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Declaration

I, Mary Gertrude Clasquin-Johnson hereby declare that this PhD thesis: Responses of Early Childhood teachers to Curriculum change in South Africa is my original work and that all the sources I consulted have been acknowledged.

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14 February 2011

Dedication

I dedicate this PhD thesis to my mother, Francisca Johnson. Although retired she remains a leader in the ECE field in South Africa. I am proud to be following in her footsteps.

Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this study without the tremendous support of my family and friends. I wish to acknowledge my late father, Bernard, and my mother, Francisca Johnson, who were not only teachers, they were my first teachers. My mother deserves my heartfelt gratitude for introducing me to the field of early childhood education.

My husband, Prof. Michel Clasquin-Johnson, not only kept me motivated throughout this study, he actively supported it on a daily basis. Our 2-year-old son, Leroy Athule, constantly reminds me of the importance of early childhood teaching. I thank my siblings: Dr. Bernadette Johnson (for leading the way) and Margaret Johnson, as well as my in-laws, Heit Piet and Mem Thea Clasquin, and David Cartwright, for their constant encouragement and concern. I thank my countless friends who supported me throughout this study, especially Josie Singaram, Joan Orr and my special PhD friend, Thiru Vandeyar.

Nine Grade R teachers and their principals participated in this study. They opened their classrooms and offices to my constant questions and observations and generously gave their time. Thank you most sincerely.

I enjoyed the camaraderie of my fellow PhD students in the University of Pretoria's PhD Education Policy Studies programme. Professor Jonathan Jansen founded the programme and invited me to be a part of it. I thank Professor Jansen for his encouragement to embark on this study. I consider myself privileged to have participated in Professor Jansen's inspirational PhD seminars.

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I consider myself truly blessed to be counted among the 19 teachers my family has produced. They continue to spur me on to be the best teacher that I can be.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AS	Assessment Standard
AECYC	Association for the Education and Care of Young Children
B.Ed.	Bachelor's Degree in Education
CAP	Contextually Appropriate Practice
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CPDT	Continuing Professional Development for Teachers
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practice
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECERS	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale
ECERS-R	Revised Edition of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale
EFA	Education for All
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ETDP SETA	Education Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
FET	Further Education and Training
FET NVC	Further Education and Training Certificate National Vocational Certificate
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association / International Football Federation
FFL	Foundations for Learning Campaign
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
Grade R	The Reception Year, a year-long programme preceding Grade 1
HDE	Higher Diploma in Education
HoD	Head of Department
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in Southern Africa
LA	Learning Area

LO	Learning Outcome
LP	Learning Programme
NAEYC	National Association for the Education and Care of Young Children
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NELDS	National Early Learning and Development Standards
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NDoE	National Department of Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NVC	National Vocational Certificate
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
REQV	Relative Education Qualification Value
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SAOU/SATU	Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie / South African Teachers' Union
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SGB	School Governing Body
SGB for ECD	Standards Generating Body for Early Childhood Development
SKVAs	Skills, Knowledge, Values and Attitudes
THRASS™	Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa
UP	University of Pretoria
USA	United States of America
WITS	University of the Witwatersrand
WQDA	Weft Qualitative Data Analysis

Chapter 1: From the Margins of Education: Curriculum Change in Early Childhood Education

1.1 Background to the Study

This study investigates Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers' responses to curriculum change. ECE ranks among the most fragmented and marginalised sectors of education in many countries (Kamerman 2005; UNESCO 2007) including South Africa (ETDP SETA 2001). Since 1994, the entire South African education system has been in a process of transformation which has begun to shift ECE from the margins of education to the mainstream. In particular, the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF 1995) with its related bands[1] confirmed the importance of ECE as it was first proposed by the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI 1992).

Because of these national policy processes, ECE has been recognised as a fundamental pillar for lifelong learning. This policy was concretised in 2001 with the introduction of White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (National Department of Education 2001) that announced that a Reception Year (Grade R) would gradually be phased in. In addition, the Report on the Nationwide Audit of ECD Provisioning[2] (2001) noted that the overwhelming majority of ECE teachers are inadequately trained.

In this research study, I define early childhood as policies and programmes for children from birth to five years of age. My focus is on teachers working with children younger than the age prescribed for Grade 1. There is no consistent definition of "early childhood education" in South Africa. The National Department of Education defines ECE as policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age. However, the National Departments of Social Development and Health defines it as policies and programmes for children from birth to five.

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[1] The bands are Adult Education and Training, Schooling (Early Childhood Development, Intermediate Phase, Senior Phase), Further Education and Training, and Higher Education and Training.

[2] ECE (Early Childhood Education) is the internationally accepted term, while ECD (Early Childhood Development) is the term most widely used in South Africa. These concepts overlap widely. For the purpose of this thesis, I will use ECE (except in direct quotations and the titles of documents), with the understanding that it deals mainly with the educational aspect of ECD.

1.2 Introduction

Although change occurs rapidly in all spheres of life, change in education often receives more attention than any other sector (Apple 2001:1). Worldwide, schools are expected to respond to globalization, national reconstruction and economic growth. However, curriculum change literature produced over nearly a century, contains no evidence of such possibilities (Jansen 1999:148). Regardless of this lack of research into curriculum change, teachers are continually charged with the responsibility of economic regeneration and expected to develop capacity for innovation, flexibility and commitment to change (Fullan 1993:18; Hargreaves 1994:5). Moreover, there appears to be consensus that teachers are the key to educational change and school improvement (Buddin & Zamarro 2008:1; Hargreaves 2003:1; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher 2007:921). Ballet, Kelchtermans and Loughran (2006:209) argue that such demands on teachers constitute significant extensions to their teaching role and detract from the core activity of teaching. Public concern for learners' academic development in order to enhance nations' technological and economic advancement underpins the growth of ECE programmes as well as the use of formal instruction as an extension of the primary grades (Fromberg 2006:69). Consequently, the ECE field has undergone a period of intense change in recent years (Ryan 2004:663).

Teachers, as the drivers of change, therefore deserve new respect and careful consideration, particularly since curriculum change is often accompanied by unrealistic demands, a lack of time and resources to understand the content of the required change, inadequate training, increased workload and a lack of effective management (Jansen 1999:152; Priestley & Sime 2005:489). Policy makers, education officials, politicians, the media, parents and the public exert intense pressure on teachers. Furthermore, professional development programmes seldom give teachers adequate tools to enable them to cope with change (Hargreaves 2003). As a result, curriculum change, although intended to increase the effectiveness of teachers, has the converse effect when teachers tend to avoid the challenge of change (Richardson & Placier 2001:905). Curriculum change may even undermine teachers and their capacity to implement change effectively.

Curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa has been drastic because an urgent alternative to apartheid schooling was required (Jansen, in Jansen & Christie 1999:145). Consequently, Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was introduced in 1997. In 2001, the Department of Education commenced the phased-in implementation of Grade R

programmes. The application of OBE to these programmes in 2004 meant that they became part of the formal schooling system. The majority of reception year programmes have gradually been relocated to state primary schools ahead of 2014, the year planned for full-scale implementation of the Grade R curriculum.

Over the past two decades, many governments have recognised the benefits of ECE programmes (Gillian & Zigler 2000:441-443; World Bank 2004:2). This has led to the integration of ECE into the school system and the adoption of official ECE curricula (Ebbeck & Waniganayake 2003; Frost 2007; Gammage 2006; Lobman & Ryan 2007). Historically in terms of South African ECE programmes, there has been a distinction between informal preschool (birth to five) and formal primary school (Grades 1 to 3). The informal, "emergent curriculum" was play-based, learner-centred, flexible, integrated all developmental domains, and promoted the active involvement of the young child (Faber & Van Staden 1997:15). Integrated or holistic development includes intellectual (language, learning skills, creativity, basic concepts), emotional (positive self image, control over emotions, self confidence), social and moral (relationships, acceptable communication skills, norms and values, respect for others), physical (health and strong body, physical independence, perceptual and motor skills, control over body) (Faber & Van Staden 1997:2).

In the absence of official curricula, teachers have followed the broad principles of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) (Cassidy, Mims, Rucker & Boone 2003:195) and the universal milestones of development (Gordon & Browne 2008:430; Morrison 2006:55) when planning their daily programmes. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC 1997:10) defines DAP as an approach to education that guides teachers in their everyday practice. Applied to ECE, DAP supports experiential, play-based curricula with effective opportunities for individualised learning, parental involvement and positive transitions to school (Anderson 2003:5). However, being able to apply this approach requires well-trained ECE teachers who possess a sophisticated level of knowledge and skills.

Despite the teachers' lack of capacity, the National Department of Education introduced the official curriculum, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), into Grade R classes in 2004. When the reception year was introduced, the majority of classes were located in community-based ECE centres. These existing classes have now largely been relocated to state primary schools and additional school-based classes have been established. Prior

to 2004, there was no official curriculum for Grade R. Instead, teachers designed their own curricula. The NCS, by its very imposition, is an example of radical curriculum change. My study reports on an investigation into how ECE teachers in Gauteng, South Africa are responding to this curriculum change.

In South Africa, Grade R programmes and the official curriculum are being implemented simultaneously. We therefore do not know what the value of traditional ECE approaches might have been if there was universal access to Grade R programmes in South Africa, since this was a policy choice that was never made. What we do know is that despite the majority of Grade R teachers being underqualified, they are still expected to implement a sophisticated curriculum. Grade R teachers have significantly lower qualifications than their counterparts in primary and secondary classrooms. Nevertheless, they are required to implement the same curriculum.[3] Moreover, teachers are doing so within tight fiscal constraints which may influence their responses. The Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA 2004:1) has referred to ECE as "the Cinderella of education", noting that funding remains inadequate.

Despite the teachers' lack of capacity, the National Department of Education introduced the official curriculum, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), into Grade R classes in 2004. When the reception year was introduced, the majority of classes were located in community-based ECE centres. These existing classes have now largely been relocated to state primary schools and additional school-based classes have been established. Prior to 2004, there was no official curriculum for Grade R. Instead, teachers designed their own curricula. The NCS, by its very imposition, is an example of radical curriculum change. My study reports on an investigation into how ECE teachers in Gauteng, South Africa are responding to this curriculum change.

To summarize, the South African Government has introduced a year-long preschool programme, Grade R, as part of the Foundation Phase of primary schooling. Since 2004, Grade R teachers, who are mostly underqualified and have inadequate resources, have been compelled to implement the official curriculum.[4] Prior to this, there was no official curriculum and teachers created their own curriculum based on the universal milestones of

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[3] By 2013, all teachers in primary and secondary classrooms must meet the requirements of the Norms and Standards for Educators (1998) namely REQV 14, which is the equivalent of a B. Ed. degree or Grade 12 plus 4 years of teacher training. This does not apply to Grade R teachers, for whom the minimum qualification is NQF Level 5 or Higher Certificate in Grade R (Department of Higher Education (2010)

[4] See Appendix 1: Circular 28/2005 Implementation of Grade R in Gauteng.

development. My study investigates how Grade R teachers are responding to this curriculum change.

1.3 Problem Statement

The official curriculum prescribes learning outcomes and assessment standards for learning and teaching in Grade R (National Department of Education 2003). Goldstein (2006:2) and Kwon (2002:11) are in accord that governments are introducing mandated or official curricula in ECE in many countries. Standards prescribed by mandated curricula allow for measuring quality and accountability (Stoney, Mitchell & Warner 2006:102). Standards originated in the USA in the 1920s, when education reform followed business models, and focused on the specifications of outcomes in the form of behavioural objectives (Tuxworth 1989:10).

