

3.3.1 The School Setting

Since the case study is primarily focused on the two schools studied, it is therefore useful for a substantive focus in case study to describe the host institution or school (classroom) as a larger setting and context in which educational innovation is attempted (Merriam, 1988). The following section gives a brief description of the two schools.

Thulani High School is situated on the edge of an African township and sprawling informal settlements, south of Durban. The school had a learner enrolment of 1300 and 18 classrooms in March 2004, out of which 1270 learners remained at the end of the school year. There were 37 teachers of which 20 were female and 17 male. One of the teachers was Indian. The school starts at 7h00 and ends at 15h00, between 7h00 and 8h00

there is a compulsory morning study for all learners to help them to study and to finish their homework. It is supervised by Learner Representatives and the Principal, and teachers seldom assist. After the study teachers and learners pray to start the day.

Moya High School is situated in the middle of the same township south of Durban. In a radius of 150 meters, there is approximately four acres of scattered informal houses. The school enrolment is 1110 learners and 30 educators. There are 21 classrooms. The school starts at 7h30 and finishes at 14h30. Quite coincidentally, the morning assembly was suspended when I was at the school. Learners' were protesting against what respondents told me was a unilateral decision by the school regarding prayers. School has a study period in the afternoon and is usually meant for the Grade 12 learners. A few teachers, mostly in the senior classes take turns to supervise the afternoon study.

According to the respondents, both schools do not have deliberate school-based teacher development programmes other than those that are organized by the Department of Education or other agencies. It stands to reason therefore, that individual teachers in the schools are mainly exposed to the 'cascade model' that is used by teacher trainers. This implies that teachers rarely get an opportunity to formulate coherent curriculum understanding and processes in the schools. Since teachers in high school operate within subject departments, it is reasonable, therefore to infer that teaching in each of the two schools is mainly content-focused owing to walled off school curriculum along content or subject matter. It is therefore likely that a situation in which 'anything goes' (Mahomed, 2002) or a sense of classroom privatism is widespread in schools studied.

3.3.2 The Respondents

Two Grade 9 Natural Science teachers from Moya High School and two Grade 8 Mathematics teachers from Thulani High School were the main respondents in the study. Again, pseudonyms have been used to protect their identities and the identities of the schools in this report.

At Thulani High School, Thembi and Sipho participated in the study. **Thembi**, is in comparison the youngest participant in the study. At the time of the study, she was teaching Grade 8 and 9 Mathematics. Needless to say, she also had the least number of years of experience in comparisons to the other participants in the study. She is a personable young teacher and usually wears casual outfits. Thembi, is well liked by children and has a good rapport with school staff. She seems to be busy wherever she is within the school. Her other responsibility outside the classroom is that of fundraising for the school feeding scheme, taking care of learners that have been identified as 'needy'. According to her, most of them usually come to school on almost empty stomach.

Sipho, is a Grade 8 and Grade 11 Mathematics teacher, and Grade 12 Functional Mathematics teacher. He has taught for over fifteen years. Although he has a good sense of humour, somehow his large built body frame creates an impression of authority persona. Two years prior to this study, he had served in the School Governing Body and as teacher representative of one of the teacher unions. He was the first participants to

agree to be in the study. At the time of this study, he was furthering his Mathematics education at one of the local universities.

The respondents at Moya High School included Cynthia and Bheki. **Cynthia**, is a middle-aged, **Physical Science** and **Mathematics** teacher with over 15 years of teaching experience. At the time of the study she taught Grade 9 **Natural Science**, Grade 8 **Technology** and Grade 10 and 12 **Physical Science**. She is petite and often wears a white lab coat at school. She demonstrated a very warm relationship with her peers and learners. She told me that about ten years ago she was awarded a three months Teachers Leadership course bursary to go to one of the prestigious universities in the United Kingdom. She is a regular adjudicator for Young Scientist Expo, both locally and at national level. At the time of the inquiry she was preparing for her own examinations, at one of the local universities.

Bheki, is an inspirational teacher in his early fourties. He has fifteen years of teaching experience. At the time of the study, he was teaching Grade 9 **Natural Science**, Grade 11 **Physical Science** and Grade 12 **Mathematics**. He seemed to have good relations with everyone in the school, even the principal spoke well of him as a teacher. During one of the lesson observations for the data collection, he used interesting theatrical gestures to explain science concepts that were studied in the class.

The choice of the Learning Areas was meant to create a context that the investigator and respondents were comfortable with in relation to the concept of learner-centred pedagogy

(Stodolsky, 1993). This is therefore a convenient and a non-probability sample.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

As mentioned in the preceding sections this case study design used questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations as data collection methods. The following section sketches out how each method was used to collect data and what sorts of considerations were given when they were used.

3.4.1 Questionnaires

Verbal invitations and arrangements were made with the respondents to get them to participate in the study. After agreements were made, each of the four informants was given a questionnaire to elicit personal experiences and thinking about learner-centredness in the RNCS.

One of the challenges of designing questionnaires in a case study is to find questions that engage both the respondents as well as the researcher. In keeping with the ideographic approach of the study, I adopted Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2000) 'funnel and filter' to overcome that challenge. By using funnel process, I was able to move respondent's attention from general issues of RNCS to the specific points of learner-centered pedagogy in the RNCS. Also, in following a normative view of the study, a filtration process was adopted to include experiences that provided insight and excluded certain responses which were outside the scope of the inquiry. These processes were particularly helpful to focus on the purpose and scope of the investigation.

3.4.2 Interviews

Four semi-structured interviews were recorded at an average of about 37 minutes per each respondent. These interviews were conducted in English using a one-to-one semi-structured interview method. According to Cohen and Manion (1994) the interviewer is allowed to use prompt to clarify topics and questions, while the probing questions enable the interviewer to ask informants to extend, add to their responses; thereby addressing the richness, depth of response, comprehensiveness and trustworthiness that are a hallmark of successful interview. These were considered as part of the qualitative nature of the inquiry.

The four interviews were transcribed to A4 paper. After completing the transcripts I returned to the respondents with an aim to check some parts of the transcripts with them. The point of the exercise was more to do with “putting the record straight” (Denscombe, 1998:133).

3.4.3 Classroom Observation

In addition to the four questionnaires and four semi-structured interviews, one lesson observation for one teacher in each school was documented, that is, two in Grade 8 and two in Grade 9. Each lesson observation lasted for about 50 minutes. Therefore, a total of four lessons were observed in this study and about 300 learners were involved.

According to Cohen *et al.* (1994), for an authentic lesson observation to take place the activity of the investigation is classed as observation when it affords the researcher an opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations. One of the challenges of gathering

live data was to focus on the many and often unrelated directions of interactions in the classrooms. In each of the four lessons, authentic lesson observation meant to see a 'live' teacher talking down on learners in an overcrowded classroom with bare walls, and most learners sitting in three per desk. To ensure that most episodes and events of the live situations were documented sketches were drawn and notes written to capture and generate text data from the 'live data'

There are two types of observations that are normally used in classroom observation; namely, participant and non-participant. The participant observation takes a view of a researcher as regular participant in the activities being observed to gain insider knowledge about social interaction. Whereas, non-participant observation takes a view that the researcher is not a member of the group under investigation.

