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# The challenges of curriculum change challenges of curriculum change teachers in Limpopo province

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# CHAPTER 3

## RESEARCH PARADIGM: PROCESSES AND METHODS

> (There are) three stages of critical discourse analysis; *description* of text, *interpretation* of the relationship between text and interaction, and *explanation* of the relationship between interaction and social context (Fairclough, 1991, p. 109, emphasis in original).

This thesis researches the challenges that an official curriculum change, namely outcomes-based education (OBE) brought to a group of rural primary school teachers, as mediated through the activities of a school development project. It probes the perceptions that this group of teachers developed as they actively engaged with a new form of teaching and learning in their schools and in their classrooms. To research these issues, strategies needed to be developed to access both the teachers' discourse of curriculum and their actual practices in classrooms, suggesting that an interpretive paradigm, grounded in qualitative methods was the most appropriate approach. This approach helped to bridge the divide between what O'Donoghue and Punch (2003) call methodological and substantive issues. In other words, the qualitative research methods chosen approached the research questions detailed in Chapter One in ways that investigated more than just the official reality of the promoters of OBE. These methods assisted in paying full attention to the unexpected aspects of implementing OBE in rural schools, and the importance teachers attached to this particular curriculum innovation.

This chapter documents the processes and methods used to collect, sort and analyse the qualitative data. The first section contains a description of the research context that is richly textured in details of the researcher, the schools and the teachers. After reviewing this context, an explanation of the qualitative processes followed in this research is provided, with interviews and classroom

observations being foregrounded as the main data collection methods. Highlights of the analytical processes that were used to sort and to find meaning in this data are also included. In addition, an analytical framework is conceptualised that is used from Chapter Four onwards to describe, interpret and explain the challenges of curriculum change that this group of teachers faced. The last section of the chapter considers issues pertaining to the validity of qualitative methods in general, and specifically to the manner in which validity was accounted for in this particular thesis.

## RESEARCH CONTEXT:

## The researcher, the schools and the teachers

This section begins by reflecting on my dual role in the schools, initially as a curriculum field worker working for the project, and then additionally as an academic researcher collecting data for a higher degree. This personal account is becoming increasingly common in qualitative research where researchers often tell stories about themselves, as well as about their work (Carter, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

My professional background in education in general, and in primary schools in particular, is especially relevant to consider as it impacted on how I developed curriculum activities for the teachers as well as on the manner in which I read the data collected in this research. I had completed my high school education in an all white, all girls, Catholic school and then went on to study for a four-year Higher Diploma in Education in what was then the whites only Johannesburg College of Education. In my subsequent fourteen years of primary school teaching, most of which took place at Sacred Heart College (SHC), I continued studying and reflecting on teaching and learning. During this time I came to understand more about my own curriculum discourse and the assumptions I made about teaching and learning.

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I left classroom teaching at the end of 1996 and in January 1997 joined the Sacred Heart College Research and Development (SHC R&D) office in Johannesburg as one of two curriculum field workers assigned to the President's Schools Project. My personal journey to understand the extent to which contextual and social issues impacted on other teachers' discourses and assumptions about teaching and learning had begun. Having lived most of my adult life in urban Johannesburg, and having grown up during the apartheid era, my contact with black teachers before 1997 was minimal. So while I brought a wealth of knowledge and experience of primary school teaching and learning in an urban resourced context to the project, I had much to learn about the material and human conditions of rural schools, and the impact this would have on the implementation of OBE in the classrooms of the President's Schools.

The schools selected for the President's Schools Project, Baropodi, Khomisani, Letjatji, Mashamba, Mutshetshe and Nwaxinyamani, were all located in Limpopo, South Africa's northernmost province. Limpopo borders Zimbabwe to the north, Botswana to the west, and the Kruger National Park to the east. Generally schools in Limpopo have similar material conditions to schools in other rural provinces in South Africa. For example, they have too few classrooms, many of which are dilapidated, the learner to teacher ratio remains high, with too few textbooks and the scarcity of other learning material confounding the problems of classroom teaching and learning. Rural schools also experience a lack of running water, sanitation, electricity, telephones, libraries, and sports and cultural facilities. The surrounding village communities are characterised by poverty, illiteracy and high rates of migrancy resulting in social dislocation (Derman and Poultney, 1990). The deficiencies and inequalities of rural schools in South Africa was detailed in the School Register of Needs census commissioned by the Department of Education in 1996 where it was noted:

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> Almost half of all Northern Province (now Limpopo) pupils are at schools with no water within walking distance. Close on eight in every ten schools have no electricity, two thirds have no telephones, and over four in every ten need serious repairs. There is less than one toilet for every forty children. (p. 14)

Before the President's Schools Project began, the material conditions in most of the six schools were very similar to those described above. However, this began to change in 1996 when the schools were refurbished with money raised by President Mandela. The only exception to this process was Baropodi, which already had excellent physical facilities in terms of a rural school before the project began. The only female principal in the project, the principal of Baropodi had the reputation of being a 'good' business woman who constantly raised money from local and urban businesses to upgrade the school. During the course of the project, additional money was raised which was used to build a library, a resource centre and two extra classrooms. Thus, it was only the five other schools that benefited directly from the refurbishing process during 1996.

By the time the in-service curriculum development activities began in 1997, strong infrastructural similarities existed across all of the project schools, with physical facilities not seen in many rural schools in South Africa. For example, all of the schools had twenty-four well-built and functional classrooms with a large chalkboard mounted on the front wall, and enough new tables and chairs for the teachers and the learners. Administration blocks containing a reception area, staffroom, offices used by the principal and senior members of staff, two storerooms and a safe were also built. Electricity was connected to the schools, though it was both unstable and unreliable, resulting in frequent power outages. Running water allowed for the construction and use of ablution blocks for learners and a separate one for teachers. The school grounds were all fenced off from the neighbouring village communities. However, the schools remained under-resourced in terms of teaching and learning aids such as textbooks and other equipment, and the human resource issues remained unchanged with each of the six schools having approximately twenty teachers who were expected to teach more than a thousand learners from Grade 0 to Grade 7.

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The issue of language was complex across these schools and in the project, as indeed it remains in the broader South African context. The Constitution of South Africa (1993) provided for the language rights of a multilingual nation when it added nine African languages to the original two official languages of the apartheid era, namely English and Afrikaans. The South African Schools Act (SASA) (1996) mandated schools and their communities to select an appropriate and negotiated medium of instruction from those listed in the Constitution. Most of the learners in each of the President's Schools shared the same main language as their teachers. In Baropodi and Letjatji, the main language of the learners and of their teachers was Sepedi, in Khomisani and Nwaxinyamani the language of Xitsonga dominated, whereas Tshivenda was the language used by most teachers and learners at Mashamba and Mutshetshe. In all of the President's Schools, as is the case in all primary schools in South Africa, instruction for Foundation Phase learners (Grade 0 to Grade 3) took place in the primary language of the communities served by the individual schools. For example, in Khomisani, the Foundation Phase was conducted in Xitsonga, while in Letjatji lessons for Grade 0 to 3 took place in Sepedi. It was at the start of the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4) where the issue of language of learning and teaching changed and became more complicated. It was also in the Intermediate Phase where the project worked intensively with teachers on curriculum development activities.