Love (2006:15), argues that the benefits of ECE standards include: (i) programme improvement, (ii) positive curriculum change, (iii) enhanced professional development, (iv) more effective resource allocation, (v) monitoring trends over time, and (vi) enhanced support for ECE programmes. Policy makers in general therefore regard results-based accountability as an essential part of a larger strategy to improve outcomes for children (Friedman 2004:14; Love 2006:21). Although unintended, excessive emphasis is placed on "measuring children's end-of-programme status" (Love 2006:16). Other "unintended consequences" are the adoption of formal approaches to teaching and assessment, and rote learning tasks which are developmentally inappropriate (Anderson 2003:5; Blaustein 2005:5; Neuman 2007:2; Osgood 2006; Scott-Little, Kagan & Frelow 2003:1).

According to the National Norms and Standards for Grade R Funding, Government Gazette No. 30679 (Republic of South Africa 2008) the funding for Grade R classes will increase incrementally until it reaches 70% of the current per learner expenditure for a Grade 1 learner per year (National Department of Education, 2008). However, even ECE centres that receive all the available subsidies, still struggle financially (Phatudi, Joubert & Botha 2007), since official subsidies are inadequate to sustain centres of good practice for children of unemployed or low wage-earning parents. Furthermore, the human resource capacity required to support, monitor and assure the quality of ECE programmes is variable and in many provinces, inadequate (DBSA 2007). Many ECE teachers therefore

have limited capacity[5] to implement the official curriculum. Bailey (2000:116) notes that the disjuncture between policy assumptions and teachers' classroom realities can marginalize teachers, especially if it fails to take their working conditions or their core values into consideration. Despite the recognised benefits of ECD standards, teachers experience many challenges in implementing them in their classrooms.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

The extent to which teachers are able to implement the official curriculum successfully is unknown. Terwel (2005:660) argues that meaningful curriculum change requires new skills, behaviours and beliefs. Ota, Dicarlo, Burts, Laird and Gioe (2006:159), recommend that further research should examine the long-term effects of behaviour change related to teacher training. A more comprehensive list of further research requirements in developing countries is given by Montero-Sieburth (1992:191-192). This list includes understanding the context of curriculum change, analysis of underlying assumptions of curriculum delivery, the use and availability of instructional materials, curriculum implementation and evaluation. Unfortunately, to a large extent, Montero-Sieburth's (1992) recommendations remain unsatisfied today.

Studies have found that policy makers pay insufficient attention to the context of change (Bell & Stevenson 2004; Chisholm 2005; Penn 2000). Similarly, Hargreaves (2005) and Jansen (1998) note that change often fails because it disregards the realities of classroom life. Developing countries rely too heavily on imported curriculum change or "policy borrowing" (Jambunathan & Caulfield 2008; Jansen 1999). However, innovations cannot necessarily be easily or successfully transferred from one context to another.

Analyses of the underlying assumptions of curriculum delivery have indeed been abstract. An exaggerated emphasis on quantity has been prevalent (Montero-Sieburth 1992), especially in developing countries, but a qualitative approach to curriculum is needed since it has the advantage of reaching beyond the curriculum itself to investigate contextual features. Although ECE research is increasingly being undertaken in South Africa, there is still little focus on teachers' perspectives of curriculum change. Recent studies include: (i) Botha, Maree and De Witt's (2005) study on Grade R teachers' implementation of the numeracy learning programme; (ii) Phatudi's (2007) study on

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[5] McLaughlin (1987) notes that teacher capacity relates to teachers' access to professional development opportunities, support and resources.

children's transitions from home and pre-school contexts to primary school, with curriculum change as a secondary focus; (iii) the National Treasury (2008) study on the readiness of the South African education system to implement universal access to Grade R; (iv) the Gauteng Department of Education and Wits School of Education (2009) study that examines the implementation of the NCS in the Foundation Phase; (v) the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2010) study that examines the status and implementation of Grade R in the province; and (v) the SAIDE (2010) study that examines the readiness of children, teachers and the system to implement Grade R classrooms. These studies examine mainly external factors, and none of them focus specifically on internal factors that influence ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change.

My study will attempt to fill this gap in the available body of research by focusing specifically on ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change. I focus mainly on underqualified Grade R teachers, although qualified teachers are included. ECE teachers hold a range of qualifications but most are lower than a bachelor's degree, which is the minimum qualification for teachers in South Africa, as in the majority of other countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 7% of ECE teachers are qualified (Kamerman 2005; Wallet 2006), which is a common occurrence in developing contexts. Penn (2000:3) notes that these contexts constitute the "majority world countries" since they are home to 75% of the world's children.

The Phatudi (2007) and Botha *et al.* (2005) studies mentioned above focus mainly on qualified teachers at relatively well-resourced institutions since these schools fall under the auspices of education departments and receive departmental subsidies. There is therefore a need to extend such research to investigate how underqualified Grade R teachers are responding to curriculum change. My study extends the current body of scientific knowledge by examining the interrelationship between teachers' contexts and their characteristics, both at a personal and professional level, and how these factors influence their responses to curriculum change. Lobman and Ryan (2007:368) note that despite a growing consensus among researchers and policy advisers about the prerequisite knowledge and skills required by preschool teachers, little is known about the views of those on the front line of ECE—the teachers themselves.

My personal motivation for undertaking this study relates to my working experience, starting as a Grade R teacher from 1994 to 1998. From 2000 to 2002, I was a member of the Foundation Phase working group, one of the groups involved in writing the National

Curriculum Statement (NCS). Although I did not implement the NCS in my Grade R class, I have presented teacher training on the topic since 2002. I have also become aware that Grade R teachers have limited capacity to implement the required changes due to their limited formal qualifications and access to further training, as well as the low levels of resourcing of the ECE sector as a whole. This awareness emerges from previous research I conducted as part of my Masters in Education studies (2005), for the Development Bank of Southern Africa (2007), and my involvement with national ECE non-governmental organisations (NGOs). My Masters study found that pre-reception year teachers were using formal approaches and teaching literacy skills for which children were not ready. They lacked the conceptual understanding of pre-literacy skills. The DBSA study found that teachers in unregistered centres were poorly trained and that their classrooms were very poorly resourced.

Over the past four years, anecdotal evidence from practice teaching experiences of Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.) and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students that I mentored at the University of Pretoria, suggested that many ECE teachers are using formal activities extensively in Grade R classrooms. The use of worksheets to teach children to read and write is especially prominent. Many studies, such as those conducted by Blaustein (2006), Ethridge and King (2005), Goldstein (2006), Grisham-Brown, Hallam and Brookshire (2006), Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk and Singer (2009), Phatudi (2007) and Sestini (2000) have since found worksheets to be prevalent in ECE classrooms. Each of these authors argues that such materials are developmentally inappropriate in the ECE context, since teachers are focusing very narrowly on standards at the expense of learning through play. In addition, they found empirical evidence that teachers are focused on producing evidence of learning.

It should be noted that nowhere in the NCS is there any recommendation to use worksheets, and that no studies suggest that this constitutes best practice. Despite this, there are numerous examples of learning and teaching resource materials endorsed by the National Department of Education that contain extensive worksheets. Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness, Trew, Rafferty & Sheehy (2006:203) argue that ECE curricula in many countries focus "too heavily and too early on academic achievement, detracting from the enjoyment of learning, lacking relevance and coherence for everyday life". Such findings are echoed by Geist and Baum (2005:2), and Ethridge and King (2005:294). Accordingly, one aspect of this study will be to examine how Grade R teachers plan their lessons.

1.5 Research Question

The following research question and sub-questions guided this inquiry:

How do teachers respond to the introduction of the official curriculum at reception year level?

Research Sub-Questions

(i)   How do Grade R teachers plan their lessons?

(ii)   Which classroom practices do Grade R teachers employ?

(iii)   What informs Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change?

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change. Since the official curriculum requires detailed lesson planning and much emphasis is placed on this requirement by the Department of Education, I specifically considered how Grade R teachers plan their lessons as well as the extent to which they implemented the curriculum change by observing their classroom practices. In addition, I examined the external factors (professional development, resources and support) and the internal factors (beliefs, motivation and job satisfaction) that influence Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change (McLaughlin 1987). Although external factors feature prominently in the literature on teachers' responses to curriculum change, very limited studies have focused on internal factors in developing countries, and no studies have done so in South Africa.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Although the literature on teachers' responses to curriculum change is substantial, very limited research has been undertaken to illuminate how ECE teachers respond to curriculum change and how the implementation of the official curriculum might influence their instructional decisions and classroom practice. During the past decade, a large number of studies have been conducted on official ECE curricula in developed countries (Ballet, Kelchtermans & Loughran 2006; Fromberg 2006; Goldstein 2006; Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer 2009; Ryan 2004; Ryan & Ackerman 2005; Scott-Little *et al.* 2006; Smylie & Perry 2005; Oberhuemer 2005; Wilson & Lowenberg-Ball 2006). However, very few studies have focused on ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change in developing countries.

My study therefore illuminates how Grade R teachers in two cities in South Africa are responding to curriculum change. In particular, I examine early childhood policy and curriculum change through the perspectives and classroom practices of Grade R teachers. The official curriculum requires Grade R teachers to implement a prescriptive approach to lesson planning, assessment and outcome setting. This contrasts with their former practices of designing their own curriculum.

My study may contribute to policy and practice in South Africa, since government involvement in ECE is a relatively recent development. This will however expand greatly since the National Department of Education plans to implement universal access to Grade R by 2014.

> The main ECD policy priority in this White Paper is the establishment of a national system of provision of the Reception Year for children aged 5 years that combines a large public and smaller independent component. In this regard, our medium term goal is for all children entering Grade 1 to have participated in an accredited Reception Year Programme (National Department of Education 2001a:5).

Furthermore, since the National Department of Education (2009) has developed standards for pre-reception year programmes contained in the National Early Learning and Development Standards (NELDS), my study will illuminate ECE teachers' responses to the official curriculum and what they need to support them to do so effectively. It is imperative that research informs future policy development. In the case of South Africa, the state has relied heavily on research conducted elsewhere in formulating its ECE policy. Issues of importance include how teachers respond to the introduction of the official curriculum at reception year level, how Grade R teachers plan their lessons, which classroom practices Grade R teachers employ and what informs Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change, which shaped my research questions.

My study will also have benefits for pedagogical practice since I am professionally engaged in training Grade R teachers. I share Collins and O'Brien's (2003:93) view that the curriculum reflects a society's requirements to prepare future generations for adaptability, acceptance, diversity and survival in an unknown world.

1.8 The Scope and Context of the Study

The National Department of Education (2001a) defines early childhood development (ECD) as an umbrella term for the process through which children grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially, from birth to at least nine years of age. Participation in an accredited preschool Reception Year Programme for five-year old children will become compulsory for all learners entering Grade 1 by 2010 (National Department of Education 2008a:4). Since 2001, Grade R has been gradually phased in to become part of public provision, in particular, part of primary education. The policy target is that by 2010, all five to six-year-old children should have access to Grade R, mostly in the public sector (National Department of Education 2001a). Following the findings of a 2008 study conducted by National Treasury that provinces lacked the capacity to fully implement Grade R, President Jacob Zuma, in his State of the Nation address on 3 June 2009 noted that "the Early Childhood Development programme will be stepped up, with the aim of ensuring universal access to Grade R… by 2014".

