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Exploring teachers' understanding of curriculum change from National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in the teaching of grade 8 maths in township and former Model C schools in Gauteng

Mlambo, Thokozani

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Abstract

What are teachers' understanding of curriculum change and how they think it affects their practice in a pedagogic setting? Whilst this may be thought of as a straight-forward answer, this study has interestingly demonstrated that teachers' understanding does not follow the simplified prescription of the curriculum but their understanding of their own contexts and how they view that affects their pedagogic practice.

Studies of teachers' responses to curriculum change have overlooked the underlying factors around teachers' willingness or unwillingness to change. In-depth interviews allow the study to explore teachers' understanding of curriculum change in the context of South African educational reform. In this regard, whilst a simplistic answer to the questions of this study, teachers have displayed highly-ordered and well-reasoned viewpoints on how their understanding of curriculum change shape their pedagogic practice. This has made the researcher to categorise teachers' responses into three pre-determined themes described by Bernstein (1996): knowledge, pedagogy and assessment whilst using the fourth – social context of learners – as background of interpreting the findings of the study. This research project unsurprisingly concludes that teachers hold a wide variety of views about curriculum reforms and implementation in South Africa. Both the primary and secondary data sources indicated that curriculum in South Africa is progressing towards more prescriptive approaches.

Keywords: Curriculum change, knowledge, pedagogy, assessment, social context, curriculum document, curriculum principles, integration and sequencing, intended and enacted curriculum, parental involvement, teachers' understanding, learners, school reform, prescriptive, textbook use, instructional discourse, regulative discourse instruction.