All of the President's Schools chose English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards even though it was not the primary language of any of the teachers. In fact, for the majority of teachers and learners in South African schools, English is a foreign, rather than even a second language (Parker, 1997). There were a number of reasons why English was selected as the language of learning and teaching in the President's Schools. Among them was the fact that since 1994 English had become increasingly dominant in most schools as the majority of South African parents wanted their children educated in the language of the economy. Setati *et al* (2002) suggest that as the

commercially published learning materials for South African schools are generally written either in English or in Afrikaans, there are also practical reasons related to the choices school communities make concerning language of instruction. Another reason for the President's Schools choice of English was that this was the language of the project, and all project activities that were conducted, and all curriculum materials that were developed were done so in English. The pedagogical implications embedded in conducting lessons in English from Grade 4 onwards are implicitly detailed in Chapter Six.

Living in Johannesburg made it logistically complicated and costly for me to conduct school-based research activities. These activities had to be well planned, as it was difficult to make too many on-the-sport adjustments to a planned programme. The physical distances between Johannesburg and the six schools were great: the closest school was Baropodi, easily a three-hour drive, while the furthest was Mutshetshe, nearly a six-hour drive. The major route from Johannesburg to Polokwane, Limpopo's capital city, is a very well maintained toll road. Once off this national road, roads to the schools are made of gravel that is very susceptible to Limpopo's weather conditions, which range between two extremes of flood and drought. Both Mashamba and Mutshetshe Schools were inaccessible for three months towards the beginning of 2000 due to large scale flooding in the region.

By the end of 1997, when I began the data collection process for this research, the teachers had become used to seeing me in their schools offering support with issues relating to OBE. They had worked closely with me in Johannesburg when they attended a three-day in-service teacher development programme held at SHC, and I had regularly facilitated curriculum workshops for the teachers in their schools. To signal the start of my new role as academic researcher, I scheduled additional school visits to introduce the research to the teachers and to find out the extent to which they were prepared to participate. The principals and the Intermediate Phase teachers asked questions about the research and we reviewed the thesis proposal together. Teachers readily volunteered to

participate in a variety of interviews and lesson observations. In keeping with the ethics involved in research, a written consent form was developed and signed by the teachers (see Appendix A). This form was referred to every time research activities were conducted within the six schools to try and help differentiate between project-related activities and those with more of a research focus. Teachers would often inquire about how the research was progressing when they saw me in their schools.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) maintain that this type of closeness between researcher and participants has significant benefits in that it "illuminates the inner dynamics of situations - dynamics that are often invisible to the outsider" (p. 30). McCracken (1988), also reflecting on the issue of familiarity, concludes:

> This acquaintance gives the investigator a fineness of touch and delicacy of insight that few ethnographers working in the other culture can hope to develop (p. 32).

While it was true that I experienced significant benefits in sharing a close relationship with the teachers involved in this research, there were also a number of disadvantages. Understandably the teachers found it difficult to always differentiate between the two roles I played in their schools. During some interviews I felt that the teachers did not want to be too negative about OBE and the teacher development activities the project offered them, as it was to 'Lorraine', the well known curriculum field worker that they were speaking and not to an external academic researcher. It is possible that the teachers were over helpful and said what they thought I wanted to hear, rather than what they really wanted to say. In order to reduce this effect as much as possible, Carol Anne Spreen, a visiting academic from Teachers College Columbia, New York, accompanied me to focus group interviews in four of the six schools. Graven (2002) also experienced the complexities of having such a dual role and described it as either a "difficult tension or a powerful praxis" (p. 62). In my experience, there were moments of tension when I felt disadvantaged in playing

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this dual role, and also moments of praxis when I felt advantaged in playing this role. Examples of this dilemma are highlighted throughout this chapter.

Appendix B contains six separate tables that summarise the biographical details of the Intermediate Phase teachers who participated in research interviews. It is immediately obvious from these tables that this research took place during a transitional period, both politically and educationally. For example, the traditional school subjects like History and Geography and the more OBE learning areas like Human and Social Sciences (HSS), and Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) existed simultaneously. The reader will also note the range of colleges of education and universities that the participating teachers attended to attain a wide variety of professional qualifications. Many of these colleges were closed after 1994, primarily due to the poor pre-service training they had traditionally offered to black student teachers, but also related to the incorporation of teacher education into existing tertiary institutions. Several of the colleges and universities were correspondence institutions that continue to offer in-service distance learning opportunities to many teachers across South Africa. Generally, the teachers could be considered 'experienced' as their years in the classroom ranged from three to twenty-six, with the average being nearly twelve years. Only one teacher out of the group was unqualified and most could be considered 'local' as the average distance between a teacher's home and his or her school was 7 km.

## QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

One of the best known and certainly one of the most powerful representatives of qualitative research is the interview, which is generally used in conjunction with some form of observation (McCracken, 1988; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Qualitative interviews are characterised by the collection of data that is rich in detail of people, places and conversations; data that are not easily handled by statistical procedures (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Rubin and Rubin (1995)

speak of qualitative interviews as great adventures that continuously bring new information. They say that through qualitative interviews the researcher finds out what other people feel and think about their worlds, and that the interviewer can understand experiences and reconstruct events and problems in which she or he did not participate. In this research, the aim of conducting qualitative interviews was to find out how the teachers understood OBE, and the extent to which the President's Schools Project facilitated that understanding. Methodologically it was necessary to develop strategies that could access the Intermediate Phase teachers' discourse of curriculum change. These strategies needed to be as natural as possible so that the teachers would be encouraged to openly reflect on curriculum issues in their schools and in their classrooms. In effect, qualitative interviews were conducted to develop an account with depth, detail and richness, not unlike Geertz's (1973) concept of thick description.

Given the relationship I shared with the Intermediate Phase teachers, it was important for the interviews to be modelled more closely on conversations between trusted parties, rather than on formal structured interviews. However, while qualitative interviews do build on the socially accepted practice of conversation, they do differ from conversations in two fundamental ways (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). First, the qualitative interview is primarily a research tool, an intentional instrument designed to learn about, in this case, teachers' perceptions of curriculum change. As such, qualitative interviews always establish the boundary between what can be said and what cannot be said in ways that informal conversations do not. Second, qualitative interviews are guided by the researcher who "intentionally introduces a limited number of questions and requests the interviewee to explore these questions in depth" (Rubin and Rubin, *ibid*, p. 2). This requires a move beyond casual conversation and necessitates that the interview focus on a narrow range of topics so that more depth and detail can be obtained.