Access to Grade R has expanded drastically (National Department of Education 2008a:5). Between 1999 and 2007, Grade R enrolment in schools increased by 212%, from 156 292 learners in 1999 to 487 525 in 2007. The increase in Grade R enrolment means that the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in Grade R increased from 15% in 1999 to 49% in 2007. These figures exclude Grade R learners enrolled in less formal ECE sites; thus the actual GER may be higher. The 2006 General Household Survey (Statistics South Africa 2006), reported that the number of five-year-old children with access to ECE programmes increased by 65 percentage points, from 387 000 in 2002 to 636 903 in 2006. These figures include the participation of five-year-olds in both school-based and community-based programmes.

Biersteker (2007) argues that it remains unclear whether Grade R is part of schooling, or just part of the school curriculum. Grade R teachers for example, are not part of the educator brigade, and Grade R learners do not have access to the nutrition programme. Grade R is therefore not really part of the formal school environment. In addition, there are unsafe and inadequate Grade R classes. Significantly, teachers do not know how to implement the curriculum. Despite these constraints, it remains a huge achievement that access to Grade R is increasing so rapidly (Biersteker 2007).

1.9 Delimiting the Study

I employed a case study design to illuminate (describe, explain and explore) the phenomenon of how Grade R teachers respond to the implementation of the official curriculum (Hancock & Algozzine 2006:15; Schwandt, 2007:28). Nieuwenhuis (2007:75) notes that case studies offer multiple perspective analysis of participants as well as accommodating the views of other relevant groups and the interaction between them. While case studies are not generalisable in the strict statistical sense, they offer more depth and insight than quantitative studies.

Moreover, I was cognisant that the gender dynamics of the ECE sector has significantly affected ECE policy because women's voices are relatively weak in the policy process as noted by Porteus (2004:349). I therefore also found the case study design useful to give "a voice to the powerless and voiceless" (Nieuwenhuis 2007:75).

My case selection focused on nine Grade R teachers in their natural contexts, bounded by time and activity (Creswell 2003:15). All nine teachers are located in state school-based ECE programmes in Johannesburg and Pretoria. I selected them from a list of schools which I had obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education. The data that were collected were subjected to a thematic analysis across cases (cross-case analysis) (Creswell 2003:15). In the final interpretive phase, I report on how these nine teachers have responded to curriculum change. Yin's (2003:4) observation that case studies are useful when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context is relevant to the ECE sector. With a single exception, the teachers have a minimum of ten years' teaching experience, meaning that they have at least 5 years' experience implementing the broad principles of DAP. Therefore, since 2009 was the fifth year of the implementation of the NCS in Grade R classes (the introduction of the mandated curriculum), and these teachers started their careers before that, they have experience of implementing (or not implementing) the new curriculum.

I applied qualitative research methods to understand the social context within which ECE teachers' practices occur (Smith & Shepard 1988:310), framed within an interpretive paradigm. My aim was to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:22), namely how teachers respond to curriculum change. I therefore focused on teachers' perspectives in order to understand their interpretations of the world around them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:22). This enabled me to "enter

the world of [the] participants and, at least for a time, see life through their eyes" (Rager 2005:24).

But any chosen method brings its limitations as well as its advantages. My study was limited to nine Grade R teacher cases in four state primary schools in two cities. The fieldwork for the study was conducted between January and August 2009. During this time several changes occurred as district departmental officials became increasingly involved in monitoring compliance.

1.10 Literature Review

The literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrates that although extensive research has been conducted on ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change, this is largely in the context of developed countries. The literature review presents a synthesis of and critical engagement with existing empirical research, recommendations for further research, and silences or gaps in previous studies on factors that influence ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change. I specifically focused on how teachers plan their lesson and the changes, if any, they make to their classroom practices. McLaughlin's (1987) study on the external factors (professional development, resources, support) and the internal factors (beliefs, motivation and job satisfaction) that influence how teachers respond to curriculum change is used to organise the body of literature. While external factors can be addressed, for example, training can be provided, internal factors that underlie an implementer's response are less amenable to policy intervention (McLaughlin 1987:172). My conceptual framework developed from the literature review illustrates how ECE teachers respond to curriculum change, and is presented in detail in Chapter 3.

1.11 Political and Ethical Considerations

Universal access to Grade R is the policy target of the ECE sector in South Africa (National Department of Education 2001). With the introduction of the official curriculum, the NCS, Grade R became part of the Foundation Phase of schooling. However, the majority of Grade R posts are still located at community-based ECE centres. Grade R teachers are employed by school governing bodies rather than by the Department of Education, which implies that there are many issues regarding equity. The ECE sector is very poorly resourced, teachers are paid low salaries, and there is great inequality in the sector.

The ECE field in South Africa has historically been divided into "formal" and "non-formal" sectors, where formal suggests provisioning of higher quality than non-formal. There is significant ambiguity and tension surrounding these issues. As a PhD student and former university lecturer I am strongly associated with the formal sector. This necessitated sensitivity on my part in dealing with my research participants.

I obtained ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Education Ethics Committee prior to data collection. See Appendix 7 for the Ethics Clearance Certificate

1.11.1 Informed Consent

I obtained informed consent from participants by (a) explaining the purpose of the study, (b) explaining that participation is voluntary, and (c) assuring them that they could withdraw at any time if they chose to do so. I requested participants to sign letters of consent prior to commencing data collection. I avoided potential risks to participants by ensuring that my methods were free of any form of deceit, duress, unfair inducement or manipulation (Berg 2001:56).

1.11.2 Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality

Throughout my study, I remained cognisant of the need to demonstrate the appropriate sensitivity and awareness of the context in which ECE programmes operate. I used preferred pseudonyms when reporting data and the real names of my participants are never mentioned. I have been extremely cautious in how I discuss participants and their respective settings (Berg 2001:58).

I protected participants from harm by ensuring their privacy and confidentiality (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:139). The names of participants and schools have not been mentioned. I took special care to ensure that my "thick descriptions" did not compromise privacy and confidentiality.

1.12 The Role of the Researcher

My approach to the study was informed by the literature on qualitative case studies set in the interpretive paradigm. I am a former Grade R teacher and although I have not implemented the official curriculum, the National Curriculum Statement, in my own Grade R classroom, I have presented training on it since 2002. In this study, I aim to present teachers' perspectives of curriculum change in the field of ECE. I personally believe that a

sound understanding of children's development remains the hallmark of successful early learning and teaching.

1.13 Layout of the Study

Chapter 1: Orientation

This chapter provides a general introduction by describing the background to the study. I further discuss the purpose and rationale of the study, as well as my objectives. I identify my research questions and suggest the possible significance of the study for policy and practice. My research methods and design are introduced as well as the delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter contains my overview of the available literature and places the problem in a broader context. I present an overview of the ECE sector and the context within which teachers work. I describe what the main curriculum changes are that teachers are required to implement and how they respond to these changes. I further discuss how teachers plan their lessons and how they implement the curriculum change. Thereafter, I discuss two broad groups of factors that influence teachers' responses to curriculum change, namely external and internal factors. The external factors include professional development, resources and support. Internal factors relate to teachers' beliefs, motivation and job satisfaction, as well as their emotions.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

This chapter contains an explanation of the conceptual framework in which this study unfolded, and demonstrates how it was derived from a review of the (mainly international) literature on curriculum change. In terms of my conceptual framework, teacher agency determines how individual teachers respond to curriculum change. In particular, teachers may respond by (i) *ignoring*, (ii) *resisting*, (iii) *adopting*, or (iv) *adapting* curriculum change.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Research Design

In this chapter, I describe the research design, methods, approach, data collection and analysis procedures, and strategies to ensure validity. I also discuss the ethical and political considerations that guided this case study.

Chapter 5: Findings: Presentation and Discussion

Chapter 5 contains the findings of the study based on a detailed presentation and discussion of the research data, compared to the literature review and conceptual framework.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter, I present a synthesis of the foregoing chapters, reflect on my research design and methodology, revisit my data, draw conclusions based on my findings and discuss the implications of ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change. I also make recommendations / suggest implications of my study for policy, practice and future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

My survey of the literature will focus on early childhood education (ECE) teachers' responses to curriculum change. I will examine the wider context in which ECE teachers find themselves, curriculum change itself, including departmental directives for lesson planning, an orientation to ECE teachers' classroom practices/curriculum delivery and more particularly, the factors (internal and external) that influence teachers' responses to curriculum change.

At a global level, ECE is a central focus of policymakers at all levels of government in many countries (Ryan 2004:661; Wallet 2006:17) and mandated or official ECE curricula are being widely introduced (Goldstein 2006:2). Policy statements recognise ECE as the foundation of lifelong learning (Development Bank of Southern Africa 2006:13; National Department of Education 2001a:1; The World Bank 2004:1; Yim-Mei 2004:79) and economists are linking ECE to investment in human capital and economic growth (Anderson & Hague 2007:3; Dodge 2003:2; Friendly & Lero 2002:3). Consequently, there is consensus that high quality ECE programmes are the basis for an individual to thrive throughout school and life (Chen & McNamee, 2006:202; National Department of Education 2001a:3; Qinghua, Yan, Yan & Qiong 2005:157). Woodhead (2006:16) argues that there are fundamental ethical objections to investment in human capital being a major rationale for developing ECE policy, specifically since it represents an instrumental view of the young child as a natural resource to be exploited. Kagan (2008:1) sums this up well:

> ECE is currently regarded as a magical panacea that prepares young children for school and life, equalises opportunity, and prevents welfare dependence, incarceration, teenage pregnancy and school drop out.

I agree with Kagan that the debate is misplaced because it fails to recognise the importance of early childhood in its own right. Instead the focus should be on meeting the immediate needs of young children to promote their holistic development and learning and viewing ECE as a "public good" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD 2006:1).

Furthermore, ECE policies reflect the global increase in the provision of universal access to reception year (Grade R) programmes, to prepare children for Grade 1 (Basket, Bryant,

White & Rhoads 2005:420), to provide them with an advantage in primary school, and to ensure future success beyond school (O'Gorman 2008:55). The reception year, or Grade R, is the South African equivalent of kindergarten, that is, a year-long pre-school programme preceding Grade 1. Davin and Van Staden (2005:5) stress that the emphasis should be on children's development and readiness to learn, rather than on readiness for school. However, many teachers have interpreted the introduction of mandated curricula as favouring academic knowledge and skills (Gordon & Browne 2008; Slanina 2003). This leads Goldstein (2008:253) to argue that ECE programmes are characterised by an "atmosphere of academic intensification" largely due to the lack of clarity on how official policy should be implemented.

> The buzz about teaching [to] the standards [and] the ever-increasing emphasis on early development of literacy and mathematics skills … and the pressures of "accountability shovedown" … have sparked questions, concerns, disagreements, and confusion about the most suitable curriculum content and the most effective instructional strategies for teaching young children in preschool and kindergarten settings (Goldstein 2008:253).

A similar situation exists in South Africa, particularly since the introduction of the national curriculum in Grade R aimed at ensuring that learners are ready for primary school and formal learning. South African teachers may also be uncertain how to implement the assessment standards (Gauteng Department of Education 2009). Grade R programmes were previously informal, flexible and play-based and there was no official curriculum. In 2009, the Department of Education introduced the National Early Learning and Development Standards (NELDS) to guide curriculum development in pre-reception year programmes for children aged birth to four years (National Department of Education 2009). ECE teachers are therefore now required to have a critical understanding of the NELDS as well as the NCS (South African Institute for Distance Education, SAIDE 2010:32).

