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Teachers' selection and use of tasks in the old and new curriculum.

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Abstract

This study investigates how a teacher selects and implements mathematical tasks in the old and new curriculum. Two theoretical perspectives: constructivist theories of learning and the socio-cultural theories were discussed in order to provide a framework from which to understand how teachers work with mathematics tasks to enhance or inhibit mathematical reasoning. Data was collected from one teacher in Grade 10 (new curriculum) and Grade 11(old curriculum) in 2006 through classroom observations, video recordings and interviews. The data was analysed using Stein et al's (1996) framework for tasks at both selection and implementation phase. The findings revealed that the teacher selected tasks that required higher- level cognitive demands in the new curriculum, but at implementation the cognitive demands of the tasks declined. The analysis also revealed that there was a mismatch between theory and practice. There was little difference in approach, contrary to the teacher's claim that he was teaching the two grades differently. The study suggests that there is still a gap between theory and practice in relation to how the new curriculum had to be implemented. The study recommends that the kind of training offered to teachers on the implementation of the new curriculum has to include both theory and practice, and not theory alone.