Focus group interviews were selected for this research as they are an interview form that is close to conversation. Intermediate Phase teachers were

accustomed to working and talking about curriculum issues together and would presumably have felt more confident and stimulated by the presence of each other. The aim of this approach was to elicit the general trends and issues concerning curriculum change in the six President's Schools. This follows the approach in Merton *et al* (1990) where the interviewer introduces a topic, then guides the discussion by asking specific questions. This approach can also be likened to what McCracken (1988) calls the "obtrusive/unobtrusive balance" (p. 21) in a qualitative interview. On the one hand this means eliciting responses in a non-directive, unobtrusive way, while on the other hand exercising some measure of control over the interview.

An interview schedule was developed and then trialled at a school in Soweto. Questions covered in the final interview schedule were related to three general issues namely, teaching practice, curriculum implementation and curriculum relevance, and were based loosely around the research aims raised in Chapter One (see Appendix C for the focus group interview schedule). The interviews were not staged to be question and answer sessions, but rather effort was made to facilitate dialogue which would be both meaningful and enjoyable, like "an invitation, an evocation, to speak" (Ensor, 1996, p. 2). Considerable effort was made to offer teachers enough latitude to pursue a range of topics and to offer them a chance to read the content of the interview. Open-ended questions were phrased in the following ways: Why is it…? What do you think about…? Tell me about…? Some people have said…. What do you think? What do you mean...? I'm not sure I'm following you, could you say it again...? Can you please explain that...? Could you give me some examples...? These types of questions required more than one word answers, and encouraged teachers to answer from their own frames of reference, rather than from one tightly structured by pre-arranged questions from which no deviation could be made.

Two focus group interviews were conducted in each of the six schools with Intermediate Phase teachers who were active in the project's curriculum development activities. Before each interview began, the teachers were

reminded about the consent forms they had read and signed concerning their participation in this research (Appendix A). A tape recorder was used to record the interviews, with the teachers' permission, and the knowledge that it could be switched off at any time. Each of the twelve interviews lasted for more than two hours, and the fifty-one teachers who participated did so voluntarily. Appendix D reflects the dates and initials of the teachers involved in the focus group interviews conducted in the six schools.

All interviews were transcribed together with Carol Anne Spreen, the result of which was a paper about the general discourse of curriculum change emerging in the six schools (Marneweck and Spreen, 1999). Transcripts of the focus group interviews were distributed to the teachers, where they were given the opportunity to clarify their comments and to respond to additional questions. A total of forty-four responses (86%) were returned. The high participation in the focus group interviews and the number of written responses received from the teachers was an indication of powerful praxis in my dual role in the project.

When the actual words of teachers are quoted directly from interview transcripts in later chapters, the following notation is used (Type of interview; Name of school; Initials of teacher; Date of interview). My comments and questions appear in italics, and text within square brackets […] are the best guesses for unclear words spoken, or for additional information the reader requires in order to accurately and meaningfully position the quote.

During the transcription of this interview data and the writing of the paper, an early theme emerged which seemed to suggest that certain teachers in two of the schools had begun to play an increasingly important role in the school-based curriculum work of the project. These teachers, referred to in Chapters Five and Six as teacher leaders, were most evident in Letjatji and Mashamba, resulting in these schools then being selected for more in-depth interviews and discussions of practice.

## A FOCUS ON LETJATJI AND MASHAMBA

The focus placed on Letjatji and Mashamba is another example of the tension between my dual roles in the project. As a project field worker, I had access to internal discussions and documents that an external academic researcher may not have had, leading me to make certain assumptions about Letjatji and Mashamba. Field workers in both components of the President's Schools Project, management as well as curriculum, had begun to talk about Letjatji and Mashamba in different ways to the manner in which the other four schools were discussed. For example, management field workers noted in staff meetings that the formal school leadership structures in both Letjatji and Mashamba seemed to understand the implications of the South African Schools Act (SASA) in ways that transcended the understandings of the other schools' leaders (Sacred Heart College Research and Development, 1997b). They also mentioned that Letjatji and Mashamba's school leaders attended and participated in management workshops in ways that seemed to suggest in-depth commitment and interest. This interest and commitment was greater than that observed from leaders in the other four schools (Sacred Heart College Research and Development, 1997c). This was with the notable exception of Baropodi's principal who was also mentioned in terms of her commitment and interest regarding the project. In the curriculum component, I noted that teachers from Letjatji and Mashamba asked more questions and participated more actively in the lessons they observed at SHC during an in-service programme run by the project as a central teacher development activity (Sacred Heart College Research and Development, 1998a). The second curriculum field worker, Sydwell Marhule, also spoke of the ease with which his work in Letjatji and Mashamba was conducted compared to his activities in the other four schools (Sacred Heart College Research and Development, 1998b). In the one-year review of the project, it was noted that in Letjatji:

> The school seems to have entrenched curriculum changes. For example, all Grade 4 to 7 teachers are required to observe lessons during their free

> periods on Mondays. Furthermore, one of the teachers, WK, was appointed on the recommendation of the teachers to manage curriculum development activities at the school. (Sacred Heart College Research and Development, 1998c, p. 30)

And in Mashamba:

> One of the heads of department [HOD] was elected by teachers to manage the implementation of the new curriculum and to act as a mentor teacher. She [SM3] works closely with teachers. (*ibid*, p. 24)

These more intuitive issues led to the conventional wisdom being held that Letjatji and Mashamba were the 'best' schools in the project. This information also helped to shape the research focus, and at that point I made what I believed to be the correct decision to concentrate more on the teaching practice in Letjatji and Mashamba. I assumed that if any of the six schools had the potential of being successful in terms of implementing OBE in the classroom, then this potential would be best realised at Letjatji and/or Mashamba. While all six schools had developed collaborative processes to assist with the implementation of OBE, it was only at Letjatji and Mashamba that school-based teacher leadership augmented this development.

The emergence of WK in Letjatji and SM3 in Mashamba as teacher leaders impacted on the methodology used in this thesis. While two focus group interviews were conducted in all six schools, it was only at Letjatji and Mashamba that leadership and pair interviews occurred. These two kinds of additional interviews were aimed at probing the actions of the leaders through the lens of their own understanding, and through the lens of their peers' understanding. Details of these additional interviews are summarised in Appendix E.