Grade R is the policy target of White Paper 5 on ECD (National Department of Education 2001a:10) and was initiated during the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI 1992). However, the Grade R model of school-based programmes originates in industrialised countries, had been a privilege of white children under apartheid in South African, and people therefore continue to perceive it as being "superior" (Porteus 2004:363). In the post-apartheid ECE policy development process, policymakers have emphasised developing a cost-effective model for Grade R provisioning in order to meet

constitutional imperatives, specifically in terms of access (Porteus 2004:363). Biersteker (2008) in her critical response to the 2008 EFA Report of the National Department of Education at the EFA meeting held at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2008, warned that access without quality could result in inadequate Grade R programmes being added to an already struggling Foundation Phase.[6] This risk was confirmed by a SAIDE (2010:5) report that notes that Grade R implementation has focused on numerical targets rather than quality. The National Treasury (2008:4) therefore recommended the extension of full-scale implementation until 2014.

2.2 Early Childhood Education in Context

Since early childhood is the period of life characterised by the most rapid growth and development (Walsh & Petty 2007:301), enhancing the quality of young children's lives through ECE has become an international priority (Woodhead 2006:4). The recent history of ECE can be traced from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) and the rapid succession of initiatives from UNICEF, the World Bank and numerous international, regional and national ECE policy developments. The UNCRC is the most significant starting point for policy development on behalf of the world's children, its universal prescription for childhood has been contested, especially for endorsing western liberal and individualistic discourses of childhood (Woodhead 2006:25).

In 1990, participants at the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, pledged to make ECE a priority, to provide primary education for all children, and to massively reduce adult illiteracy by the end of the decade (National Department of Education 2005:20; UNESCO 2007:1). This commitment to ECE was extended in 2000 with the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All. In particular, Goal 1: "Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children" (UNESCO 2007:1) has accelerated ECE programmes. The Dakar Declaration reflects an increasing emphasis on educational quality and measurement of educational outcomes, in particular student achievement (Khaniya & Williams 2004:315). In addition, the effectiveness of educational activities, organisations and teachers are now judged according to the academic performance of learners.

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[6] For example, as reflected by PIRLS 2006 - see Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy (2007).

Since these international conventions were established, ECE provisioning outside the home has increased rapidly and there is agreement that it plays a crucial role in complementing parental care (Fromberg 2006:76; Nupponen 2006:43). Signatories to the EFA declaration are required to submit annual progress reports, which are compiled into an Annual Global Monitoring Report. Although access is expanding, it still lags behind the set targets and quality continues to be unsatisfactory.[7] According to the OECD (2006), a more unified approach to learning is required in early childhood and primary school systems. This should include a stronger focus on transitions, readiness for school and cognitive development during the early years. However, even in the twenty most highly developed countries, the early childhood sector is largely private and unregulated, with staff professional development and pedagogical programming being the most neglected areas (OECD 2006:8). This undermines the quality of ECE programmes and their potential benefits. Despite the lack of research in developing countries, it seems likely that the same challenges would be relevant.

Authors such as Ackerman (2006) contend that quality ECE requires much more than simply establishing facilities and hiring staff. Quality ECE is the result of specific, intentional practices that support the recruitment and retention of well-trained teachers. However, it appears that governments are more focused on meeting access targets than on improving programmes or building capacity among teachers (Myers 2006:7). As noted by Biersteker (2007), this challenge is pertinent to the South African context and may have implications for teachers' capacity to respond to curriculum change. In a 2000 presentation, Biersteker[8] argued that inadequate early stimulation poses a serious threat to children's development and learning. Nearly one quarter of all South African children's development is stunted, two thirds live in poverty, and one third of women suffer from maternal depression. Such children therefore enter Grade R with significant challenges. Biersteker (2010) concluded that improving schooling depends on strengthening inputs much earlier on, with a focus on nutrition, maternal health and education.

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[7] Interview with the National Director for ECD, Mrs Marie-Louise Samuels. Mrs Samuels was a participant in a study on ECD programmes (DBSA study interview held on 21 May 2007).

[8] Biersteker's presentation at the joint UMALUSI/CEPD/WITS seminar on Grade R: Readiness of children, 16 April 2010.

2.3 Curriculum Change in Early Childhood Education

Graham (1999:71) and Bottery (2006:103) are in accord that change in education reflects the values and technologies that are prevalent in business and commerce. Apple (2001:84) notes that managerialism has taken centre stage and that change in education reflects reduced professional power and status. Managerialism has shifted professional identities in order to make them more responsive to client demand and external judgement. Internationally, these factors have significantly shaped national standards, curricula and testing. Moreover, there are two dynamics operating in neo-liberal reforms, namely "free markets" and increased surveillance (Apple 2001:83; 2004:30). As a result, education policies have become strongly regulatory, linked to the neo-conservative sense of a need to return to a lost past of high standards, discipline and real knowledge. Similarly, Day (2008:243) contends that teachers' work is occurring in the context of increasingly intensive and persistent results-driven policy interventions to ensure higher standards of teaching, learning and achievement, as well as increased efficiency and effectiveness. Within the context of "performativity agendas" and continuous monitoring, the locus of control has shifted from the individual to the system managers (Day 2008:243).

An international trend in ECE curriculum change identified by Smylie and Perry (2005:318) is the development of centralised systems of standards for learning outcomes and assessment. This is attributed to cross-national research findings that central curriculum control is positively related to consistency in subject matter coverage. The current focus of teacher development programmes in South Africa is on strengthening teachers' subject matter / content knowledge, as reflected in the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education, 2007. Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk and Singer (2009:9) argue that good ECE pedagogy has been sacrificed for the sake of curriculum goals since:

> Preschool classes have replaced playful learning with practice and drill. Blocks were replaced with worksheets. Both play and playful learning declined precipitously in US preschools, where they were sidelined as an expendable diversion in favour of early preparation for school test-taking… skills once deemed appropriate for first and second graders are being taught in kindergarten, while kindergarten skills have been bumped down to preschool.

Hirsh-Pasek *et al.* (2009:3) further note that:

Play has become a four-letter word. In an effort to give children a head start on academic skills such as reading and mathematics, play is discouraged and didactic learning is stressed.

These authors in their 2009 publication, "A mandate for playful learning" illustrate how standards have fundamentally altered early learning and teaching. In particular, they note how young learners are pressurised to know and do more at an increasingly younger age. This appears to be pertinent to South Africa where learners have consistently underperformed on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

2.4 Early Childhood Teachers

In the following sub-sections, I compare ECE teachers in general and Grade R teachers in particular, to primary school teachers because of the similarities of their contexts and job responsibilities. Such factors influence ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change.

2.4.1 Profile of Early Childhood Teachers

Although the job responsibilities of ECE professionals are comparable to those of primary school teachers, their work is undervalued (NAEYC 1993:10). Wallet (2006:34) notes that the majority of ECE teachers in almost all regions and countries are female. Low salaries are attributed to the caring aspect of teaching young children, which is often viewed as requiring minimal skills because it is an extension of women's familial role in rearing children (Ackerman 2006:99). Ackerman (2006:99) notes that the price of an activity (or the wages paid) determines its value. Therefore since caring work is perceived as a female activity and the skills required to perform women's work tend to be undervalued (financially and in terms of status and power), a normative context is created by devaluing such work in comparison with traditional "men's work". Low wages tend to result in a high staff turnover, which is harmful to the development of children (OECD 2006; Torquati, Raikes & Huddleston-Casas 2007:262) in that it impacts negatively on their language and socio-emotional development, as well as the relationships they form with their caregivers (Ackerman 2006:87). In addition, low wages are attributed to the nature of the childcare market, in which the main mechanism employed to reduce costs is to reduce overall quality and pay ECE teachers less.

The need for competitive fees further limits teachers' remuneration since ECE programmes often operate as market-dependent, non-profit or for-profit businesses. Staying in business means remaining competitive and competing for the same customers within a small geographic region close to where families live and work. Inadequate state subsidies further exacerbate the effects of a competitive marketplace in terms of remuneration, and gender plays a subtle role in creating a marginalised status (Ackerman 2006:92). ECE teachers tend to be younger than primary school teachers are and although they constitute a youthful, mobile workforce, they have lower levels of overall experience ECE teachers often hold lower qualifications[9] than their primary school counterparts and their initial teacher education is often shorter in duration[10] (Wallet 2006:34).

Developing countries continue to recruit high proportions of untrained and poorly qualified teachers, for example in Sub-Saharan Africa, only 7% of ECE teachers have met minimum training requirements.[11] In Niger, Togo and Senegal, most new recruits to primary education receive 2 to 3 weeks of training before entering the classroom (Wallet 2006:19). Wallet (2006) cites evidence from Kenya to demonstrate how fees and private provision can ultimately affect ECE teachers' salaries. Since the introduction of free primary education, most Kenyan parents are no longer willing to pay for ECE. Decreased enrolments have led to reduced salaries for ECE teachers as the income from parental fees has dropped. Primary school teachers are paid according to legal statutes and salary scales, which do not apply to ECE teachers. As a result of free primary education, it has become even more difficult to mobilise resources from parents for ECE. Decreased job security and ECE centre closures are on the rise, especially in poorer communities (UNESCO 2006 cited in Wallet 2006:33). Ackerman (2006) offers the following analysis of the low professional status of ECD teachers:

> ECE teachers' abilities to increase their policy capital and address these issues
> are constrained by the very problem that needs to be addressed. Because of
> low wages teachers cannot afford the kinds of post secondary education that

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[9] In South Africa, the minimum qualification for ECE teachers is NQF Level 4 or a FETC in ECD, which is equivalent to Grade 12 of schooling. However, the minimum qualification for Grade R teachers will become a Higher Certificate in Grade R which is equivalent to Grade 12 plus two years of teacher training.

[10] Refer also to the section on professional development below.

[11] The minimum qualification is matric / Grade 12 plus four years of teacher training or the Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education.

could give them both higher status and the knowledge base to articulate why the field needs a skilled, well-paid workforce. The regulatory and economic systems that bring about low wages will not change unless they are addressed through policymakers' agendas, but teachers' pay—and the fact that the work itself is considered to be part of the women's work sphere—hinders access to the very mechanism and dialogue that could potentially rectify the situation (Ackerman 2006:101).

In South Africa, anecdotal evidence suggests that the relocation of Grade R to primary schools is having a similar impact.[12] Larger numbers of children were previously accommodated in community-based Grade R classes, and higher teacher-child ratios for older children meant that ECE centres were able to cross-subsidise their pre-reception year classes.[13] Although stakeholders raised objections to the relocation of Grade R classes to state primary schools, it did not affect the implementation of government policy. Porteus (2004:363) attributes this to the fact that the ECE sector is highly feminised and less organised than other sectors of education. As with ECE teachers in Kenya, the status of ECE teachers in South Africa is significantly lower than that of primary school teachers who earn salaries and work standard hours based on government statutes and regulations (Clasquin-Johnson 2007:80).[14]

2.4.2 Pre-requisite Knowledge and Skills of ECE Teachers

The literature on pre-requisite knowledge and skills of ECE teachers reveals that their roles and responsibilities have changed since the introduction of official curricula. Teachers are continually charged with the responsibility of economic regeneration and are expected to develop the capacity for innovation, flexibility and commitment to change (Fullan 1993:18; Hargreaves 1994:5). Moreover, the ability to deal with change is considered vital to living in a post-modern society (Fullan 1993:3). However, ECE teachers' work has intensified because standards-based, official curricula present complex professional challenges (Goldstein 2008:254). In particular, teacher training and academic standards intended to professionalise the ECE field conflict with the persistent image of preschool

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[12] Informal discussion with Ms Lucy Thornton, Director of Woz'obona, an ECE NGO based in the South African provinces of Gauteng and Limpopo.

