

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

South Africa has had its first national democratic elections in 1994, where President Nelson Mandela was the first democratically elected president of the country. These elections marked the change from the apartheid regime to a Democratic country. As a democratic state, South Africa has developed a Constitution that provides for curriculum transformation and development focusing on democratic nation building. The Constitution states some of the aims in the Preamble as: to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights; to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1994:1). In situations of such social changes, education and the curriculum have an important role to play towards the realization of the aims of the Constitution.

In 1997 the 24th of May South Africa launched a new curriculum, called Curriculum 2005 (C2005). The new curriculum aimed at redressing the imbalance caused by the past practices, which were compartmentalized departments of education by race, ethnicity and gender by developing the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa (RNCS, Mathematics, 2002:1). The underlying philosophy of C2005 is an Outcomes Based Education (OBE). OBE is defined as a learner-centered approach and in it the emphasis is on what the learner wants to achieve and on what the learner should be able to know, to understand, to do and to become (Northern Province Department of Education, 2001:5). This new curriculum involves a shift to curriculum design by outcomes, skills and thinking from curriculum design by objectives, content and examinations linked to Universities. Outcomes of this new curriculum focuses on enabling learners to develop critical thinking powers and problem-solving abilities,

and not on subjects that linked to tertiary institutions. There are eight Learning Areas which were formed by integrating groups of related knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes from subjects disciplines of the 'old traditional' curriculum. The eight learning areas are: Languages; Mathematics; Natural Sciences; Social Sciences; Arts and Culture; Life Orientation; Economic and Management Sciences; and Technology (Department of Education, 2002). Specific outcomes for each Learning Area were developed. Specific outcomes of a Learning Area are designed not to stand alone as separate entities, but all specific outcomes integrates within and across all Learning Areas and are intended for life long learning.

Being a Mathematics teacher who witnessed the paradigm shift from the 'old traditional curriculum' through the introduction of the new OBE curriculum (C2005) and that it is now 6 years into the national innovation in the Senior Phase, I decided to explore how well the new OBE Mathematics Learning Area curriculum is working in schools. This refers to establishing whether the curriculum is working as intended in the national innovation or not. This curriculum study is evaluative in nature. It focuses on adjudicating the curriculum following a variety of qualitative approaches to curriculum evaluation. It specifically focuses on using Illuminative Evaluation to adjudicate the curriculum by finding matches between what actually happens in lessons with what is intended in Grade 7 Mathematics texts, with reference to teaching of percentages in Algebra. This was achieved by asking two Research Questions of: "How are percentages to be taught in OBE Mathematics?" and "How it is actually taught in lessons?" to find matches between them and establish if teaching and learning percentages is done as intended in C2005 and the revisions to it (RNCS). Data for answering these questions was collected through triangulating methods of naturalistic observations with follow-up probing interviews, questionnaires and document analysis.