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## ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES IN INTERVIEW DATA

Cohen and Manion (1994) argue that the world of the qualitative researcher is subjectively structured by the people involved in it, and so it possesses particular meanings for its inhabitants. An attempt was made to understand these meanings through analysing the patterns of discourse teachers used, in other words, to hear the teachers' voices (Cortazzi, 1993). This was done by moving from a broad exploratory beginning to a more directed analysis of the interview data. This process can be likened to a funnel, where the study begins at the wide end of the funnel, where the researcher looks for clues, collects data, modifies the design and makes decisions, thus narrowing the funnel (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982).

Interview data was critically read and decisions were made regarding the key words and phrases that were repeated by many of the teachers across the six schools. This reading also afforded me the opportunity to become very familiar with the nuances in the transcripts. The transcripts were read in terms of the three broad categories of questions asked during the focus group interviews, namely, teaching practice, curriculum implementation and curriculum relevance. During these critical readings, questions such as the following were also asked of the data: What concepts did the teachers use when talking of their practice? How did the teachers incorporate OBE issues into their discourse of good and bad teaching practices? How were the teachers' accounts constructed?

The software package Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising[1] (NUDIST) (1994) was used to assist in handling the data during the process of establishing and substantiating analytical categories. The most useful feature of the NUDIST package was its ability to handle the vast quantities of text created from the transcripts of focus group interviews and later from the additional interviews.

[1] Thanks to Dr Ray Basson for permitting me to use his copy of NUDIST.

In particular, four NUDIST functions proved useful in probing the interview data for analytical categories. These functions were the index system, the raw text files, the string and pattern searches, and the text units. As Appendix F provides a detailed discussion concerning how these functions were used and the analytical categories that emerged out of them, this section will merely summarise the key points.

A NUDIST index system was developed to systematically store and then to explore the twelve focus group interview transcripts as separate raw text files. Several searches were conducted to identify common ideas throughout each of the raw text files and then these ideas were grouped together as theoretical constructs. After modifying the index system several times, four main analytical themes emerged, each of which was linked together by a unifying concept. These themes were named curriculum authority, curriculum knowledge, curriculum creativity and curriculum leadership; while the unifying concept was termed teacher collaboration in participatory communities. The focus group interview data were the primary sources that were used to establish the categories, which were then substantiated with data from additional interviews (see Appendix E) to bring multiple perspectives to the research. This type of triangulation resulted in a rich, complex and more consistent textured set of findings, which are drawn on extensively in this thesis. For example, when Chapter Four theorises on how teacher collaboration in participatory communities emerged as a new social practice in the six schools, it draws mainly on the unifying concept of teacher collaboration in participatory communities. Curriculum creativity is used to provide evidence in Chapter Four of the discursively creative processes that the teachers went through to develop this new social practice. Chapter Five draws heavily on the categories of curriculum authority, curriculum knowledge and curriculum leadership when it presents the roles the teachers' discursively associated with OBE. Appendix G shows the number of times interview data from individual teachers is used in subsequent chapters.

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Tabachnik and Zeichner (1986) and Borko *et al* (1992) argue that the verbalised accounts of teaching are often inconsistent with teachers' actual classroom practices. This suggests that it was not enough to collect and analyse interview data for this research as classroom observation data also needed to be collected, analysed and then integrated into the developing arguments and research categories.

## QUALITATIVE OBSERVATIONS

A three-part lesson observation schedule was developed with the assistance of Professor Jill Adler, based on an instrument used to research the impact of the University of the Witwatersrand's Further Diploma in Education (FDE).
Part A of this schedule contained an information checklist, which was completed before each lesson began. This part categorised the physical features of the classroom, as well as listing brief details about the lesson's topic as supplied by the teacher before the lesson began. Part B of the schedule contained a narrative description of the lesson where the classroom dialogue was recorded using, as far as possible, the exact words of the teachers and learners. All parts of the lesson that were written up on the chalkboard by the teachers and their learners were also recorded in Part B. Part C of the schedule contained five coded sections that had been restructured from the original FDE research model to fit the needs of this particular research. This section was structured around my own progressive view of primary school teaching and learning that had developed during fourteen years of classroom experience. The five coded sections covered the following issues: lesson structure; classroom pedagogy; concepts and knowledge; learning activities; and roles. Appendix H contains the three-part lesson observation schedule and indicates which coded sections are used in this thesis to substantiate conclusions drawn about classroom practice in the President's Schools.

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Lesson observations in the six schools took place over a two-year period from November 1997 to November 1999, resulting in a total of forty-five Intermediate Phase lessons being observed. The classroom observation visits were organised at each school by different teachers working in the Intermediate Phase, therefore some of the teachers observed had not been present during focus group interviews. As explained earlier, a more intensive focus was placed on Letjatji and Mashamba as certain expectations had been developed of the practice in these two schools. This focus impacted on the lesson observation process, as several lessons in Letjatji and Mashamba were video taped and the dialogue transcribed at a later stage. The aim of the video was to read and to understand the events and interactions that occurred during lessons from multiple perspectives. The video also helped new ideas about teaching and learning emerge, as well as confirming certain existing ideas. I also returned to Letjatji and Mashamba to discuss some of the lesson videos with the teachers concerned (see Appendix I for the details). During all classroom observations I collected lesson plans, schemes of work and copies of any learning materials that the teachers had prepared for their lessons. The lessons observed were from a range of learning areas or subjects and covered a wide variety of topics (see Appendix J). I tried to follow each lesson observation with a discussion interview with the teacher concerned. Due to time constraints on the part of the teachers this was not always possible. However, as Appendix K reveals, this process was much more successful at Letjatji and Mashamba, given the assistance provided by WK and SM3 respectively.

It is important to note that this focus on Letjatji and Mashamba was directly related to the emergence of the teacher leaders in these schools. I had made the assumption that, in participatory communities where teacher leaders supported curriculum changes through the manner in which they organised the curriculum, there would be a direct connection to improvements in teaching and learning. Later chapters will reflect critically on the validity of this assumption in the context of the President's Schools. I also made the early conclusion that the lessons observed in all of the schools were exemplar OBE versions of what the

teachers usually did in the classroom. There are a variety of reasons for this conclusion, for example: the teachers knew they were going to be observed in advance; lessons were prepared together; all lessons were conducted totally in English with no code switching to the primary language of the teachers and learners; the class time-tables displayed were not followed; and teachers had gone to a lot of extra trouble preparing activities and teaching aids. It needs to be remembered that the arguments made and the conclusions drawn in later chapters must be understood in terms of their being the 'best' practices that the teachers associated with OBE and not necessarily their everyday practices.

When data from lessons are used in later chapters, the following notation is used (Type of evidence; Name of school; Initials of teacher; Date of lesson evidence). Appendix M shows the range of observation data used in later chapters in relation to the lessons from which they were taken.

## ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES IN CLASSROOM OBSERVATION DATA

The classroom practice of the teachers was analysed from a sociocultural perspective, which argues that as cultural activities, teaching and learning have a certain routineness about them that ensures a degree of consistency and predictability. This led to particular kinds of questions being asked of the data collected from the lesson observations, for example: What did an OBE lesson actually 'look' like in the President's Schools? What forms did 'learner-centred' practice take in the classrooms? What did the teachers do during lessons? What did the learners do during lessons? To what extent was there a pattern in the practice observed across all six schools? And, if there was a pattern of practice, what categories constituted that pattern?

After an in-depth study of the three parts of the lesson observation schedule it was concluded that the information gleaned from Part A of the schedule was not particularly helpful in isolating analytical categories of actual lessons. This was

largely due to the uniformity in terms of infrastructural and physical resources across the six schools as a result of the refurbishment process that took place during 1996. However, the lesson narratives in Part B of the schedule were extremely useful. It was here that the actual words of the teachers and learners had been recorded as accurately as possible. In addition, any words, phrases or diagrams that were written on the chalkboard during the course of a lesson had also been reproduced. Analysing these lesson transcripts suggested that a procedural pattern of practice did exist across all of the schools, and that it was clustered around two distinct categories. The first category related to the brief manner in which the teachers introduced their lessons to their learners. Teachers generally did these introductions through a question and answer technique structured around some form of content knowledge. The second category dealt with the group learning activities that teachers developed for their lessons. The majority of lesson time was spent on the second category, namely group learning activities.

After identifying a pattern of practice, the data collated from all lesson observations were used for the purposes of triangulation to substantiate the two categories (see Appendix H, Part C). The first category in the pattern of practice, question and answers, was substantiated in Section Two, *Classroom Pedagogy*, where it was documented that the use of questions as a teaching tool was evident in all but one of the lessons observed. Section One, *Lesson Structure,* indicated that in nearly half of the lessons observed, the teachers made some form of content knowledge available to their learners at the beginning of their lessons by telling the class what the lessons were about. This data also seemed to suggest that the category of questions and answers contained both pedagogical and content elements.

The second category in the pattern of practice, group learning activities, was also substantiated through Part C of the lesson observation schedule. Section Four in the schedule documented issues relating directly to *Learning Activities*, with both of its sub-sections, group work and learning tasks, being particularly

helpful. The group work sub-section reflected that this method was used as a strategy for the learners to engage with the lesson content in three-quarters of the lessons observed. The kind of engagement that resulted from the group work ranged from repeating class work content (in nearly a quarter of the lessons observed) to using standard textbook activities, which had a focus on content (in nearly half of the lessons observed). This evidence seemed to suggest that this category, like the first, was constituted by content and pedagogical elements.

Additional data was used to support the conclusions being made about the pattern of practice. For example, the two lesson categories were discussed during interviews held immediately after the lessons with some of the teachers, and they were also discussed during extra interviews conducted at Letjatji and Mashamba (see Appendix I). Field notes also generated additional insights into the nature of practice in the schools, as they were written accounts of what I observed, heard, experienced and thought during the course of observing, and then reflecting on lessons. These field notes were used as a secondary source of data to substantiate the two categories that emerged during the lesson observation process (see Appendix L for an example of field notes).

To conclude, the pattern of practice observed in the schools had two distinct categories: questions and answers; and, group learning activities. Both of these categories, involving elements of pedagogy and elements of content, were reflective of the manner in which the teachers translated their understanding of OBE as curriculum theory into curriculum practice. These categories are systematically used throughout Chapter Six to reveal the teachers' knowledge of pedagogy and knowledge of content in the lessons observed. This process is presented in great detail in Chapter Six, which concludes with a summary that typifies the teachers' knowledge as practice in the President's Schools Project. This summary is introduced below as Table 3.1.

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| TABLE 3.1: | TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE |
|---|---|
| *Knowledge of Pedagogy* | <u>Pedagogical Control</u><br>The teachers controlled and directed the flow of their lessons.<br>*What examples were seen that typified this pedagogical control in practice?*<br>• The teachers asked all of the questions.<br>• The teachers pre-determined what the answers were.<br>• Learners were required to recall simple facts in response to questions.<br>• These facts were in the form of single words or short phrases.<br>• The learners often answered in chorus.<br><br><u>Social climate</u><br>The teachers created socially supportive interactive norms in their classrooms.<br>*What examples were seen that typified these norms in practice?*<br>• The learners were active during lessons.<br>• The learners enjoyed the activities.<br><br><u>Learning contexts</u><br>Teachers created learning contexts to help their learners acquire new knowledge.<br>*What examples were seen that typified these contexts in practice?*<br>• The teachers taught things the learners already knew.<br>• Knowledge was presented in the form of facts.<br>• Facts were connected to learners' lives in a contrived manner.<br>• The teachers spent very little time explaining these connections. |
| *Knowledge of Content* | <u>Form and substance</u><br>The teachers privileged the technical form of learning activities over the substance of what learners were meant to learn from them.<br>*What examples were seen that typified this privileging in practice?*<br>• Activities were randomly selected.<br>• There was little connection between activities.<br>• Learners sat in a group seating arrangement.<br>• One learner in each group completed the activity while the others watched passively.<br><br><u>Authority and responsibility</u><br>The teachers made a distinction between their authority for generating learning activities and their learners' responsibility for completing these activities.<br>*What examples were seen that typified this distinction in practice?*<br>• Learners' misunderstandings were left unchecked by the teachers.<br>• The teachers provided learners with little or no support to complete the learning activities.<br>• The teachers provided learners with little or no support during the report back sessions on learning activities.<br><br><u>Concrete and abstract</u><br>The teachers confused concrete and abstract knowledge.<br>*What examples were seen that typified this confusion in practice?*<br>• The teachers did not explain how to complete abstract activities.<br>• The learners were unable to successfully complete abstract activities. |

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## ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As was documented earlier in Chapter One, the President's Schools Project took place during a time of intense political, social and educational change in South Africa. These macro changes were mirrored in the project, and resulted in the emergence of new curriculum discourses accompanied by a particular form of teaching and learning across the six schools. These developments in the six schools were situated within the micro social practice of teacher collaboration in participatory communities. In this qualitative research a framework was required to shift the analysis of these developments from mere descriptions of teachers' discourses and practices, to a more integrated explanation that included a reconciliation of the social and the textual. Norman Fairclough's[2] work on how language maintains or changes practices in a society was particularly helpful in developing such a framework.

Essentially, Fairclough's work is based on two critical assertions he makes about language. First, he asserts that language is not something that exists externally to society, but it is actually an integral part of society; essentially language is a social practice. Second, he asserts that as language is discourse, the conditions of the production and the interpretation of texts must be taken into account, and not just the linguistic products or artifacts of what is seen and heard. These assertions mark the move from merely describing discourse to the interpretation and explanation of discourse, as well as linking macro analyses of society to a micro analysis of particular social exchanges, like those that took place in the context of the participatory communities.