[13] Pre-reception year classes cater for children from birth to four years of age.

[14] In South Africa, the Education Labour Relations Council determines teachers' conditions of service. See *www.elrc.co.za*.

teaching as the domain of untrained women who love and care for children (Lobman & Ryan 2007:377).

The changing early childhood landscape reveals that ECE teachers need to possess a dynamic range of skills, including specialised professional knowledge and the ability to effectively engage with young children and promote their learning (Chen & Chang 2006:1; Goodfellow 2008:17). In addition, teachers have to demonstrate an understanding of the early childhood profession and make a commitment to professionalism (NAEYC 1993:5). The increasingly diverse classroom contexts demand that ECE teachers create a caring community of learners, enhance children's development and learning, construct appropriate curricula, assess children's learning and development, and establish reciprocal relationships with parents and families (Jambunathan & Caulfield 2008:251; Laverick 2007:248). Through observing and assessing children's behaviour, teachers should plan and individualise teaching practices and curricula, as well as establish supportive relationships with children in a safe and healthy environment. Furthermore, ECE teachers are required to implement developmentally appropriate curricula that advance all areas of children's learning and development including social, emotional, intellectual and physical competence. The recognition that children are best understood in the context of family, culture, and society, requires ECE teachers to establish and maintain positive and productive relationships with families to enable them to better support the development and learning of individual children (Bredenkamp 1997:43; NAEYC 1993:6).

Ryan and Ackerman (2005:2) note that the successful implementation of educational change depends on ECE teachers' capacity and will. Teachers therefore require adequate levels of information, skills and resources to successfully implement curriculum change. According to Fullan (1993:5), teachers require inbuilt capacity that consists of the habits and skills required to engage in continuous corrective analysis and action. For example, reflection on practice should become a habit. Meeting the diverse needs of learners is a skill that all teachers should develop. Productive educational change depends on teachers' ability to survive the vicissitudes of planned and unplanned change while growing and developing, rather than simply their capacity to implement the latest policy.

The focus on preschool has changed, the role of the teacher has shifted from being primarily a facilitator to someone who is expected to plan and implement an academic curriculum for an increasingly diverse group of children … teachers must have both

breadth and depth of knowledge about teaching young children (Lobman & Ryan 2007:371).

The above discussion illustrates that curriculum change in ECE requires teachers to change their pedagogy, to learn something new and to understand the principles framing the curriculum. Lobman and Ryan (2007) examined the knowledge and skills required by ECE teachers in the USA in relation to both initial teacher education programmes and continuous professional development. They found that in that context, ECE teachers need foundational knowledge in child development and pedagogy, including an understanding of curriculum content and ECE methods, which they have to be able to articulate, to justify, and to explain, especially to parents. These authors contend that teachers need to apply the knowledge of developmental theory as a tool to convince parents of the importance of play and the need to protect children from being pressured into academic activities too early.

Wallet (2006:36) notes that ECE teacher training programmes consist of three core components that should be well balanced: (i) subject-matter studies that provide teachers with the subject (content) and knowledge base that they will in turn transmit to their learners, (ii) pedagogical studies provide teachers with the skills they require to effectively practise their profession and (iii) in-class teaching experience is an academically organised opportunity for teachers to practice teaching in a classroom, while being supervised by a qualified and experienced professional. However, despite the importance of content knowledge and a specialised knowledge base, Ackerman (2006:87) and McLaughlin (2002:95) are in accord that more and better content knowledge does not guarantee that teachers will know how to use it effectively in their classrooms. Instead, teachers need to know how to engage their learners in content knowledge, how to allocate time and attention, as well as how to articulate standards for practice. Similarly, the OECD (2006:8) argues that the focus of early childhood teaching and learning should be on the child and the developmental tasks and learning strategies of young children.

McLaughlin (2002:97) recommends that teachers need pedagogical knowledge to develop new ideas, skills and perspectives, to evaluate, enrich and change their practice, to exploit external knowledge, to situate knowledge in their particular school workplace, and to understand the need for new ways of doing things. Knowledge of pedagogical methods is also important since it has the potential to enable teachers to identify problem areas in their practice, as well as opportunities for inquiry and innovation. At a personal level,

pedagogy could be useful if it is used to inform individual teacher action and reflection and to guide teachers to use resources to enhance their work (McLaughlin 2002:97).

ECE teachers who participated in Lobman and Ryan's (2007) study identified innate dispositions required by ECE teachers for the caring and social-emotional aspects of teaching. These authors concluded that a bachelor's degree and specialised training in ECE should be the minimum qualification and that teachers need communication and interpersonal skills to be able to work effectively with other adults (Lobman & Ryan 2007:377). Teacher training programmes should be monitored to ensure that higher education institutions produce suitably qualified teachers. Legislating linkages between the content of professional development and preparation programmes, and national standards should be considered.

2.4.3 How ECE Teachers Work

ECE teachers' practice is multidimensional since it involves personal, social and cultural contexts, as well as extensive emotional labour (Goodfellow 2008:21). Nevertheless, ECE teachers' work is often undervalued and they are vulnerable to being exploited due to the perception that their role is equivalent to 'mothering' (Goodfellow 2008:21). Ironically, although they are under-rated, ECE teachers create positive relationships through warm, sensitive and responsive care that helps children feel valued and enables them to gain more from their learning experiences (NAEYC 1993). Teachers should focus on children's well-being, and their early development and learning should be ECE teachers' primary concern (OECD 2006).

Walsh *et al.* (2006) note that ECE teachers provide children with a safe, secure and inviting learning environment, help them to feel valued and take time to listen to their views and opinions. ECE teachers promote children's self-esteem, confidence, independence, imagination and general well-being; they understand how children learn and what constitutes significant learning by considering learning preferences, and they are aware of children's uniqueness (Hirsh-Pasek *et al.* 2009:44). ECE teachers foster positive attitudes learning and avoid frustration by teaching at a pace suitable for the individual child as well as the class as a whole. In this way, ECE teachers are able to meet the needs of all children by stretching the more able and supporting the less capable. Theories of best practice and current research findings illustrate that ECE teachers should be actively

involved and sensitive when interacting with young children (Wilcox-Hertzog & Ward 2004:1).

ECE teachers have traditionally created their own curricula (Lobman & Ryan 2007:371). Mandated curricula tend to be not only prescriptive, but are often overloaded, resulting in ECE teachers needing to cover more curriculum content than previously (Hacker & Rowe 1998:95). The intensification of their work means that instead of being programme implementers, teachers also need to be programme planners and designers (Brophy 1982:5). However, the inherent complexities of teaching limit the degree to which teachers are able to actively make curriculum decisions when they use commercially produced curriculum materials.

Teachers still have input through school curriculum committees, and individual teachers still adapt officially adopted curricula according to their own educational beliefs and their perceptions about their students' needs. It remains important for teachers to know how to select and adapt curriculum materials for their students (Brophy 1982:11).

Coburn and Stein (2006:25) attribute the shortcomings of educational policy implementation to limitations in teacher learning. Policy makers design professional development programmes according to a vision of instruction that departs substantially from teachers' existing practice. This fails to recognise that teachers understand new forms of instruction through the lens of their pre-existing knowledge, beliefs and experiences. Thus, teachers tend to gravitate toward approaches that are congruent with their prior practices, and focus on "surface manifestations" such as discrete activities, materials and classroom organisation rather than deeper pedagogical principles. They graft new approaches onto existing practices without altering classroom norms and routines.

According to Bottery (2006:95) teachers' work is increasingly controlled through excessive standardisation. Falk (2000:104) recommends that teachers acquire a broader vision as they develop a curriculum that extends beyond meeting standards. Teachers should therefore locate their learners at the centre of the curriculum, give them opportunities to construct their own understanding through active involvement, encourage them to explore, question, hypothesise and argue about their ideas. Since few teachers have experienced this kind of education themselves, they are unable to relate to these abstract learning theories (Falk 2000).

In South Africa prior to 2001, there was a policy vacuum and government involvement in ECE programmes was limited. ECE organisations initiated their own training and developed curricula for young children. Yet despite their experience in curriculum development, they were not consulted on the adoption of the official curriculum, were not represented on the NCS writing teams, and were initially not included in professional development programmes offered by the national Department of Education. This exclusion may have affected their response to the curriculum changes implemented—this hypothesis is further explored in this study.

2.5 ECE Curriculum Delivery and Instructional Practice

There is a rich diversity of approaches to ECE curricula and pedagogy (Woodhead 2006). Historically in South Africa such diversity may be attributed to the marginalised nature of the field and the former absence of government involvement. As noted earlier, community-based and non-governmental organisations established ECE centres and initiated training programmes for teachers (Clasquin-Johnson 2007). Contemporary programmes continue to promote a diversity of approaches as an attempt to address context-specific needs. ECE curriculum delivery reflects policy priorities such as early stimulation, the need to link to brain research, prevention and early intervention to overcome learning breakdown, meeting the needs of children regarded as being "at risk" or vulnerable, children living in poverty, and those infected or affected by HIV/Aids (Department of Education 2001).

Any specification of early childhood services, curriculum and pedagogy reflects particular combinations of cultural assumptions and aspirations, as well as patterns of power that characterise the relationships between governments, children, families and professionals (Woodhead 2006:5). The majority of ECE curricula are individualised, play-based and child-centred, western developmental theory still predominates.

Biersteker's (2007) recent research on non-centre-based ECE demonstrates that the majority of young children are being catered for outside government-supported programmes or community-based ECE centres. Biersteker (2007:9) notes that the flexibility of professional development programmes for teachers promotes the use of a range of curricula because registered ECE qualifications and standards are outcomes-based and flexible. ECE curricula in South Africa follow a strengths-based, holistic approach with a strong human rights focus. In addition, the range of content suggests that there have been attempts to incorporate indigenous or contextualised elements in

curricula for young children, but not much is known about what this means in practice (Biersteker 2007:9).

Davin and Van Staden (2005:8,25) recommend that the Grade R curriculum should be informal, enjoyable, well planned, relevant to the learners' life world, and should integrate the eight learning areas in developmentally appropriate activities. The eight learning areas are Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Technology, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation, and Economic and Management Sciences. The main design features of each learning area are learning outcomes and assessment standards. The curriculum should focus on the three main Learning Programmes, namely Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills, while following an integrated approach that promotes the development of the whole learner in terms of intellectual, physical, emotional, perceptual and language development.

2.5.1 Child-centred and Community-based Models

During the 1980s, evidence emerged about the long-term benefits of ECE programmes and a developmental perspective drawing on insights from developmental research, namely the advocacy of informal, holistic, child-centred, play-based settings (Woodhead 2006:5). Such settings include (i) recognising the early years as a distinctive phase in children's development; (ii) promoting "developmentally appropriate" policies and practices; (iii) avoiding developmental risks for the "hurried child"; (iv) recognising the formative significance of early childhood; and (v) determining the impact of early experiences on children's futures.