Paraphrasing Aaronsohn (1996) one of the realities of a high school culture is a distance among teachers and not being sure of what other teachers are doing. As a teacher in one of the participating schools in the study, this meant approaching the lesson observations, in large part, as a non-participant observer. Also, in keeping with Socio-Transformative Constructivism and basic tenets of learner-centered pedagogy that teaching is more about looking at how learners learn rather than how teachers teach. I needed to focus mainly on evidenced learners' roles and ways in which the teacher engaged them in the situation they operated. To focus the inquiry I asked questions such as: 'Who talks mostly and how? What sorts of on-task-behaviors of learners are in evidence? Is the lesson paying

attention to the creation of meaning that uses all the potential given to each learner in the classroom?

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was continuous throughout the study. Initial data analysis informed subsequent research questions. Once data collection was complete, a more focused data analysis began. First, for the interview data analysis I used a *Sanyo TRC 8800 transcriber* to transcribe teachers' narratives and these were later typed on A4 size paper. For the sake of transcription quality a turn -by-turn conversation analysis was considered (Silverman and Heritage, 1984 cited in Poland 1999). A 'text' data was then coded and analyzed according to the categories derived from research questions, emergent themes and to formulate their clusters.

According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994) data analysis technique of using unitized data and photocopies of coded data on large chart is useful. For this reason, this study used photocopies of coded data to pages from the respondent's source documents, that is, (IV = Interview, QN = Questionnaire, and LO = Lesson Observation) and divided the responses into units of meaning, for example (Bheki, IV p.7). In addition, the text data obtained from the lesson observation and questionnaire responses were analyzed by means of clusters, themes, and contrasting and comparison (Miles and Huberman, 1990 cited in Kvale, 1996) to maximise participants thinking about the research issue. In this way it was easy to return to the original data set when necessary to see differences and identify any similarities and frequencies or responses patterns. This ensured a permanent

trail of field notes and transcripts and hence constant comparative method of data analysis was presented. In accord with the constructivist approach in this inquiry it is useful to mention that data analysis is viewed as construct that not only locate the data in place; culture; context and time but also reflects the researcher's thinking.

3.6 Establishing Trustworthiness

It is worth pointing out that in imparting their every day life experiences, teachers tell stories about themselves but they do not do so in a socially neutral stance (Smith, 1987). I am therefore mindful that it would be naïve to believe that teacher's telling of the story solely meant to give oneself away. To maximise trustworthiness of respondents' stories I returned to them to put right their stories in the first transcript; and I observed the context in which the schools operated and how social interactions operated in the classrooms. As part of the case study design trustworthiness was further maximised by selecting two respondents sharing the Learning Area, in each of the high schools studied.

3.7 Ethical Considerations and Design Limitations of the Study

In the report pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of both the schools and participants. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants before they participated. Teachers were also given time to read, ask questions and reflect on the research issues. Dates of data collection were negotiated and confirmed between the researcher and informants. These deadlines were often not met owing to teachers' other commitments which had to be accommodated from time to time.

In my view, there are four major design limitations of the study that actually stand out. Firstly, it is the number of the instances studied in relation to the whole of Durban teacher population and schools. In view of the sample of two schools and four teachers, and approximately 300 learners indirectly involved in this study the findings and analysis presented in chapter four cannot be generalisable to all schools and teachers, but can serve as valuable 'test bed' (Robson, 1993) for which the case study is appropriate. Secondly, it is the unavailability of the adequate and relevant research materials and appropriate inquiry to investigate learner-centred teaching experiences and roles. Thirdly, it is a dearth of literature with a comprehensive definition of learner-centred pedagogy in the RNCS. Nevertheless, the study was proposed on the strength to make a contribution and to relearn.

The fourth limitation was a direct result of the last two mentioned limitations. To overcome them I needed to order and wait for three months for Elizabeth Aaronsohn's (1996) *Going against the Grain: Supporting the Student-Centered Teacher*. Essentially, it is the rich case study in her book that was instrumental in how I framed the concept of learner-centredness in this study.

This chapter has outlined the research design and methodology that was used to collect and analyse data in the study. The next chapter presents findings from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of Data and Findings

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the main findings and analysis of data from the study. In keeping with the organisation of the report which was outlined in chapter one, the findings are presented according to the three research questions: (1) how do teachers at the schools understand learner-centredness in the RNCS? (2) what are teachers' experiences of learner-centred pedagogy in the RNCS? and (3) what do teachers see as their roles in enabling learner-centredness in the RNCS? In this analysis findings from the three research questions are highlighted in terms of what they have in common; and how they resonate with the contextual realities that are shaping them in the schools.

4.2 How do teachers understand learner-centredness in the RNCS?

The salient 'visionary tools' that teachers have used to understand curriculum change in general and learner-centeredness (Scott, 1992 and Hennessy, 1993) suggest several understandings of the latter. Firstly, the four teachers in this study understand learner-centredness to be a directive teaching that focuses on the learner as an individualistic receiver of knowledge. Secondly, they understand it to mean a group-oriented teaching to ameliorate classroom complexities. Thirdly, they understand it as an activity-based curriculum in which learners play important roles; and fourthly, they understand it to mean learning that originates from learners and where teachers do not impose on learners. Each of the unfolding 'visionary tools' highlighted one of the meanings or themes of meanings in teachers' understandings of the concept of learner-centredness in the RNCS.

Some appeared in some form or another in most as shown in some of the following instances. These are discussed in the next sections.

4.2.1 Learner-centredness as focusing on the individual learner.

As described above, the four teachers in the study tended to talk about learner-centredness as a directive teaching that focuses on the learner as an individualistic receiver of knowledge. This is contrary to the conceptualisation of the concepts in the RNCS and secondary literature, which describe learner-centredness as teaching that focuses on the learners mediated interaction with meaningful content and processes in which both teachers and learners are active constructors of their understandings (Aaronsohn, 1996). In this section, Thembi's understanding is used to exemplify how the four teachers spoke about their understandings of learner-centredness: To the question, "what is your understanding of the concept learner-centredness"? She responded:

I think learner-centred education means that education should focus on the learners, and making sure that what you taught was 'grasped' by learners (Thembi, IVp.11).

She described learner-centredness in the RNCS to mean:

Finding out what learners understand and what you are teaching and to make sure that at the end of the day most of the learners have understood the content of what you were teaching. It means making sure what you taught was grasped by learners (Thembi, IVp.11).

It is well illustrated in the foregoing that in the absence of an agreed framework in which teaching can be discussed, teachers may talk about their approach in terms of contrasts with the style which they attribute to learners (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999).

In the literature I have identified two common conceptions of teaching that can be contrasted with Thembi's 'visionary tool' of learning as "grasping" or absorbing (as later corrected by respondent). They are imparting information and transmitting knowledge to learners. Both can be contrasted with a notion of receiving content knowledge. Holt (1967) argues that this way of teaching reinforces learning as 'answer-pulling' and is characteristic of a content-centred teaching approach. Contrary to this point of view, learner-centred teaching does not encourage a view of the content as given material that is passively received, but rather it is learners' interaction with accessible, meaningful and negotiated content that is emphasized (Aaronsohn, 1996).

Seeking clarity from Thembi, I added a qualification: How would you ensure that learners grasped what you have taught? In her response she continued:

Like, for example, in mathematics, when you go to class with an aim of teaching angles of triangles, you divide them into groups and instruct them to draw any triangles. A triangle they would draw will not be 100 %. So, I will ask them to draw as many as possible and identify the number of interior angles and measure them, to add the sum of interior angles to give 180 ° (Thembi, IVp.11).