The following sections draw on Fairclough's assertions about language in two ways to inform the analytical framework. First, the increased consciousness he raises around the issues of language and society is used to relate the research categories described earlier to the dimensions of discourse in an analytical

[2] Thanks to Dr Patricia Shariff for introducing me to the work of Norman Fairclough.

framework. Second, the method he developed to critically analyse discourse is reviewed in terms of its applicability to the texts of this research.

## DIMENSIONS OF DISCOURSE

Fairclough presents his theory of critical language study in a model containing three embedded boxes. In the centre box is 'text' which represents a written transcription of what is said; essentially this box contains a product, for example an interview transcript. The middle box represents the process of producing the text, and the process of interpreting the text, both of which are social interactions. People involved in social interactions bring a wide range of cognitive resources to either produce new texts or to interpret existing texts. Fairclough (1991) calls these "members' resources" (p. 24), which he abbreviates to MR. The outer box in his model represents the social conditions, struggles and context that determine the nature of a person's MR. After internalising what is socially produced and made available, people use their MR to engage in their social practice. His model is reproduced as Figure 3.1 below.

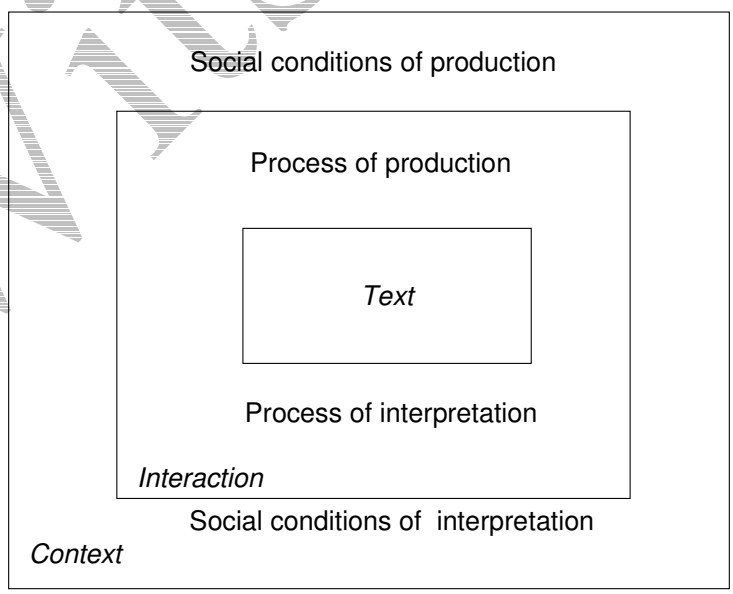



**FIGURE 3.1: DISCOURSE AS TEXT, INTERACTION AND CONTEXT (FAIRCLOUGH, 1991, p. 25)**

Teachers in the six schools produced and interpreted their understanding of curriculum change through the social practice of teacher collaboration, which determined the nature of the MR that they brought to these processes. When the teachers spoke about the curriculum they did so in ways that were socially determined and subject to the conventions created through the context of participatory communities. In turn, this new social practice was structured into sets of situations where discursive practices were produced and interpreted, and where actual practices were enacted as the products of these processes. The discursive practices of the participatory communities established the conventions and norms whereby the new social practice could be organised and maintained. Teachers developed sets of situations and discourses around issues of authority, knowledge, creativity and leadership as they interacted with one another in their participatory communities. Once the conventions and norms of these social practices were established through discursive practices, they in turn created a precondition for action on the part of the teachers. The actual practices of this particular group of teachers were clustered around the texts, or artifacts of questions and answers, and group learning activities. The analytical framework developed for this research, based on Fairclough's model (Figure 3.1), is presented in Figure 3.2 below.

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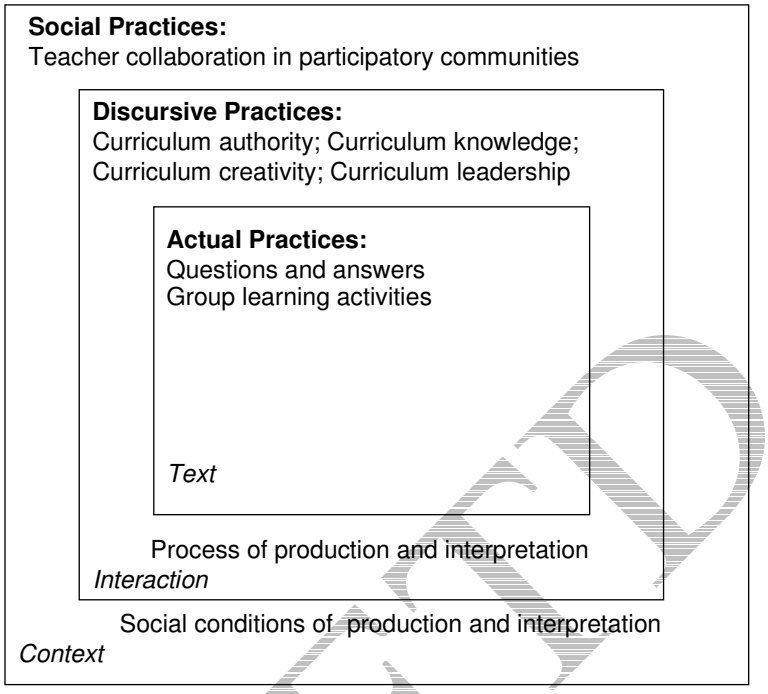



**FIGURE 3.2: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

The relationship between the dimensions of social practice, discursive practice and actual practice is not mechanical or linear, but rather dialectic. Each dimension is both the product and the cause of determining the nature of the other dimensions. For example, the actual practices of the teachers also determined the conventions and norms of the discursive practices, which impacted back on the structure of the new social practice. In this thesis the words of the teachers are not merely read as simple systems of sentences, but they are also read in such a way that considers language as discourse and language as action. Likewise, the social institution of the participatory communities was not just an abstract stratified structure, but also a dynamic formation of relationships and practices constituted by creative struggles.

These dimensions of discourse, presented in a framework based on Fairclough's model, require a specific form of discourse analysis.

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Fairclough developed a theory of critical discourse analysis that studied the linguistic expressions of people in social interactions from a particular perspective. His theory, based on the three embedded boxes represented in Figure 3.1 above, asserts that critical discourse analysis is not just about analysing text, nor is it just about analysing the processes of production and interpretation, but it includes analysing the relationship between texts, processes and their social conditions. Fairclough presents three stages of critical discourse analysis that correspond to these three dimensions of discourse, namely description, interpretation and explanation. He identifies particular areas of language as having the greatest potential for understanding social processes in a descriptive, interpretive and explanatory way. By so doing, he privileges certain linguistic options from the whole array of features present for critical discourse analysis.