Furthermore, research into early brain development has highlighted the significance of the pre-natal period and the importance of adequate nutrition, responsive care, and a supportive environment (Rushton 2001:76). The evidence from developmental neuroscience therefore indicates the need for a more comprehensive ECE strategy (Blair 2002:111), encompassing the welfare of children and families from well before birth as well as early intervention, rather than a focus on the pre-school years as prioritised by current ECE policies. Early intervention is aimed at children "at risk" and includes children who are vulnerable in terms of their health, social competence and susceptibility to neglect or abuse. This paradigm can be applied to a range of adversities including natural disasters, family poverty and breakdown, and HIV/Aids. The goal of early intervention (and early prevention) is the achievement of social and economic change. The latter approach

commonly justifies early childhood programmes in terms of ensuring school readiness, equalising opportunities and promoting social justice (Woodhead 2005). This constitutes the underpinning rationale for ECE.

International ECE strategies have been widely challenged for their assumption that the norms, goals and expectations for young children's development, care and socialisation in western settings can be transferred to diverse societies with different cultural traditions and child rearing practices (Woodhead 2006). This objection is pertinent to South Africa since policy borrowing is a prominent feature of curriculum change (Jansen 1999). Hargreaves and Shirley (2009:19) liken policy borrowing to "stealing skeletons from other people's closets". Woodhead (2006:5) further contends that the dominant developmental paradigm, expressed within policy statements about "developmentally appropriate practices" is problematic since it bears little resemblance to the realities of the lives of millions of the world's children. Moreover, the idealised assumptions about what constitutes a quality environment[15] for early childhood, although widespread, are based on narrow cultural assumptions about what constitutes quality in early childhood. Woodhead (2006) has therefore offered an alternative term, "Contextually Appropriate Practice" (CAP), to focus attention on the many respects in which early childhood policies, services, curricula and practices must accommodate the circumstances of children's lives, as well as the material and cultural resources available to parents and communities and their expectations and aspirations for their young children.

The belief of advocates of play-based ECE is that young children's thinking and learning practices are qualitatively different from those of adults (Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness, Trew, Rafferty & Sheehy 2006:202). The ECE curriculum should therefore be commensurate with children's age and developmental status. Walsh *et al.* (2006) explain how the former prescriptive curriculum for reading, writing and arithmetic in Northern Ireland focused too heavily and too early on academic achievement, lacked relevance and coherence for everyday life, detracted from children's enjoyment of school, negatively affected their motivation to learn, and diminished their experiences of childhood. Believing that children should instead be free to explore, experiment and learn at their own pace through play and practical activities, a curriculum review led to the adoption of the Enriched Curriculum in Northern Ireland in 1999. The new Northern Irish curriculum is

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[15] As reflected in the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) developed by Harms and Clifford (1980).

based on European and South-East Asian ECE models and curriculum practices that have been strongly influenced by constructivist and Vygotskian perspectives (Walsh *et al.* 2006). It emphasises play, oral language, and phonological awareness, aimed at the development of literacy, attention, concentration and memory skills, physical confidence and competence, as well as learners' ability to build social relationships through co-operating with one another. Overall, the focus is on the process of learning rather than the content (Walsh *et al.* 2006:203). This is contrary to policy directions in many countries where early learning standards and teacher accountability are leading to the adoption of increasingly formal academic approaches.

Hirsh-Pasek *et al.* (2009:55) extend the argument of Walsh *et al.* (2006) by noting that:

> The emphasis on narrowly defined learning, as promoted by the current climate of high-stakes testing and accountability, relegates play to the status of an extraneous embellishment. It treats preschoolers as if they are miniature primary school children and as if all that matters are the child's cognitive skills. It is time to define educational goals in a way that respects what research has found about the value of play and playful learning. Play is the furthest thing from a waste of children's time; it should return to its rightful place in the curriculum.

Prior to the introduction of official curricula, teachers regarded play as the core of the early childhood curriculum. Hirsh-Pasek *et al.* (2009) assert that teachers are unable to relate the philosophy of learning through play to official curricula because they interpreted the curriculum as requiring formal instruction. Moreover, teachers are uncertain of how to implement early learning standards without focusing primarily on knowledge and skills. Educational goals in particular need to reflect research findings on how children learn and how they should be taught.

2.5.2 A Formal Academic Approach

While there is agreement that teachers should purposefully create and maintain the context to stimulate and facilitate children's development and learning (Hsueh & Barton 2005:179), teachers are increasingly using formal approaches at a younger age (Fromberg 2006:70; Hatch, Bowman, Jor'dan, Morgan, Hart, Soto, Lubeck & Hyson 2002:442). There is also a growing expectation for individual children to produce evidence of "readiness for learning" (Groark, Mehaffie, McCall & Greenberg 2007:7) or "school readiness" (Davin & Van Staden 2005:6). Furthermore, Davin and Van Staden (2005) assert that school

readiness is not an isolated outcome and that Grade R teachers should aim to develop the child as a whole person in preparation not only for school, but also for life. Similarly, Elkind (1982) and Smith and Shepard (1998:307) argue that children should be protected from a curriculum that is too advanced for their individual levels of readiness.

Cassidy, Mims, Rucker and Boone (2003:194) extend this critique of school readiness by noting that the concept of readiness cannot be addressed by focusing exclusively on children. The school setting must be ready to allow children and teachers to experience success. Palermo, Hanish, Martin, Fabes and Reiser (2007:407) stress the role of the ECE teacher as a crucial contributor to young children's readiness for school. In addition, the ECE teacher should maximise the quality of the classroom environment, which is associated positively with children's long-term school adjustment. For example, children who experience warmer and closer teacher-child relationships, tend to have fewer behaviour problems, enjoy school more, and perform better academically than children who experience more conflicted or dependent teacher-child relationships. Consequently, the quality of the teacher-child relationship is an important correlating factor with children's school readiness and should be optimised to promote young children's academic readiness (Murphey 2003:3; Palermo *et al.* 2007:420).

With the introduction of official curricula, ECE programmes in many countries are becoming increasing formal, rigid and academic. Blaustein (2005:5) argues that the real risk of the academic readiness approach is that the "directed academic curriculum" often replaces essential, hands-on learning activities with skill-based performance and rote learning tasks. In doing so, the developmental growth necessary for children's future academic success is put at risk. When rote learning tasks are introduced in an early childhood classroom, they condition a child to concentrate on a very specific skill and use lower parts of the brain, such as the limbic system and the insufficiently developed cerebral cortex, to learn that skill. During this type of task, the child is forced to use parts of the brain trained to perform a task, rather than later when the cortex system becomes more developed and better suited to the task (Hearly 2004). Balanced developmental brain growth is crucial if a young child is to gain a broad base of knowledge and meaningful understanding.

While some adult-directed or facilitated activities, such as reading stories, singing songs, and group dictation, are appropriate, a traditional adult-directed academic curriculum is largely inappropriate in early childhood learning environments. According to Hearly (2004),

adult-directed activities place the emphasis on the teacher's goals. Children are expected to tackle problems that are often unrelated to their environment or concrete experiences. As a result, there are gaps in the development of their reasoning and logic. Such an approach fails to respect the child's individual objectives or allow the child to use intrinsic motivations to engage in learning. More seriously, it jeopardizes a child's attitude or disposition toward learning. In addition, adult-directed activities limit opportunities for a child to practise and develop essential non-academic abilities. They reduce opportunities for the child to understand essential relationships between experiences and peers or to test newly learned concepts in his or her environment. This in turn decreases the development of the intuitive foundation of knowledge needed for complex abstract thinking in the future. It also places pressure on young children and forces them to use immature neural pathways to complete prescribed tasks (Blaustein 2005).

As a proponent of the play-based approach, I concur with Blaustein's (2005) and Fromberg's (2006) reviews of early learning environments that focus on academic achievement. Teachers implementing formal ECE curricula believe that the best way to prepare young children for school success is through formal instruction, worksheets and skill drills (Hirsh-Pasek *et al.* 2009:13). Teachers employing these strategies predetermine the most relevant information and attempt to force young children to focus in ways that most of them are simply too immature to fulfill. Although unintended, the consequence is often children with low confidence and negative dispositions toward learning (Blaustein 2005:2). Similarly, Fromberg (2006:70) notes that in the USA public policies emphasising high-stakes summative testing of information and skills have resulted in the reduction of the socialisation and child-centred traditions and the intellectual/experiential orientations required in early childhood programmes. Similarly, in South Africa, the ECE programmes are becoming increasingly formal since the introduction of the official curriculum, the NCS even though learners have not had early stimulation in pre-reception year programmes.

2.5.3 Early Learning Standards

Early learning standards are a central feature of standards-based curriculum change aimed at helping all students to achieve. Wilson and Lowenberg-Ball (2006:122) note that:

> [Teachers] must teach in the direction of the new curricular standards and meet the performance standards embedded in teacher assessment systems. They must help their students meet the standards for learning outcomes, preparing them for much more open-ended and ambiguous assessment that examines, at

a much finer level, what students have learned. They must demonstrate, select, and design good classroom learning tasks, teach more complex content to deeper levels of understanding, and cover the curriculum.

Despite criticisms that learning standards are leading teachers to adopt increasingly formal teaching approaches, the NAEYC (2004) believes that early learning standards have the potential to establish a comprehensive, high-quality system of services for young children. They however acknowledge that early learning standards are often implemented in ways that are problematic. Rather, standards should emphasise significant, developmentally appropriate content and outcomes, be developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes, and be implemented and assessed in ways that support the development of all young children, including those with special needs (Darragh 2007:168). In addition, early learning standards should be accompanied by strong support for early childhood programmes, professionals and families.

While ECE standards were initially welcomed by practitioners in the ECE field with its long history of establishing and advocating standards for young learners, standards have recently become more complex and confusing because of their accountability demands (Goldstein 2006:2; Scott-Little, Kagan & Frelow 2003:1; Scott-Little, Lesko, Martella & Milburn 2006:2). Love (2006:15), asserts that the benefits of well-applied ECE standards include programme improvement, positive curriculum change, enhanced professional development, and more effective resource allocation. ECE standards facilitate monitoring trends over time and may lead to enhanced support for ECE programmes. Results-based accountability is therefore regarded as an essential part of a broader strategy to improve outcomes for children (Friedman 2004:14).

2.5.4 Assessment

Accurately assessing individual children's knowledge and skills is one of the most difficult, yet most important skills in teaching (Chen & McNamee 2006:111). To do so, teachers need reliable assessment systems to help identify learners' strengths, identify areas that require additional practice and instruction, monitor their progress, and decide on appropriate next steps in their instructional practice (Wilson & Loewenberg-Ball 1996:127). Understanding assessment and knowing how to use it appropriately is crucial to effective teaching. Assessment in early childhood classrooms is particularly challenging because young children's competencies are situation-dependent and they do not respond well to the constraints of standardised testing.

The problem with changing accountability requirements linked to new assessment procedures is that these measures increase external technical control over teachers, decrease their autonomy, and lead to an intensification of their work (Ballet *et al.* 2006:210). Day (2008:244,258) regards such "performity agendas" as alienating and bureaucratically managerial. Moreover, Bottery (2006:108) notes that:

> There is abundant evidence that this kind of approach, linked to systems of targets and performity, not only generates poor morale in those made so accountable, but also fails to understand, appreciate, value and encourage other aspects of professional practice which make educational practice successful.