According to her scenario an opportunity presented itself to talk more about how learners learn and understand triangles and what sort of intuitive thoughts learners bring into the class when taught triangles. What seems to be subliminally present in her 'visionary tool' is an anticipation of side-effects that must be avoided because they are likely to complicate or destabilise her relation with learners (Reynolds and Saunders, 1987). According to Olson (1980) this happens when teachers have no reliable techniques available to handle the practical dilemmas as result of this they tend to adhere to ways

that are familiar and thus choose to operate mainly along subject lines. To illustrate, let me first accept hypothetically that learners participate by drawing many triangles and by identifying various angles in groups. But then, in doing so learners' participation is all made for listening and reproducing textbook shapes and algorithms. It is therefore my contention that to conceptualise what is required in implementing a learner-centred pedagogy in their classrooms, teachers will have to place in the foreground of a lesson how learners learn (make sense of triangle as a concept) and move on to center the content or materials to be learned according to the individual and group needs and interests.

Similarly, Larsson (1983) argues that there is little or no need for wholesale directive teaching, if it does not pay attention to how children learn, and if it does not afford learners an opportunity to formulate their own ways of seeing the world. However to justify her directive teaching, Thembi argues that:

My experience is that, when they work as individuals it is easy to tell who is really working, and I give them work as individuals. I prefer learners as individual instead of groups (Thembi, IVp.13).

So the respondent does not recognise learning as proceeding in social contexts, hence her focusing on the individual learner is what takes priority in her teaching style. Or perhaps this may be her oversimplification of the learner-centred perspective. What ever case maybe. I want to argue that teachers need sensible intellectual anchors to support their thinking, understanding and how ideals of the RNCS can be organised.

As basis for focusing on the individual learner, the individual constructivism posits that meaningful learning is rooted in and based on personal experience. However, studies have shown that learners who are made to experience the difficult of contradictory beliefs and values of the in-school and out-of-school cultures, individualistic and decontextualised character of traditional pedagogy often constrains and distorts what they do and capable of doing (Moll, 1992). Moreover, problems with learner-centredness in the RNCS are not restricted to teacher competence. Available literature suggests that in order to cope, teachers tend to use the complexities of the classroom to justify their choice of methods (Chandra, 1987). Likewise, it is possible that many teachers faced with similar complexities such as the observed large classrooms in the two schools will cite enrolment as what militates against the enactment of learner-centered pedagogy in the RNCS. The question remains: What forms of interventions (training, resources, support systems, *etcetera*) are needed to disrupt such discourse in the schools and for curriculum change to take root among the teachers?

In the next section, I look at the second emerging understanding of learner-centredness among the four teachers in this study.

4.2.2 Learner-centredness as Group-oriented teaching and learning.

A second theme emerging from the data involved the four teachers' understanding of learner-centredness as group-oriented teaching to ameliorate classroom complexities. To illustrate this, Sipho is used as a case in point. According to him:

Learner-centred education is based on what is happening in the class. It is whereby the students form the groups, without the involvement of the teacher. Students discuss and give suggestions and so on (Sipho, IVp.8).

Sipho stated from the outset that “I have never been trained thoroughly on OBE and RNCS” (Sipho, IVp.8.). But this did not discourage him from participating in the study, as a way of appraising himself. For him, learner-centred education meant “what is happening in the class, whereby the students form groups” (Sipho, IVp.8). On one hand, available literature asserts that cooperative learning strategies such as group work provide teachers an opportunity to concede some of their power and share it with learners in a way that Noddings (1989:173) ironically describes as ‘a generous act of those who have and may further be blessed with generosity’. On the other hand, in this study, it soon became clear that Sipho’s notion of group work was not as a result of a perceived need to change or be generous, but that it was simply a way he was naming a perceived requirement or mandate. According Jansen *et al.* (1999) it is a way of describing ‘the major symbolic identifier of the new curriculum’ that teachers use when they tell their curriculum stories.

Furthermore, his experience and frustration at having to let go of his control over the classroom is revealed when he commented:

There is a lot of chaos and commotion in forming groups in class, and learners do not participate fully in their groups, except those individuals who always cooperate on the given topic (Sipho, IVp.8).

It can be seen that in the absence of conceptual clarity of cooperative learning strategies that are suitable; and the increasing complexities of the classroom teachers are mostly

likely to adopt either an incomplete innovations or technology of the innovation to address their needs on one hand while trying to maintain the goals of education on the other. In fact, in either case, teachers end up reaching only a portion of their learners (Aaronsohn, 1996) and thus some learners end up the losers or excluded in the education process. His remark that certain learners do not participate fully during lessons and that others always participate is telling curriculum story, indeed. But again, I want to point out that the activity of learning is a complex one. From a learner's standpoint learning may be suspended from time to time for various reasons that may arise from the conceptual gaps in an activity and context in which it is organized. Therefore, much of the discrepancies that account for lack of learning outcomes cannot be easily recognised unless teachers engaged learners to identify obstacles to their full potential and then to drive them to move against those obstacles (Ayers, 1989).

To the question: what factors or things do you consider when planning a lesson and during teaching? His response was that "when I come in front of the students I want every learner in the class to understand me" (Sipho, IVp.9). In spite of his sincere intention to be understood by class there seems to be no guarantee that all learners learn. Advocates of learner-centred teaching suggest that it is not in the interest of learners to understand a teacher by virtue of being 'the authority' (Young, 1992) and a subject expert. Instead, it is in the best interest of the individual learner to be understood by a teacher 'in authority' (Young, 1992) who cares about the learners' unmet needs and interests. This study's findings reinforce the emergent idea that when collaboration is practiced as a technique, its resultant effect is even more dangerous than traditional

teaching because it tends to mask asymmetrical power relations between teacher and learners in the classroom (Zellermayer, 1997). Importantly, it also illustrates that simplistic conceptualisation of group teaching is unhelpful and that it has no significance for meaningful and equitable classroom practice.

I also noted that in Sipho's stories, references to learner groupings were mentioned in several areas of the interview and slightly more than other respondents' stories. However, he conceded that:

Although I do not make use of groups a lot but there are topics where we have to form groups, but I experience a lot of problems (Sipho, IVp.9).

In almost the same way, another teacher, Bheki, cautiously mentioned group work as 'visionary tool' and an ameliorative motive to address the complexities of the new classroom:

Group work makes things easier because it saves time and even starting from what they do. They help, assist each other, the task get finished quicker ... I also have reservations about group work because you never know who was not doing well (Bheki, IVp.20).

It may well be that it makes teacher's life easy, but for the advocates of learner-centred pedagogy the individual learner is placed within a group, because the learner needs to be validated in a supportive and respectful environment for his or her sake and not for the teacher's convenience (Boud, 1989). As a result of what seemed to be a misconceived use of group work, I needed to look closer at the nature of grouping procedures that were

used by the teachers to enact the concept of learner-centredness in the RNCS as well as those which teachers used intuitively in their classrooms.

The kind of group work that reinforces learner-centredness in the RNCS coincides with a method of forming groups that is derived from Moreno's (1934) 'sociometry'. It is a simple device for discovering and analysing patterns of mutual acceptance and rejection of each learner by others in relation to proposed activities and it is in part based on democratic principles such as a right to choose. In contrast to the group-teaching which is teacher-centred, in group-work a group is self-selected and the teacher's role is to guide learners in the group by checking for omissions, errors, by asking questions and leading the group to realize its own mistakes to realize its own potential (Kaye and Roger, 1969). In doing so the ultimate objective is to arrive at a situation in which learners come to rely less upon teachers as is characteristic of a lifelong learner that is envisaged in the RNCS. Could this explain Siphos 'visionary tool' of less teacher involvement? Did he understand this to mean that the teacher does not have to do much and that learners have to be left alone to their devices? For now, one can only speculate.