Both the explanatory and interpretive stages of Fairclough's framework involve the analysis of complex and invisible relations. In the explanatory part of his framework, Fairclough argues that it is necessary to analyse discourse as an element of social processes. These social processes operate at situational, institutional and societal levels, illustrating the extent to which the discourse in this research was either ideologically determined by, and/or ideologically determinative of, power relations and power struggles. In this way, discourse in the research can be seen as part of a broader social struggle. Included in Fairclough's explanatory stage is the process of making explicit the common-sense assumptions embedded in the production and interpretation of discourses. It allows the research to draw conclusions concerning the extent to which the practices embedded in a new social process either sustained the continuity of past practices or transformed those practices into new ones. Chapter Four draws heavily on Fairclough's explanatory stage when it presents teacher collaboration as a new social practice in the six schools. It shows that while the teacher development activities planned by the project were ideologically

determined by social processes operating at societal and institutional levels, at a situational level the teachers played a more determinative role. The extent to which this served to sustain past practices or transform them into new ones is probed in Chapter Six.

Fairclough argues that interpretations are generated both by what is in the text and what is in the reader, in particular the MR all participants bring to the process of interpretation. Once again, specific areas of Fairclough's framework (1991, p. 143-144) were concentrated on in this research, in particular the issues he includes relating to situational and intertextual contexts. Interpreting the situational context wherein interactions occurred provided important external cues regarding the nature of the relationship between the people involved in social interactions in the schools, and the roles that they assumed. The interpretations of intertextual issues revealed the discourses that were either foregrounded or backgrounded in these interactions, as well as the manner in which the former were combined. The strength of including both situational and intertextual processes in this research was that it provided opportunities to illustrate how the concepts of social and interpersonal struggle could be seen working themselves out in the dimensions of discourse. These struggles are highlighted in Chapter Five.

During the descriptive stage of the framework, the formal features of a text are identified and labelled according to Fairclough's (1991, p. 110-111) framework. As this research uses his framework as a guide and not as a blueprint, it centres on the relational and experiential values words and phrases had in texts. Describing the relational values of words or phrases in the texts produced in this thesis illustrated how social relationships between teachers were created and enacted. Experiential values are specifically concerned with the way the teachers represented their experiences of the social and natural world. This contributes greatly to understanding the struggles that took place in the teachers' discourses and the ideological processes that underpinned these struggles, as set out in Chapter Five. The descriptive stage is also drawn on in Chapter Six,

which probes the nature of teaching and learning as the actual practices of the teachers in the President's Schools.

Both Fairclough (1991; 1995) and Janks (1997) argue that the decision to begin critical discourse analysis at one particular stage is, at best, an arbitrary one. This is because it is precisely the interconnections between these three forms of analysis wherein the interesting patterns and disjunctions are revealed. The analytical move to examine a single dimension necessarily breaks the interdependence between dimensions and requires the subsequent moves that re-insert that dimension into its interconnected place. In this thesis, the analysis begins by explaining how the dimension of participatory community emerged as a new social practice in the six schools, while continually acknowledging that this was an arbitrary position from which to start, and that the analysis of this dimension was always dependent on the analysis of the other dimensions. The analysis then moves to an interpretation and description of the discursive practices and the actual practices of the participatory communities of teachers. Through analysing the texts of interviews and lessons according to Fairclough's theory of critical discourse analysis it was possible to theorise about how social relations were changed, maintained, resisted or appropriated in the project schools, and the impact this had on classroom practice.

The last section in this chapter probes issues of validity in terms of qualitative research. After briefly examining each of the categories used to validate qualitative research, the manner in which each of these issues is accounted for in this thesis is explained.

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ISSUES

There have been many critics of the qualitative paradigm including Campbell and Stanley (1963), Phillips (1983; 1986; 1987) and Dippo (1988) who maintain that this type of research results in subjective and impressionistic accounts that lack

precise quantifiable measures. Cohen and Manion (1994) turn this criticism into a question of which qualitative researchers need to be mindful:

> How do we know that observers do not lose their perspective and become blind to the peculiarities that they are supposed to be investigating? (p. 11)

Much of the criticism surrounding attempts to answer this question stem from the tendency to evaluate qualitative research by quantitative standards. Guba and Lincoln (2004) deny the relevance of applying such standards to their particular form of qualitative research. Kirk and Miller (1986) support this denial when they argue that qualitative research has its own verification procedures and that these are different from the criteria used in quantitative research. Qualitative research is not intended to capture issues of distribution or generalisation in the same manner as is intended in quantitative research. The qualitative focus reveals what people think and do, not how many people think and do something, as is the case in quantitative research.

Many researchers have recognised the issue of validity as crucial in legitimising the qualitative paradigm. These included Bosk (1979), Goetz and Le Compte (1984), Kirk and Miller (1986) and Kvale (1989). However, many inconsistencies exist regarding how the term 'validity' is used in the methodological literature. For example, Spindler (1982) suggests that there are certain standards for ethnographers to follow that facilitate validity. These include among others, that instruments must be developed in the field and that observation is conducted in a prolonged and repetitive manner. Smith and Glass (1987) list eight issues concerning how the quality of "naturalistic studies" (p. 278) can be validated, which include that the researcher be self-critical and that sufficient time be spent on collecting data.

While there are no straightforward means of assessing the validity of a qualitative research study, in particular the validity of the account it produces, there are ways to verify the effectiveness of data collection procedures in

qualitative studies. In this research, the applicability of the concept of validity relates to Hammersley and Atkinson's (1983) contention that "data themselves cannot be valid or invalid; what is at issue are the inferences drawn from them" (p. 191). In this research the notion of validity is drawn specifically from Maxwell (1992), who argues that the validity of an account is inherent, not in the procedures used to validate it, but in the relationship it has to those things of which it is intended to be an account. Four of the five categories Maxwell (1992) developed for issues of validity are appropriate for this research, namely descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity and generalisability. His fifth category of evaluative validity was not considered to be central to this research, which did not set out to make judgements about the actions of the teachers.

## DESCRIPTIVE VALIDITY

Descriptive validity is considered to be the primary aspect of validity as it is "the foundation upon which qualitative research is built" (Wolcott, 1990, p 27). As the first concern of qualitative research, descriptive validity relates to the factual accuracy of the account being made, or to what Geertz (1973) calls the "exactness" (p. 17) of that account. In other words, for research to be considered descriptively valid, the accuracy of the account's application needs to be assured.