Ongoing classroom assessment is believed to be a more accurate method of data collection and evaluation (Davin & Van Staden 2005:225) than tests. While observation and documentation are at the heart of such assessment, teachers may not know specifically what to observe and/or what to document. Having gathered observations, a further challenge for teachers is what to do with the assessment findings, and how to use them to inform their teaching. To serve diverse groups of learners, teachers need assessment tools that help them to identify children's strengths and weaknesses in a wide variety of learning areas. For results to be meaningful in the classroom, the assessment must measure the skills and knowledge in areas similar to those used by teachers in planning the curriculum (Davin & Van Staden 2005).

Using assessment to guide children's learning and development requires expertise in child development knowledge, subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Chen & McNamee 2006: 124). Assessment should guide curriculum development and curriculum implementation should be supported by assessment information (Grisham-Brown *et al.* 2006:45). As teachers implement learning experiences, they use assessment activities to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Children's participation in curricular experiences raises questions in a teacher's mind that prompt taking a closer look at their progress with learning and the nature of activities offered to them.

If effectively implemented, early learning standards have the potential to make ethical, appropriate, valid and reliable assessment a central part of all early childhood programmes. Teachers are responsible for applying the standards to assess young children's strengths, progress and needs, as well as using assessment methods that are developmentally appropriate (NAEYC 2004:1). Grisham-Brown, Hallam and Brookshire

(2006:46) assert that high quality assessment of young children should include the following characteristics: (i) be conducted within naturalistic environments; (ii) use multiple methods; (iii) connect the intent of the assessment with the way it is used; and (iv) enable the participation of families in the assessment process. Moreover, researchers agree that assessments that reflect the goals of the programme and link to the curriculum will enable children to make significant progress (Grisham-Brown, Hallam & Brookshire 2006:46).

2.5.5 Accountability

According to Meisels (2006:1) politicians, policy makers, journalists and scholars are all focused on outcomes, or on "what works". Day (2008:243) contends that teachers' work is occurring in the context of increasingly intensive and persistent results-driven policy interventions to ensure higher standards of teaching, learning and achievement as well as increased efficiency and effectiveness. The establishment of formal curricula and accountability through the school system has moved the ECE sector in many countries firmly into the public arena (Woodrow & Brennan 1999:90). Consequently, the expectations of the ECE curriculum, children's learning outcomes and accountability have undergone dramatic change (Goldstein 2006:2) and the underlying motivation for introducing mandated curricula is to raise standards (Kwon 2002:11).

Standardised tests are increasingly being used to measure achievement and school performance, and to meet accountability demands (Jaruszewicz 2005:362). In particular, cross-national test comparisons of children's performance in narrowly defined academic arenas, for example the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) are impacting ECE curricula worldwide (Botha, Maree & De Witt 2005:697; Kennedy 2006:299). The results of PIRLS, which found that South African learners scored the lowest out of 40 countries in their reading ability, and the public outcry that followed, may have a far-reaching impact on Grade R programmes and reinforce the perception that children should be learning these skills at a younger age and in more formal ways.

Black and William's (2005:249) assertion that faith in the education system is considerably undermined by unfavourable international comparisons is pertinent. In particular, it causes taxpayers and parents to question the effectiveness of the education system (Polyzoi, Fullan & Anchan 2003:21). They often blame teachers for the poor quality of education, treating them as scapegoats for other parties who may be responsible for the prevailing

conditions in education (Cochran-Smith 2006:24). Similarly, Nieto (2005:141) notes that an economic imperative has been at the heart of the majority of reform initiatives and that increased "high-stakes" testing has resulted in schools, teachers and learners being the primary targets of blame for poor achievement. According to Fink and Stoll (2005:17), this is a common governmental change strategy to undermine the public's confidence in its schools and teachers, thus allowing policy makers to mandate a series of new policies. This approach effectively deskills teachers and undermines their judgement.

A common motivation from policy makers for curriculum change is that teachers and schools need to improve learner achievement (Smith & Rowley 2005:126). According to Harlen (2005:209) and Falk (2000:92), teachers consequently experience curriculum change in overtly negative ways, for example, teacher evaluation policies are being connected to teacher professional development, which in turn is primarily geared towards enhancing student learning. In addition, high stakes summative assessment impacts significantly on the curriculum and teachers become more test orientated than learning orientated (Cochran-Smith 2006:23; Harlen 2005:209). In particular, teachers focus on the content of tests, administer repeated practice tests, train learners in the answers to specific types of questions, adopt transmission styles of teaching and neglect formative assessment which can enhance learning. In the USA, school districts are linking teacher salary increases to learner test scores. Moreover, there is a widespread myth that increasing the workload of teachers results in enhanced effectiveness (Harlen 2005:209). Although teaching time has significantly increased in the UK, it has not resulted in an overall improvement in standards. Accountability is being enforced through new data systems, which allow for comparisons between schools. This fails to reflect the complexities of schooling or a particular school's overall education and programme goals.

Ndawi and Peasuh (2005:211) argue that since a significant number of teachers in developing countries such as Zimbabwe are unqualified, they cannot be held accountable for producing citizens who are able to meet societal expectations. In addition, teachers need professional development in the area of assessment and standards to understand and apply the principles of standards in school-based assessment (Chirume 2007:39).

2.5.6 Curriculum planning

The *Teacher's Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes for the Foundation Phase* (National Department of Education 2003) stipulates that lesson plans should form
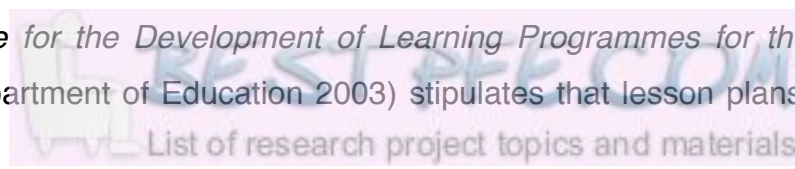
part of a broader planning process across learning programmes, consisting of whole phase planning, work schedules involving year-long or grade planning, and lesson planning including groups of activities. According to the guidelines, learning programmes should be translated into year-long, grade specific work schedules and shorter activity-long lesson plans (National Department of Education 2003:2).

Lesson plans describe concretely and in detail teaching, learning and assessment activities that are to be implemented as a single activity or through a term's teaching, learning and assessment and may last from a day to a week or a month. Lesson plans include how teachers should manage teaching, learning and assessment activities. Significantly, whole phase curriculum planning by Grade R teachers should be undertaken in cooperation with their Foundation Phase colleagues who teach Grades 1 to 3, in order to ensure that resourcing and progression from Grade R to Grade 3 are addressed (National Department of Education 2003:5).

In addition, the Gauteng Department of Education (2008) requires Grade R teachers to follow Circular 28/2005 (see Appendix 1) when planning their lessons. A review of the *Teacher's Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes* reveals that considerable emphasis is placed on how teachers plan their lessons.

> We are convinced that teachers implementing Curriculum 2005 have gained skills, experience, knowledge and techniques that have provided them with a base for engaging with the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools). This *Teacher's Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes* builds on and enhances that base (National Department of Education 2003:5).

Despite the viewpoint above expressed in the Guidelines, teachers often lack the capacity to develop their own learning programmes. Since Grade R teachers generally have lower levels of qualifications, their capacity may be even lower.

2.6 Teachers as the Implementers of Change

The ability to deal with change is vital to living in post-modern society (Fullan 1993:3). The educational system is fundamentally conservative (as evidenced by the way teachers are trained, the way schools are organised, the ways that the educational hierarchy operates, and the way that education is treated by political decision makers). This trend consequently results in a system that is more likely to retain the status quo than to change.

Therefore, when change is attempted it often results in defensiveness, superficiality or short-lived pockets of success. According to Fullan (1993), it is impossible to have an educational environment in which change is continually expected, alongside a conservative system, without constant aggravation.

Teachers therefore find themselves working in a deeply paradoxical profession where, on the one hand, they are hailed as the catalysts of change, the harbingers of the new informational society, the creators of knowledge and learning on which success in this society will depend. This is why so much is expected of them and why so much change is demanded from them … At the very same time, they are expected to work better and harder, teachers also find themselves more restricted, more regulated and less supported to do their work (Fullan 1993).

In addition, teachers need to understand the broader context of educational change. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009), trace the impact of standards on curricula over the past fifty years. They explain how schools' and teachers' responses to change are influenced by the features of educational change. However, this is not a linear process: different schools could be at different stages depending on their infrastructural conditions. According to these authors, decentralisation was the main feature of the first stage since teachers were afforded professional freedom to interpret outcomes and standards. This gradually progressed to centralisation during the second stage where teachers had to follow prescribed content and curriculum change was compliance driven. During the third stage, creative combinations sought to balance autonomy with accountability. The current focus of curriculum change is on inclusive and sustainable partnerships between schools, communities and the corporate sector being promoted, and strong schools are helping their weaker peers (Hargreaves & Shirley 2009).

2.7 Evaluation of previous research on teachers' responses to curriculum change

Past research has seldom found that teachers respond to curriculum change in positive ways. For example, a study conducted in Hong Kong reported that nearly 50% of ECE teachers resigned from their teaching posts within the first six months of curriculum implementation (Wong 2003:46). The ECE teachers in this study attributed their decision to the significant increase in their workload and the tremendous stress they experienced. In addition, they interpreted the principal's supervision and intervention as an indication of

mistrust. Their lack of knowledge and skills required to implement the curriculum change, as well as the rushed time frames, led to a loss of confidence in their ability to teach.

In Bailey's (2000:113) study on mandated curriculum change in Canada, teachers' resistance to change was costly since it led to health problems, early retirement, and in one case, a nervous breakdown because teachers felt "powerless". Successful curriculum change therefore necessitates finding ways to overcome resistance and encourage engagement.

Murphy, Evertson and Radnofsky (1991:139) found that teachers are more likely to adopt curriculum change if they have more uninterrupted instructional time and if they believe that the change will benefit their learners. Datnow and Castellano (2000) found that teachers feel pressured to adopt change when their administrator is in favour of it, or because of available funding. However, Bailey (2000:120) notes that teachers' efforts to comply with mandated change are usually inadequately supported. Mwakapenda's (2001:53) study on curriculum change in Malawi, for example, found that although teachers appeared to have adopted the curriculum, very limited change occurred in their classroom practices since teachers were inadequately trained.

Since Grade R was gradually phased into the South African schooling system after 2001, research output on this grade is still relatively limited. Consequently finding related to teachers' responses to curriculum change is sparse. Three studies were found on the implementation of curriculum change in South African Grade R classrooms: Botha *et al.* (2005) focused on mathematics activities, Phatudi (2007) examined transitions from home and preschools into Grade 1, and SAIDE's (2010) study focused on the quality of South African Grade R programmes.

In the Botha *et al.* (2005) and Phatudi (2007) studies, the majority of the teachers were located at relatively well-resourced schools and the teachers had at least a bachelor's degree. Botha *et al.* (2005) found that although a particular curriculum change required teachers to specifically plan mathematics activities, teachers ignored it. Phatudi (2007) found formal activities, particularly worksheets, to be prominent in Grade R classrooms.