In the next section, I look at the third emerging understanding of learner-centredness in the RNCS among the four teachers in this study.

4.2.3 Learner-centredness as an Activity-based curriculum

A third understanding that emerged from data in this study is that of learner-centredness as an activity-based curriculum in which the learner plays an important role. To illustrate

how the teachers in the study spoke about their understandings of the concept through this discourse, Cynthia's story is used. First, her definition of learner-centredness was:

I think learner-centred education means, an education where learners play an important role in education, so they ask question, solve problems on their own and do a lots of activities, and the teacher is just a mediator (Cynthia, IVp.1).

Similarly, in Yinger's (1977) study it has been shown that for many teachers, activities, as opposed to ideas, are the starting points and basic units of planning and little thought is given to the intellectual implications of any activity.

To establish further what her understanding of the teacher's role as 'mediator' was, I then asked her, how she mediated her lessons. Her response was that "I consider what they know and what it is there to discover with them" (Cynthia, IVp.4). The immediate impression of her response suggests more involvement of the teacher beyond just observing and evaluating. It suggests the teacher actively assisting the learners to achieve the learning outcomes. This is in line with what Rodriguez (1998) refers to as Socio-transformative Constructivism, which suggests an approach that takes into account the historical and institutional realities in framing understandings about efficacy of educational innovations. The value of their use is that whenever one talks about educational issues they are 'subliminally present in ones mind' (Witz, Goodwin, Hart and Thomas, 2001).

Cynthia's subliminal pleas for relevant books in the school caught my attention to her curriculum story, as the following extract illustrates:

Cynthia: We do not have books. The Department of Education has not supplied us

the relevant and sufficient amount of book (sic).

Researcher: Do you believe that a particular book is very important to your teaching?

Cynthia: Oh yes! We need the books that are easy to use. Even, if you do not have them (books), you must have something to teach with.

At this conceptual blockage point of our conversation I was trying to make sense of her story. In trying to form a view of what she meant I shifted to the questionnaire data. I noted that she presented a less optimistic view of RNCS whereas in the interview she gave a more optimistic one. Her neat turn of phrase in the questionnaire that caught my attention was that there was ‘no other possibility’ (Cynthia, NQ16.1) in selecting and planning her lessons, other than content and activities. She justified this with:

...because teachers say in Grade 10 the same student will be using the old syllabus. So they say, they would rather continue teaching that way, because the learners will be going back to the old syllabus after Grade 9 (Cynthia, IVp.3).

For me, this seemed to be part of a large story. Following a ‘permanent trail of field notes’ (Maykut *et al.*, 1994), I then set out to look out for more unlikely contextual dissonances in her colleagues’ story and response. While Cynthia complained about lack of appropriate books, Bheki gave away a more revealing response in saying:

So, what we do we take information from different books and copy it for the learners and all the exercises that we want. We do not have a prescribed book and we decided to use the old books and syllabus (Bheki, IVp.22).

In order to make sense of what Goffman (1959) called the ‘front’ and ‘back regions’ of institutional life, I needed to uncover what set off Cynthia’s immediate discourse in the context of her experience. I recalled Deborah Britzman’s (1991) study of teachers’

experiences in traditional classrooms in relation to the complex definition of pedagogy as the production of knowledge. Britzman contends that the notion of complex pedagogy (including learner-centred teaching materials with teacher and learner guides) strips teacher's authority because it comes from an alternative and much more complex definition of pedagogy as the production of knowledge in teaching.

Other studies on teachers' choice of textbooks such as Siosniak and Stodolosky (1993: 271) found that teachers did not see text as 'blue print' or 'driving force', but as "props in the serving of managing larger agendas". Granted this, teachers choose techniques, and materials that fit their own style, contexts, and learners, and adjust them on the basis of their own goals as well as daily subjective realities that are presented in order to cope with change. Also, emerging from this study is that teachers faced with uncertainties about how to organise learner-centred pedagogy seem not particularly concerned about the notion of Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) as a blue print or driving force, but rather, they are more concerned about ways of coping with the requirements of the mandate. For example, one respondent has mentioned that teachers compile old syllabus materials and give them to learners hoping that these will help them to achieve the RNCS outcomes. However, such managerial ways of coping with the mandate tend to foreground intermingling of new and old practices. The danger of such practice is that teachers do not immediately recognise contradictions among the conceptions of content, teaching and learning roles that undergird the disparate elements (Peterson, 1990 and Wiemer, 1990). Moreover, failure to recognise the underlining conceptual contradictions may result to superficial imitations of new practices, which do not disrupt the existing

cultural ways of the classroom. This study was also an attempt to investigate the many ways in which teachers use or think about new learning materials to organise a learner-centred pedagogy.

Implicit in the cited studies, as well as the emergent understandings of the respondents is a view that teachers' subjective and fragmentary notions of pedagogy as a set of activities that need to be strung together in order to have an impact on the learner is reinforced (Britzman, 1991). In a sense, activity as one of teachers' major symbolic identifier of the new curriculum seems to signify a nuclear role of teaching as stringing out and stringing together set of activities. Of particular relevance to this study, the findings suggest a need to understand teachers' larger curriculum agenda in choosing not only learning materials but also in teaching either as string out or stringing together activities in the context of institutional realities.

To understand Cynthia's agenda, her appeal for easy learning materials provided a reference point to her 'space of marginality' (hooks, 1990) and thus revealed her 'resistance as renaming' (Mc Daniels, 2000) of her roles to trial OBE learning material. Two questions emerge from this understanding: To what extent and in what ways are teachers using such avoidance strategies to justify their failure to implement OBE in general, and learner-centredness in particular? More importantly, what interventions are needed to address these?

In the next section, I look at the fourth emerging understanding of learner-centredness among the four teachers in this study.

4.2.4 Learner-centredness as learning that originates from the learner.

A fourth understanding emerging from the four teachers' narratives in this study was of learner-centredness in the classroom as learning that originates from learners and where teachers do not impose on learners. To illustrate, Bheki exemplified this by stating that, "learner-centred education means that what is happening in the classroom should all centre around the learner" (Bheki, IVp.19). Bheki's story continued:

The teacher is not by himself to impose what should constitute the lesson. It has to start with the learners. To be centred from centred round the learners, means everything should originate from them. They must be the ones to choose what they want to do (Bheki, IVp.11).

Initially, his 'visionary tool' represented a less typical scenario in comparison with the other respondents and it included many features that exemplified an insight of learner-centredness. It soon became clear that I got it all wrong because, "Meaning is rooted in everyday language and experience and motivation in everyday action" argues (Young, 1992:28). I also recalled Scott (1992) who stated that any critical theorising of experience must be read as a construct or representation mediated by culture and in relation to the critical discourses of others. In her essay "Experience", she comments:

When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject (the person who had the experience or the historian who recount it) becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constructed as different in the first place, and how one's vision is structured - about language (or discourse) and history - are left aside (Scott, 1992:25).

In keeping with Socio-Transformative Constructivism perspective of the inquiry I needed to understand Bheki's experience in larger context and against the experience of other teachers in the school. I noticed that as the interview progressed he slowly immersed his own 'personal curriculum story and experience' into a larger and murkier collective experience. For example, he stated:

We decided to use the old syllabus, that is, content. So, we are trying to make learners acquire some skills, working in groups doing investigation to enable them to acquire content as it is put in the old syllabus (Bheki, IVp.22).