Maxwell (1992) differentiates between primary and secondary descriptive validity. The former relates to the exact nature of the accuracy of the account, with the latter being, "the validity of accounts of things that could in principle be observed, but that were inferred from other data – for example, things that happened in the classroom when the researcher was not present" (p. 286). In an attempt to ensure the primary descriptive validity of this study, I recorded events as accurately as possible with a tape recorder, and at times, a video recorder. These tapes were transcribed and expressed, as far as possible, the

actual words of the teachers and their learners. The transcripts of interviews were then given to the teachers to read, thus ensuring that the texts were as accurate as possible. In terms of secondary descriptive validity, further questions were put to the teachers relating to inferences that were being drawn from the primary source, namely transcripts of focus group interviews conducted with certain Intermediate Phase teachers. Extracts from video transcripts of lessons were discussed with the teachers concerned in another attempt to ensure the descriptive validity of the account of the lesson.

But describing what happened in the classroom, or what transpired during the interviews, was not the sole concern of this research. It also wanted to attach meaning to these events, or what Maxwell (1992) calls ensuring the "interpretive validity" (p. 288) of the account.

**INTERPRETIVE VALIDITY**

Interpretive validity has no real counterpart in the validity procedures traditionally used in quantitative research, and is directly associated with qualitative research. Geertz's (1973) concept of thick description is useful in relation to the interpretive validity of qualitative research. His concept is not about the richness of details in the account itself, but rather the richness in terms of meaningful descriptions; descriptions that are embedded in the conceptual frameworks of the participants themselves. Qualitative researchers are not just concerned with describing events, but also with what these events mean to the people involved in them. Interpretive validity is crucial to this thesis, which sought to understand teachers' perceptions of curriculum change from their own conceptual frameworks, and not merely from the researcher's perspective. It was important for me to understand how the teachers understood the world, and how they created and shared meaning about their teaching with each other.

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Maxwell (1992) defines interpretive validity as:

> Accounts of meaning must be based initially on the conceptual framework of the people whose meaning is in question….Interpretive accounts are grounded in the language of the people studied and rely as much as possible on their own words and concepts. (p. 289)

When this research began certain expectations existed concerning what would be discovered and how the teachers' perceptions of curriculum change would be expressed. However, the interpretive process revealed issues that were contradictory, confusing and uncomfortable when compared to these expectations. To ensure the interpretive validity of the final account, these unpredictable issues were built in and in fact, in some cases, became central to the thesis. For example, I had not expected that the teachers would find the sophisticated and technical form that OBE took in South Africa to be in any way relevant for their teaching in rural schools; nor had I anticipated the particular manner in which the teachers translated that understanding of relevance into their classroom practices. However, the issue of relevance became an important element in the teachers' understanding of OBE. My struggle to understand and acknowledge the teachers' position on relevance was one of interpretive validity.

This research is grounded in rich descriptions of the teachers' perceptions of curriculum change through using the teachers' own words to describe and to interpret curriculum change. However, qualitative validity also relates to the concepts and values of the teachers, which raised another category of understanding, namely theoretical validity.

## THEORETICAL VALIDITY

Theoretical validity is a much more abstract concept than either descriptive or interpretive validity. It goes beyond description and interpretation and explicitly addresses the theoretical constructions that are brought to, or developed during

the study. In addition, theoretical validity functions as an explanation of the phenomena that were described and interpreted. In this way it relates very closely to the explanatory process in Fairclough's (1991) analytical framework discussed earlier in this chapter.

Following Maxwell's (1992) indication of important aspects of theoretical validity, I did the following. First, I considered how valid the categories or constructs were that I was applying to the phenomena in the study. Second, I considered what the suggested relationship between these categories and constructs actually was as a theory. To do this I identified the constructs of authority, knowledge, creativity and leadership, and established that teacher collaboration in participatory communities created a relationship between them. These were issues of theoretical validity.

Usher and Bryant (1989) argue that tentative conclusions should be discussed not only with the participants, but also with the researcher's peers and with the literature in the appropriate field, in this case in the field of curriculum. This is also written of by Freire (1985) and Brookfield (1993) when they speak of a researcher's preparedness to place his or her own beliefs before others for scrutiny. In an attempt to address this particular component of theoretical validity, I participated in a reflective conversation with several of my peers in a PhD seminar group chaired by Dr Michael Cross of the University of the Witwatersrand. I presented early concepts and relationships that were emerging from the classroom observation data to this group. This helped me to explore alternative interpretations and explanations. Similarly, the concepts and relationships emerging from the focus group interview data were presented at a conference for PhD students at the University of Queensland to give shape to early ideas. Theories that were emerging from the research were also discussed and probed with the Intermediate Phase teachers in the project. All of these strategies were useful in accounting for theoretical validity.

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## GENERALISABILITY

In terms of qualitative research, generalisability involves asking whether the insights and understandings of curriculum change gained by working with this small group of teachers could in any way shed light on how these issues would be interpreted by other teachers. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) argue that it is false to say that the tradition from which qualitative research draws its inspiration eschews generalisability. This is because generalisation can take place through the development of a theory that makes sense, not only to the persons or situations studied, but also by showing how the same process in a different situation can lead to similar results (Becker, 1990).

While qualitative research should contribute to cumulative knowledge about educational processes, it should not be in terms of replicating the exact study. Rather it is based on the assumption that the theory that explains this research data may be useful in making sense of similar positions. Delamont and Hamilton (1984) put it this way:

> Through the detailed study of one particular context it is still possible to clarify relationships, pinpoint critical processes and identify common phenomena (p 19).

In an attempt to address issues of generalisability in this study, Maxwell's (1992) distinction between internal generalisability and external generalisability was particularly helpful. Internal generalisability refers to relating this research to other teachers in the President's Schools who participated in the project, but not as directly as the Intermediate Phase teachers. External generalisability involves relating findings to teachers in schools that were not part of this project. This study proceeds cautiously in terms of external generalisability and makes no definitive statements concerning generalising the findings in these particular schools to other school communities. However, the study does generalise internally across the six schools and to other Intermediate Phase teachers in the schools who were either not available to be observed, or who were not

interviewed. This thesis also argues that it is feasible to generalise about these teachers' perceptions of curriculum change, and the impact the implementation of OBE had on their practice, through broad brush strokes that Bassey (1999) calls "fuzzy generalisations" (p. 44), and not through the identification of a distinct pattern. After investigating many small-scale qualitative research projects, particularly case studies, Bassey concluded that it is possible to develop fuzzy generalisations that hedge their claims with uncertainties.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the methodological and theoretical premises for this study on the perspectives rural teachers developed and then enacted within the context of the President's Schools Project. The thesis used the qualitative research methods of interviews and observations to develop the research categories that are analysed in the remaining chapters within the framework of Fairclough's theory of critical language study and critical discourse analysis. This analysis begins in the next chapter where the participatory communities that emerged in the President's Schools Project are considered as a new social practice in all of the six schools.

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