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# Learners' perspectives on the incorporation of the everyday in Mathematics

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## ABSTRACT

This study is part of a larger national study, the Learners' Perspectives Study. The main focus of this particular study is to explore, describe and explain learners' perspectives regarding the incorporation of the everyday in mathematics. Two Grade 8 mathematics classrooms in two different schools, Umhlanga and Settlers are used as sites for empirical data. Learners' perspectives are sought through a series of post-lesson interviews with different groups of learners for lessons in which the everyday was summoned for a mathematics lesson. During these interviews, learners whether

1. They welcomed or appreciated the use of the everyday in class or not and
2. The everyday inhibited or enabled easy access to mathematics content.

In order to understand the background against which these perspectives are held, mathematics lessons wherein the everyday was incorporated were observed, recorded and transcribed. In addition, teachers' views about these lessons were explored through interviews and activities which incorporated the everyday were analysed. I used Bernstein's notions of classification and framing as a theoretical lens through which to account for my observations. It became necessary though, to supplement these through Dowling's domains of text analysis (esoteric, expressive, public and descriptive). I also introduced the notion of authentic/inauthentic and close/far descriptions. It is a combination of these three broad theoretical frameworks which assisted in the provision of a comprehensive theoretical account.

The significance of mathematics-everyday aspect in mathematics education is highlighted by the number of studies, as discussed in the study, and different orientations from which this aspect is engaged. What can be teased out of these studies is that mathematics education debates are seldom informed by the learners' perspectives. The study suggests that most of the learners who participated in the interviews welcomed and appreciated the use of the everyday in mathematics. However, most learners (particularly from Umhlanga) viewed mathematics as a platform to raise genuine concerns about the everyday used. In contrast, some learners (particularly from Settlers) viewed the everyday as vehicles or see-throughs towards the mathematics content. What this study

suggests is that, firstly, the everyday is multifaceted and the nature of the context summoned tends to influence views learners hold about the role of the everyday in mathematics. Secondly, the study suggests that learners' perspectives about the everyday cannot be divorced from the classroom context in which they encounter these everyday contexts.

Keywords: Mathematics, Learners' perspectives, everyday knowledge