For this reason, I needed to gain insight on the respondent's immediate alignment and who is implicated in it in relation to the issues at hand. I probed further: *Are you saying that the new RNCS material is not used in this school?* To this he responded that, *"they (teachers) are more familiar with the old syllabus material and use it to achieve the outcomes of the new approach"* (Bheki, IVp.22). In trying to conceptualise his sudden 'collective conscience' (Durkheim, 1933), I recalled Rosenholtz's (1989: 124) insightful assertion that "A story is constitutive, it makes for collective identification".

In view of that insight, I needed to derive a logical meaning from his collective identification and immediate counter discourse. In Durkheim (1933: 109) a 'collective conscience' is defined as a system of 'definite "sentiments" for or against doing something'. With this insight I returned to Bheki's main story, and where it all started, to make sense of his sudden 'reactivation of old elements' (Althusser, 1971) in relation to the visionary tool he gave away early. I realized at this moment that he had laid bare 'an insider knowledge' (Ritchie *et al.*, 2000) of how teachers groped for curricular

interpretations in the maze of complicated conventions, managerial discourses and resisted change in schools. But there is a second implication in the insider knowledge. It suggests the extent to which identities of teachers colonised by familiar areas of everyday practice could become mere effects of 'collective conscience' and how they may also reconstruct themselves as outsiders of educational discourse by 'doing their own thing' (Mahomed, 2002).

As outsiders in pre-implementation process there is a third implication that individual teachers' subjective understandings of the concept of learner centredness in the RNCS may limit the quality of educational messages they may take from counter discourse. As a result of widespread subjective understandings, teachers may also construct themselves as imperfect replicas of the kind of the teacher that is envisaged. Consequently, the more imperfect replicas teachers become, the greater their 'false clarity' (Fullan, 1991) as shown by discrepancy between the respondent's insightful visionary tool and his justification for total disregard of the new curriculum learning materials.

As reviewed by Watkins *et al.*, (1999) a common danger of the emergent multiple simplifications of teachers' identities and roles is that they tend to reinforce incomplete teaching models and achievement of the lower order goals of the curriculum that exclude particular learners. It therefore stands to reason that the teachers' incomplete understandings are not likely to explicate comprehensively all the learner-centred principles and processes of the RNCS. Could this be one of the reasons why teachers are failing to "live" the principles of learner-centredness in their classroom practice?

In the next section, I present some of the teachers' experiences in attempting and thinking about a learner-centred pedagogy in the context in which they teach.

4.3 What are teachers' experiences of a learner-centred pedagogy?

A central feature of institutional ethnography usually takes as its entry point the experiences of specific individuals whose everyday activities are in some way shaped by constituent of the culture under exploration (De Vault and McCoy, 2002). To make an entry point I needed to establish a relationship between the four teachers' everyday activities and their particular thinking about learner-centered pedagogy by moving back and forth between their perceived roles and the contexts they operate in and which produce them (Ng and Griffith, 1999 cited in DeVault *et al.*, 2002). I was on the lookout for particular ways in which teachers' experiences related to their context and how they each rub against each other in the schools.

In distilling the remaining case material I found that the respondents indicated divergent views about whether they would take into account how classrooms (context of learning and teaching) are organized when choosing the contents and lesson activity. Despite a fixation on content as managerial ways in planning lessons, participants suggested three categories for choosing content as priority in planning their lessons. Firstly, they identified *Activity-content*. Sipho justifies his choice in this regard by stating that “*an activity enables learners to understand the content*” (Sipho, NQ. 13.1). Second, the respondents chose what can be categorised as *Content-activity*. To justify her choice in

this regard, Thembi stated that “*an activity supports the content*” (Thembi, NQ. 13.1), while Cynthia explained that “*an activity will be based on selected content*” (Cynthia, NQ.13.1). In the third and last category, *Content* as it were in old syllabi is identified as what matters most in planning lessons. To justify his choice Bheki explains that “*we still use the old syllabus*” (Bheki, NQ.13.1).

Seemingly, there is a strong a bi-polar conception of content-activity or vice versa, as a way to simplify content rather than to support practice. Taking these experiences into consideration, it appears that teachers tend to use various learning sources that range from; old syllabus and its materials; to the cuttings of journals, magazines, and newspapers. In the list I noted an absence of CNS and RNCS materials. However, for all respondents the sequence of the content as the most important item to plan curriculum around is largely determined by; (i) resources that the school has; (ii) resources required for the topic; (iii) exemplars of publishers; (iv) previous learner performance; (v) and the old syllabi. It can be inferred therefore that experiences of the respondents are characterized by subjectively felt curricular choices with respect to the content to be taught and activities to be used to simplify it. In addition, they also indicated strong views about teaching what learners need to learn and not more, and not less. The latter has serious implications for pedagogic processes and education messages that learners must take from the enacted curriculum. It therefore suggests the reason why the familiar is often opted for, particularly in high schools. According to Aaronsohn (1996) in high schools the familiar is chosen because teachers have well established content-centered roles.

In the absence of familiar setting Rosenholtz's (1989) noted study, cited in Fullan (1991), found that teachers who worked in schools characterised by turbulent environment and curricular dissonance exhibited "low-consensus" because they commonly "skirted the edge catastrophe alone" by confronting all pedagogic complexities all by themselves. The study findings share many similarities that have relevance to the four teachers' experiences, the most relevant being teachers' low consensus about what constitutes learner-centeredness in the RNCS. Harding (1995: 1) suggests that teachers' experiences of incoherent curriculum process is a messy environment to work in "with unexpected shifts in direction in social, economic, political and educational patterns that constantly break with existing familiar or known trends". My point here is that schools internal environment, and 'teacher coalitions' (Watkins, *et al.*, 1999) fighting a rearguard actions in defense of their longstanding reconstructed identities and roles in large part are shaping how teachers are enacting, attempting or avoiding learner-centred pedagogy in the schools. It is therefore possible that an unlimited variations of learner-centred curricula understandings are organised, explained, and probably many more in the Durban area and beyond.

In the next section, I present some of teachers' and learners' roles that were presented during lesson observations in this study.

4.4 What do teachers see as their roles in Enabling Learner-centred Education in the RNCS?

The following main features of interactions were observed during four lessons in the

two schools. They are presented randomly as follows:

1. *Desks are* rearranged to suit *group* oriented activities or lessons.
2. *Teachers introduce lesson topic*, write the lesson topic on the chalkboard and give further instructions and ask questions.
3. *Teacher is* responsible for the most talking and writing during lesson.
4. *Learners do several and different things or activities* during the lesson. Many events also occur simultaneously and moving in many directions. These include children side-talking, writing, sleeping, opening books, raising hands, looking through a window, moving in and out of the classroom, those without necessary learning resources participate, those without learning are ‘spectating’, learners move from one group to another.
5. *Teachers stand in the front, and occasionally move* to the other parts of the classroom.
6. *Teacher shouts at learners to keep quiet* and to lower their voices.
7. *Teacher* explains the investigation activities in Common Task Assessment by drawing sketches and writing formulae.
8. *Teachers* mainly use *learning materials* that are adopted from an old syllabus and related teaching methods, with a few attempts to order and sequence chalkboard notes for learners in the class to read, write and hopefully to understand.

According to Young (1992) the above features are from a ‘method classroom’. In the ‘method classroom’ teacher’s main role is to transmit knowledge in order to cover a set curriculum. This implies that in the schools the roles of learning and teaching are rigidly

drawn along lines of content and task of ‘covering set curriculum’ (Smith and Geoffrey, 1968) and focusing on the facts to be transmitted. In doing so, the task thus translates to a concern about time and focus on the teacher dominant roles to confer correct forms of content or what is seen by teachers as relevant knowledge to fit learners regardless of their individualistic and multicultural unmet interests and needs. The observed features also come across as revealing or insights into the traditional teaching mind set of teachers shaped by the existing traditional roles and identities. On the contrary, a learner-centred classroom ought to be a community of learners engaged in activity, reflection and conversation (Howe and Berve, 2000).

According to Ayers (1993) teachers’ notion of a direct link between teaching and content in classroom is built on a ‘deficit-model’ because it is predicated on teaching roles as repairing learners’ weakness and filling in expert knowledge. It is therefore possible that while teachers confirm learners’ weakness to fill in their expert knowledge they may overlook learners’ potentials and put more emphasis on their weakness on the basis of subjectively felt understandings and false clarity. The latter has wide implications for teachers’ roles and their standing as teaching identity. For example, Gultig (2000) has pointed out that the identity of the one who mainly transmits factual knowledge is called a ‘knowledge-worker’. While being a knowledge-worker might serve as grist to content, the fact remains that not all learners learn when teachers transmit factual knowledge. Therefore, critical questions have to be asked, such as: what forms of training are required to enable teachers’ to operate more as learner-centred teachers and less as rigid knowledge-workers?

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter findings are presented firstly as the main findings in terms of each question asked and; secondly, as a common strand in respect to the context in which they were investigated:

1. How do teachers at the school understand 'learner-centredness' in the RNCS?

The multiple visionary tools that have unfolded amongst respondents have at the very least, reinforced the notion that teachers are individualistic in how they understand learner-centredness in the RNCS. This implies that one of the basic problems in schools is dissociation between curriculum discourse and curriculum practice thus resulting to a 'loose coupling' (Reynolds and Saunders, 1987) in teachers practices. Further, their loose understandings suggest that teachers do not only use selective approach to think about, organise or avoid learner-centred pedagogy, but also they use 'assimilationistic approach' (Moletsane, 1999) to fit learners into their existing and familiar roles and practices. This means that they did not attempt to change their ways of organising classroom or teaching, but instead, expected learners to fit into existing ethos and culture of the schools studied.

To address the research question direct. Teachers at the two schools studied seem to understand learner-centredness in the RNCS along various 'defining features of the new curriculum' (Jansen *et al.*, 1999) as well as their longstanding subject roles and identities of what and how to teach, rather than the required principles, processes and outcomes.

According to Sowell (2000) there are two major approaches of curriculum process that teachers and practitioners often use namely, technical approach and non technical approach. On one hand, the former views curriculum and pedagogy as separate but related, and support an objective interpretation of knowledge. On the other hand, the latter does not view curriculum and pedagogy as readily separable entities. Those who support this view also hold a subjective interpretation (construction) of knowledge. From these distinctions it can be inferred, therefore, that teachers in the instances studied use a technical approach to understand and think about the concept of learner-centredness in the RNCS. Taking their emergent views of curriculum to consideration, it is not clear how the teachers and two schools can organise a comprehensive learner-centred pedagogy that would free the potential of learners as enshrined in RNCS.

2. What are teachers' experiences of a learner-centred pedagogy?

It is clear that teachers teach as they see fit in the contexts they operate. According to teachers' justifications this is because the guidelines and goals of pre-implementation process of the RNCS are not clear, and that the schools' curricula are not well understood.

3. What do teachers see as their roles in enabling learner-centred education in the RNCS?

A consideration of teachers roles indicate that although they demonstrate individuality in how they perceive their roles, they in some ways also share collective sentiments in how they tend to reconstruct their traditional roles and identities. It can be inferred, therefore,

that what teachers see as their roles in practice lie somewhat at the three way intersection of their subjectively felt roles; antecedent roles of the syllabus; and collectively reinforced roles. However suggestive this finding is, it is not clear how the apparent three way intersection work as a conservative force in schools to reinforce curriculum non-change.

To conclude, two contextual areas that I believe have emphatically highlighted the findings in the contexts in which learner-centredness in the RNCS was investigated in this study, needed noting. These are: traditional teaching in the schools; and the collective reconstruction and misrecognition of the roles that are constructed for them to trial and implement the Revised Natural Curriculum Statement. Thus, a fundamental issue the findings have highlighted is that teachers cannot possibly understand learner-centredness in the RNCS without proper use of new curriculum materials; full use of new teaching approaches and comprehensive curriculum principles; and reconceptualisation of their existing pedagogic beliefs and assumptions.

This chapter has presented the main findings of the study. In the next chapter, chapter five the summary of findings are highlighted and their implications in terms of classroom organisation and professional development are discussed briefly.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Implications

5.1 Introduction

The last chapter presented and analysed the main findings of the study; and highlighted the main contextual factors that are shaping how teachers understand and make sense of the concept of learner-centredness in the RNCS. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings and to identify implications for teaching and learning in the schools, and for professional development of teachers in the context of the RNCS and its principles. To recap, this study was organised around three research questions:

- (1) How do teachers at the schools understand learner-centredness in the RNCS?
- (2) What are teachers' experiences of learner-centredness in the RNCS?
- (3) What do teachers see as their roles in enabling learner-centredness in the RNCS?

In the next section, I look again at the three research questions to summarise the main findings of the study respectively.

5.2 Summary of Findings

A consideration of teachers' experiences and roles show that they use several 'visionary tools' (Hennessy, 1993 and Scott, 1992) to understand curriculum change in general and learner-centredness in particular. These visionary tools have yielded several understandings of the concept: Firstly, teachers understand learner-centredness to be a directive teaching that focuses on the learner as an individualistic receiver of knowledge.

They understand it to mean a group-oriented teaching to ameliorate classroom complexities. In addition, they understand it as an activity-based curriculum in which learners play important roles; and lastly, they understand it to mean learning that originates from learners and where teachers do not impose on learners.

Secondly, teachers' experiences of learner-centredness indicate many important features of which the following are worth noting. In the context of the schools' operative curricula, teachers' salient roles suggest that they generally use surface approaches and directive teaching methods to transmit factual knowledge. In instances where respondents were required to reflect on alternative approaches they seemed more concerned about the side-effects these would have and thus tended to avoid certain aspects of the innovation. In the absence of clear conceptual clarity of suitable curriculum discourse as well as complexities of the classrooms their reaction was either to adopt incomplete innovation or technology of innovation to address their own needs while trying to maintain what they perceived as educational goals. In extreme cases where daily realities and school realities present more challenges, the emerging theme from the study is that teachers either rename their roles as a way to avoid the new curriculum roles or resist curriculum change because of their perceived contextual difficulties.

Thirdly, the considered roles of the respondents in this study suggest that teaching intentions are often subjectively felt as large responsibility for covering the curriculum, simplifying content and filling in expert knowledge. To be precise, to teach refers to content simplification and by implication the content is made simpler in order to be

understood by learners. Of particular importance and relevance to the findings are their individual justifications of traditional teaching roles and avoidance of the new curriculum. Suppose their justifications are telling, this implies that a major shift among the teachers will have to occur along their understandings of the new curriculum teaching roles and identities; and through reconceptualisation of their longstanding roles in order to enable learner-centredness to take root in their practice.

On the face of it, it sounds as if traditional teaching has outlived its usefulness. In fact it is possible that while one might label as traditional or authoritarian a teacher, a learner given a unique interest to the subject or relation with that teacher might experience learning in a way one would expect from a learner-centred classroom. In all truth, not everyone knows the moment-to-moment, and critical consciousness of what actually happen when the teacher is enacting learner-centredness in the classroom.

Nevertheless, I believe that in avoiding trialing of curriculum teachers and schools have missed a good opportunity to put in practice ideas and structures that would have enabled them to make an informed attempt in enacting the learner-centred pedagogy. This means that the schools may not be ready to identify factors that determine teachers' understandings; and changes in practice that are needed to enact learner-centredness in the RNCS when the implementation date is confirmed.

The aim of this study was not to provide a guide to learner-centred teaching in the RNCS, although some would argue there is a need to have such a guide. I hope I have resisted the temptation. Despite the limited time and data that was available for the study it is

safe to mention that the study offers several lessons for teachers and others interested in the RNCS and its implementation in schools. Some of these implications are summarized in the next section.

5.3. Implications

Of the many and widespread implications that have been noted in the study I will restrict the findings to only two: (1) implications for classroom organization and (2) implications for professional development.

5.3.1. Implications for Classroom Organisation

The Integrated Quality Management System Training Manual, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (ZKNDE) (2004) stipulates as one of twelve evaluation criteria that teachers need to demonstrate an ability to create learning space; and as its expectation to create a suitable environment and climate for learning and teaching and a creation of meaningful learning experiences. The assumption of these is that the notion of learning with and from learners will be reinforced in teachers' practices. According to Aaronsohn (1996) the thrust of learning with and from learners in learner-centred teaching brings influence to bear on class organisation as well as classroom management. In turn, the latter translates to a concern about the way in which the teaching environment, namely; physical, social and educational are geared towards teaching and learning roles. In my view, all three aspects of classroom organisation are equally important because together they present a wholesome effect on the educational outcomes.

In all the lessons that were observed in the schools learners were seated in group formations but this was where physical, social, and probably educational aspect of classroom organisation ended. This implies that the RNCS inspired social means of meaning making and communication do not play an important role in teachers' conceptions of their roles as well as in learners' intellectual development in the schools. This means the GETC quality of the schools as whole qualification that is in part based on the five principles; and its developmental processes and outcomes will not be achieved as envisaged in the RNCS. Instead, the schools will produce imperfect replicas of the kind of learners that are envisaged in the RNCS as implied elsewhere by respondents.

For this reason, the obvious lack of clarity to organise a meaningful classroom learner-centredness in this study strongly reinforces my argument that the purpose of teacher development need to do more than “to socialize compliance” (Andrews, 1987: 148).

5.3.2 Implications for Professional Development

The findings in this study as well as available studies on curriculum change have shown that in the absence of follow-up support and “regular support that hears, knows, validates, and helps teachers to grow in their work” (Aaronsohn, 1996: 3) even the innovative teachers quickly become socialised to the ‘real world’ and conservative perspectives that they find in the school they operate in.

For this reason, I would like to call for teacher or professional development and where possible reeducation that allows teachers to acknowledge that curriculum occurs when

their personal and professional roles are recognized as being inextricably connected to personal development and to school management consciousness. If such teacher or professional development is school-based, such as the IQMS, the task of both mentor and a mentee should include referring to what is known about learner-centered pedagogy, curriculum, underlying epistemology; conceptualisation of learner's and teacher's roles; teachers capacity for reflection; and to deal with daily subjective realities in schools and not to avoid them.

5.3.3 Implications for further research

A number of questions and issues have been raised about the unfolded understandings of learner-centredness in the RNCS amongst the respondents. It is clear that their understandings, experiences and roles in organising, attempting, thinking and avoiding learner-centred pedagogy are influenced by various daily subjective realities, as well as their faithfulness to the existing traditional (teaching) roles. However, I must point out the value of further research to probe the following: (1) Validity and reliability of the research instruments, to truly reflect respondents' understandings, experiences and roles in organising and avoiding learner-centred pedagogy. (2) How a more representational population of teachers organise and manage the formal implementation of learner-centredness in the RNCS in schools? (3) What forms of interventions are available to enable a better understanding of learner-centred pedagogy? These are some of the relevant research questions that deserve further attention as result of the questions and issues that were raised in this study.

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APPENDICES: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

RESEARCH TOPIC:

Teachers' Understandings of the concept of learner-centredness in the Revised National Curriculum Statement: A Case Study of two Durban township high schools.

Research Purpose and Instruments Used In The Case Study

A research study to investigate teachers' understandings of the concept of learner-centredness in the Revised National Curriculum Statement, in Durban township high schools is conducted by MFEKA SIYANDA, a Master of Education (Curriculum Studies) student at University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Completion of the *interview questions, questionnaire and observation of a lesson* in class are the important aspects of the research study. They require brief information about your school, personal details, instructional practices in your classroom, your experiences (challenges and successes) and anything that constrains your practices and your beliefs and attitudes towards learner-centred education in the RNCS. Your responses are very important as they will help to describe the understandings of the concept of learner-centredness in the RNCS in the study.

Your co-operation in completing the instruments will be appreciated greatly.

1. There are seven semi-structured interview questions to be tape recorded.
2. There are four sections in the questionnaire to be completed:
SECTION A: Participant's biographical data
SECTION B: Context of teaching and learning
SECTION C: Selection, planning and organization of learning materials and activities.
SECTION D: Learner-centred processes and principles when enacting RNCS.
3. There is a lesson observation guide for classroom practice recordings.

S F MFEKA
University of KwaZulu-Natal
September 2004

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

List of Interview Questions

1. One of the features of the RNCS is that it encourages learner-centred education.
What do you think learner-centredness in the RNCS means?
2. There are five principles that characterise learner-centredness in the RNCS, these are:
(i) Outcomes-based education; (ii) Social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity; (iii) A high level of skills and knowledge for all; (iv) Progression and integration (v) Clarity and accessibility.
- 2.1 Do you incorporate or consider the *five principles of the RNCS* when planning activities?
If No. What do you think is stopping you?
or
If yes. Give examples to illustrate how you would go about it.
3. Tell me about your experiences in trying to get learners to learn as individual and as group.
4. What factors (things) do you consider when planning a lesson and during teaching?
5. Do you believe your school is well equipped and supportive enough to enable teachers to implement both group and individual focussed instructions?
6. Do you think the assessment that is followed in the school and in your class allows for learner differentiation?
7. What do you think are the teachers' role in learning or learner-centred teaching in relation to: (i) new materials/ content (ii) teaching approaches (iii) teachers personal beliefs.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

You are kindly invited to read and complete this following questionnaire.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS:

(i) Most questions have A to D options, some have more or less and **some are not**:

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

(ii) You are required to put a cross on relevant option and specify in writing when required.