Botha *et al.* (2005:712) recommend "drastic measures" to adequately train teachers. Their conclusion that Grade R learners "will probably never be able to take their rightful place in society, perpetuating the vicious cycle of inadequate education" (Botha *et al.* 2005:712) fails to acknowledge that ECE teachers are operating under severe capacity constraints.

Placing the onus for professional development on teachers themselves relieves pressure on the state. However, effective implementation of curriculum change is undermined by our continued reliance on underqualified teachers. The Department of Education's own studies, for example the Final Report on the National ECD Pilot Project (1999) and the Nationwide Audit of ECD (2001) confirm that the sector is underdeveloped and under-resourced.

In the SAIDE (2010) study, three recent South African studies were reviewed: (i) the Eastern Cape Department of Education's (2008) evaluation of accredited ECE training, (ii) the Gauteng Department of Education's (2009) study on the implementation of the NCS in the Foundation Phase, and (iii) the National Treasury's Technical Assistance Unit's (2008) Grade R Diagnostic Project. These studies were in accord that the focus of Grade R programmes was on numerical targets rather than quality. In the Eastern Cape study it was found that quality of the majority of Grade R programmes in that province was so poor that it was actually harmful to the well-being of children and that schools were not ready to incorporate children into the reception year.

SAIDE (2010:4) recommends that the quality of Grade R programmes be addressed urgently since it constitutes the first experience of school for most children. The most significant recommendation related to the Grade R curriculum was that it should provide a bridge into formal learning with an emphasis on providing continuous early development on the birth to nine continuum rather than strictly being incorporated into formal schooling and having the same curriculum components as Grade 1. In addition a "common core standard content" is recommended for Grade R teacher training (SAIDE 2010:5).

It could therefore be concluded that previous research has found that teachers often respond to change in negative ways because of a lack of capacity and support. However, previous research also informs us of factors that influence teachers' responses to curriculum change. Therefore, if policy makers want teachers to adopt or adapt curriculum change, they should provide the conditions that will be conducive to change, particularly access to professional development opportunities, a range of support mechanisms as well as resources. This in turn will positively influence teachers' motivation, job satisfaction and attitudes towards the curriculum change.

2.8 Factors that Influence Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

McLaughlin's (1987) study on the external factors (professional development, resources, support) and the internal factors (attitudes, beliefs, motivation) that influence how teachers respond to curriculum change is used to organise this section of the literature review. While external factors can be addressed, e.g. training can be provided, internal factors that underlie an implementer's response are less amenable to policy intervention. In the next section, I will first discuss the external factors in detail, followed by the internal factors. These factors overlap since they shape and are influenced by one another.

2.8.1 External Factors

Organisational conditions and characteristics of the infrastructure, which facilitate the successful implementation of change, constitute an organisation's (school's) innovative capacity (Leithwood & Jantzi 2006:206). According to Cochran-Smith (2006:24) the current emphasis on teacher quality positions teachers as the determining factor in learners' success. This disregards complex variables such as school resources, leadership, investment in teachers' capacity building and professional development, as well as learner factors such as family structure and economic status.

Teacher capacity relates to professional development, resources and support, including sustained technical support (Bascia & Hargreaves 2000:19). Ryan and Ackerman (2005:2) note that successful implementation of educational change depends on both capacity and will. If implementation actors lack adequate levels of information, skills or resources, their capacity to successfully implement the required curriculum change will be limited. According to Fullan (1993:5), teachers require inbuilt capacity, or the habits and skills to engage in continuous corrective analysis and action. However, capacity extends beyond individual teachers, to schools and districts (Ryan & Ackerman 2005). Productive educational change is related not to teachers' capacity to implement the latest policy, but rather to their ability to survive the vicissitudes of planned and unplanned change while growing and developing.

2.8.1.1 Professional Development

Kwakman (1999 in Sleegers *et al.* 2002:91) defines professional development as "the process in which individual teachers acquire new knowledge, skills and values for the constant improvement of the quality of their services". This challenge demands reflection, interaction, translating new developments and insights into practice, reflecting on personal

performance, keeping abreast of relevant literature, participating in training activities, and experimenting with a range of didactic methods. All this however, is implemented in the school workplace, which is the most complex domain in which to foster professional development. Consequently, teacher professional development is viewed as "the best solution and worst problem in education" (Fullan 1993:7). As a result, curriculum change, which is often intended to increase the effectiveness of teachers, has the converse effect when teachers "avoid the challenge of change" (Richardson & Placier 2001:905). Thus curriculum change often undermines teachers and their capacity to implement change effectively.

One indicator of high quality ECE is a qualified teaching workforce (Ryan & Ackerman 2005:2). According to Clark and Huber (2005:179) professional development is an important aspect of educational reform. In the ECE field, professional development programmes are complicated by inconsistencies in government requirements for teachers, high turnover rates, and a proliferation of new knowledge in the field of brain development and its application to ECE programmes. Increasing attention is being paid to both initial and continuing ECE teacher professional development. The role of universities includes providing high-quality teacher preparation, enhanced student learning, professional development opportunities and research interventions (Clark & Huber 2005:181).

Professional development is a priority for policy makers since they believe that better educated teachers provide higher quality care and education (Torquati *et al.* 2007:262). Moreover, research confirms that ongoing professional development is central to the successful implementation of curriculum change (Datnow & Castellano 2000:777; Marchel & Keenan 2005:332; Penuel *et al.* 2007:922; Wilson & Loewenberg-Ball 2006:134; Woodrow & Brennan 1999:89), particularly since effective teachers are the most critical factor for quality ECE (Chen & Chang 2006:1). The key to sustained teacher effectiveness and continuous growth is high-quality ongoing professional development (Chen & Chang 2006).

The National Association for the Education and Care of Young Children (NAEYC 2004:1) notes that an effective system of early childhood professional development should provide meaningful opportunities for career advancement and increased compensation to ensure a well-qualified and stable workforce. In the majority of countries, early childhood professionals enter the field through various paths. While some have completed professional preparation programmes prior to assuming a professional role, many others

embark on formal professional preparation once employed as ECE teachers. Ongoing professional development opportunities should encourage and support all individuals working with young children to improve their knowledge and skills (NAEYC 1993:4). Effective professional development is needed to change teachers' classroom practice and facilitate their understanding of new curricula (Ryan & Ackerman 2005:2).

Due to the impact of new learning theories such as constructivism, teachers are expected to change their attitudes towards their work. This is extremely difficult when teachers are expected to apply what they learn without adequate support in the form of continuous professional development programmes. Professional development in the ECE field should be an ongoing process (NAEYC 1993). The NAEYC (1993) and Firestone *et al*. (2005:415) agree that professional development is most effective when grounded in a sound theoretical and philosophical base and structured as a coherent and systematic programme. In addition, professional development experiences should respond to an individual's background and experience, as well as the context of their current role. Effective professional development opportunities should be structured to promote clear linkages between theory and practice and should be active, interactive and hands-on. This does not only encourage participants to learn from one another, it also incorporates prior skills and resources they bring to the training process, rather than creating feelings of self-doubt or inadequacy by immediately calling into question an individual's current practices. Effective professional development experiences provide opportunities for application and reflection and allow individuals to be observed and receive feedback on what they have learned. Professional development programmes are especially effective when participants are afforded the opportunity to be involved in the planning and design of the programmes (Firestone *et al.* 2005).

Training programmes focused on specific content (e.g. literacy or numeracy) do not necessarily support the process of teacher development. Teachers' professional development should therefore be located within a larger coordinated system and related to their daily work, rather than being a top-down mandate with little relevance to their current needs (Ackerman 2006:2; Boote 2006:470). Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi and Gallagher (2007:928) assert that reform oriented professional development includes being mentored and coached, participating in a committee or study group, or engaging in an internship, since workshops alone do not allow teachers to explore new concepts and teaching strategies in sufficient depth. Mentoring and coaching activities are more effective because

they are led by classroom teachers, whom other teachers trust as a source of meaningful guidance on improving teaching practice (Hargreaves 1994).

Curriculum-linked professional development focuses specifically on how to enact pedagogical strategies, use materials and administer assessments associated with particular curricula. Penuel *et al.*, (2007:929) stress that professional development that is of long-term duration is more likely to contain the kinds of learning opportunities necessary for teachers to integrate new knowledge into their practice. Ongoing professional education for teachers recognises that professional growth is a developmental process that continues throughout a teacher's career (Chen & Chang 2006:8; National Department of Education 2007). Therefore, a "whole teacher approach" is required to facilitate the full range of teacher development needs, offering programmes that support teachers to progress from novice to expert levels of competence (Chen & Chang 2006). Laverick (2007:248) reminds us that motivation, metacognition, mentors and money are ingredients for promoting expertise which demonstrate commitment to teachers' professional development.

In South Africa, Grade R teachers are required to undergo training at the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 4. This is a vocational qualification equivalent to Grade 12 of schooling. Teachers' access to professional development is uneven, both geographically and in terms of access to higher qualification levels starting at Level 5 (Biersteker 2007:10). Biersteker (2007) recommends that the shortcomings of ECE teachers' professional development programmes in South Africa could be addressed through distance learning, satellite campuses, and increased allocations for learnerships and skills programmes in remote and underserviced areas. Biersteker (2007) further recommends that the state considers offering incentives for undertaking degrees and postgraduate studies in ECE to increase the take-up of these opportunities. Moreover, the current requirements for access to higher education institutions for learners who have completed Level 4 and Level 5 need to be addressed urgently so that vertical progression is enabled and achievements credited. Key challenges at all levels of training relate to current low language and literacy levels of many ECE teachers (Biersteker 2007).

ECE teachers need to create their own professional development goals and take personal responsibility for their learning and growth (Clark & Huber 2005:183). Professional development programmes should therefore get teachers actively involved in reflecting on their teaching, asking questions about practice, and sharing what they are learning with

each other. The same authors found that professional development resulted in a significant change in how teachers view themselves and their roles, and that professional development has fostered a sense of belonging to a profession.

Smylie and Perry (2005:329) argue that teacher professional development programmes should be extended to include new learning opportunities, such as work groups, planning teams, and team teaching as sources of exchange, collegial problem solving, and learning. This should be accompanied by incentives such as participative decision-making, collective responsibilities, and team structures, which enable teachers to act in ways consistent with a group. Disincentives to risk-taking and change include political divisiveness and constraints on teachers' classroom autonomy (for example, standards and mandated assessments) that reduce teacher creativity and discretion. Under such circumstances, instruction tends to be directed towards processes and outcomes, especially if teachers believe they do not serve their students well (Smylie & Perry 2005:330).

Fullan's (1993:135) assertion that the ability to manage change is an essential skill in post-modern society, shows clearly that this should be consciously addressed in training programmes for ECE teachers. Day (2008) further recommends that continuing professional development should be provided for teachers who serve disadvantaged communities. Day's (2008.) findings acknowledge that sustaining and enhancing teachers' commitment and resilience is a key quality and retention issue. Therefore, efforts to support and enhance teacher quality should focus upon building, sustaining, and retaining their commitment and resilience, as well as on curriculum-related matters.

2.8.1.2 Resources

According to UNICEF (2007:45), resources have a significant effect, since children who receive high-quality childcare in a stable, safe and stimulating environment, demonstrate stronger mathematical ability, cognitive skills and fewer behavioural problems than children who receive low-quality care. A large percentage of the 42 items on the revised edition of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) confirms that learning and teaching resources are critical for high quality ECE programmes. