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Curriculum reform in Lesotho: teachers' conceptions and challenges

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. The sources used from other authors have been referenced. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Education to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

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ABSTRACT

In Lesotho the development of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy is considered a crucial milestone in the history of education in the country as it is the first official curriculum document to be published post-independence. The policy advocates an integrated approach with a merge of eleven subjects that were taught at primary school into five learning areas. Integrated curriculum is adopted as a means to make education relevant in an attempt to address the socio-economic needs of the country. Curriculum revision towards integrated curriculum is done in phases, and the process of implementing the new curriculum is currently at primary school level. In 2013 implementation started in grade one, two and three, it has moved progressively such that in 2015 implementation was in grade five. The aim of this research was therefore to explore challenges primary school teachers face in implementing integrated curriculum. This study intended to find out how grade three and grade five teachers' interpret and enact integrated curriculum.

The study followed a qualitative case study method in which six teachers from three schools participated. The data was gathered through semi structured interviews in order to find out how teachers understand integrated curriculum. To further understand how teachers interpret the curriculum lesson observations were conducted. The study was informed by Bernstein (1971) concepts of classification and framing as they provided the language for description of their pedagogic choices. The lessons were coded and classification and framing values were designated. The findings revealed that in two of the three schools the teachers attempted to implement the curriculum, however in terms of classification and framing their pedagogic understanding was limited and varied. The teachers' understandings of integrated curriculum across the schools varied. Teachers in School A understood the curriculum to mean making links between everyday knowledge while the understanding of teachers in school B was interconnection between concepts across learning areas. In the third school the teachers were not implementing the curriculum; findings showed that they lacked understanding of integrated curriculum as all their lessons were strongly framed and classified. In all three schools the findings reflected that teachers' pedagogic choices were related to their understanding and interpretation of the curriculum. Given this, there is still a need for further teacher development and follow up in schools.

Key terms

Curriculum reform, integrated curriculum, pedagogy

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I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept faith! 2 Timothy 4: 7

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DEDICATION

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