SECTION A: PARTICIPANT'S BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Age: 25 - 30 _____ 30 – 35 _____ 35 – 40 _____ 40 and above _____

2. Sex: Male _____ Female _____

3. Highest Qualification:

3.1 College of Education Certificate or Diploma: M+ 2 _____ M+3 _____

3.2 Other specify: _____

4. Teaching S

5. Subjects:

5. Level of Teaching:

4.1 _____

6. Years of Service:

6a. 0 to 5

6b. 5 to 10

6c. 11 to 15

6d. Over 15 years

SECTION B: CONTEXT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

7. Number of learners in the school :

7a. Less than 500

7b. Between 500 – 1000

7c. Over 1000

8. Average Number of learners in the classrooms:

8a. Less than 40

8b. Between 40 – 60

8c. Over 60

9. Type of school :

9.1a State/Government

9.1b Private/ State assisted

9.2 Other specify _____

9.3 Context of school:

9.3.1 Urban

9.3.2 Rural

9.3.3 Township

9.3.4 Informal settlement

9.3.5 Other specify _____

10. School Phases :

10a. Foundation Phase

10b. Intermediate Phase

10c. Senior Phase

10d. FET Phase

SECTION C: EXPERIENCES WHEN SELECTING AND ORGANIZING CONTENT

11. Mark which pedagogical values are present when selecting the learning materials.

A. Focus on subject matter

B. Focus on the individual activity of the learner

C. Focus on group activity

D. Focus on the whole class.

12. You take into account how your classroom is organised when choosing the contents and lesson activity.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

13.1 Which do you select first in planning your lessons?

A. Activity B. Contents C. Other

13.2 Explain your reason _____

14.1 When selecting topics, you tend to follow: (mark one or more)

- A. An exemplar of a particular publisher or textbooks.
- B. You do not take any publisher into account.
- C. You follow several exemplars from several publishers or textbooks.
- D. You tend to use another type of source.

14.2 Which other source(s)? _____

15. You choose learning materials by thinking about:

- A. Previous academic needs of the learners
- B. Socioeconomic needs
- C. Deficiencies of a psychological nature
- D. Other, specify _____

16.1 Your selection of contents for the class-based curriculum conform to RNCS emphasis or you broaden it with your contextual consideration.

16.2 If it conforms exclusively:

- A. For the reasons of availability.
- B. Because we know of no other possibility.
- C. Due to requirements of the subject advisors
- D. Due to requirements of the Common Task Assessment
- E. For convenience
- F. For other reason (state which ones) _____

17. You choose some content that you think the learners won't understand by themselves

to enable them to learn from each other.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

18. You select content that basically encourages:

A. Self-directed learning or individualism

B. Cooperative-learning

C. Constructivism

D. Contents close to the learner experience

E Other specify _____

19. Lack of necessary learning aids or resources that learners are expected to have affect your selection of content and lesson outcomes.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

20.1 Do you have a 'School Curriculum Committee' at your school?

A. Yes _____

B. No _____

20.2 If no. What do you think its role should be? _____

21. You organize the learning content in such a way as to make it suitable to the learners' ways of knowing and learning processes according to their development and age?

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

22. The sequence of the contents in you planned curriculum is largely determined by:

(You may select more than one option)

A. The resource that the school has

B. The resource of the context

C. Exemplars of publishers

D. Previous learner performance

E. Other, Explain _____

23.1 You organize the content taking into account the learners' difficulties?

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

23.2 If none. Give reasons _____

23.3 If agree. How would you do that? _____

SECTION D: LEARNER-CENTRED PROCESSES AND PRINCIPLES

24. You always encourage learners to tolerate one another other in groups and in class.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

25. You allow learners to develop and appreciate their own individuality.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

26. You do not let anyone dominate or get marginalized in groups.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

27. You do not rush learners but focus on process rather than on product and give it time, when learners are struggling or lesson is not working well.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

28. You are careful to consider activities and materials that enable learners' participation as a whole person.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

29. You make learner engagement with texts personal and construct own meaning.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

30. You make the learning materials accessible while demanding learners to complete tasks or work through the problems at their own pace.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

31. You listen to the learners' interests and needs without losing sight of set outcomes

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

32. You stay visible while they learn to listen to one another in groups.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

33. You always assess for different aspects of learners' potential.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

34. You only teach what learners need to learn?

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

35. You allow learners to decide what they want to learn within the framework of learning programmes and set outcomes.

A. Disagree B. Agree C. Agree strongly D. None

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

APPENDIX C

LESSON OBSERVATION GUIDE

Details

1. Name of school : _____
2. Name of teacher : _____
3. Grade : _____
4. No. of learners present : _____
5. No. of learners absent : _____
6. Gender composition : Boys = _____ Girls = _____
7. Learning Area : _____
8. Topic of lesson : _____
9. Activity : _____
10. Date : _____

Short Description of School Organisation:

(Location and surrounding environment, enrolment, staff, any contextual realities)

Notes on Context and Interaction of Learning, and Teaching:

1. Draw or sketch the classroom noting classroom environment.
2. Common positions of teachers during the lesson.
3. Learners' changes and maps of these changes (movements) in class.
4. Other observable interactions

Enacted Curriculum:

Activity / Social Organization in classroom	Instructional Materials Present
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Objective of lesson in relation to LOs and LA outcomes.2. Relationship between concepts studied and tasks.3. Time on task.4. On-task-behaviour of learners.5. Individual or group interactions6. Desk arrangement and implications.7. Who talks mostly?8. Nature of activities?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Classroom ambiance and wall display.2. Accessibility of materials used and when used3. Role of publication and textbooks4. Clarity of instruction and questions5. Any observable medium used6. Relevance of materials to learners7. Context as a starting point.8. Major considerations for instructions and materials.

Teaching Instructions and Strategies:

Comments As Lesson Unfolds on:

1. How are activities structured? (classroom organisation)
2. Are all learners aware of the lesson objectives and learning outcomes?
3. Access and clarity of underlining concepts used and those introduced
4. Evidence of integration and progression
5. How are learners engaged during the lesson?
6. Reflect on what you observe during the lesson.
7. Who talks and how? Roles of the learners and teacher in the lesson.
8. How are learners' ideas and questions taken?
9. Learners interests, needs, difficulties, successes and experiences.
10. Observe any tendencies that may suggest learners and teachers beliefs and assumptions during the activities.
11. Materials and interaction during activity.
12. How disciplinary issue or problem is handled?
13. Supporting of those who are having difficulty in understanding.
14. Group management and discipline
15. Evidence of support for those who learn with difficulty and attention to those who learn with relative ease.

Assessment and Related Activities Suggested in Learning Document:

Assessment Management Comments and Records:

1. Does the teacher use test-preparation or test-related drills or activities prior to testing?
2. Is assessment formative or summative?
3. Are all learners expected to meet the same goals?
4. How is test feedback provided and remedial work given attention?
5. The reason to assess and form(s) of assessment used.
6. Differentiation awareness when assessing learners.
7. Inclusivity, integration (any other principles) and considerations of language of teaching.

APPENDIX D

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO USE SCHOOL PREMISES AND CLASSROOM WORK FOR THIS STUDY

This is a copy of the letter given to the principals of the participating schools.

P O Box 32758
Mobeni
4060
17 September 2004

The Principal
Moya High School / Thulani High School
_____ Township.
Durban
4031

Dear Sir/ Madam

PERMISSION TO USE SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM WORK FOR RESEARCH PURPOSE.

I am investigating teachers' understandings of the concept of learner-centredness in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), for the purpose of Master of Education (Curriculum Studies) dissertation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I have a verbal agreement with two teachers in the school to participate in the above mentioned, study outside school time. However, in addition to our agreement, it is necessary that I also observe how they experience or attempt to enact learner-centred pedagogy in their classrooms. For this reason, I would like to request a permission to observe one of your teachers in the classroom. The teacher as well as the school will not be identified by real names in the case study report.

Your co-operation will be much appreciated.

Yours sincerely
Student researcher: *Mr SF Mfeka*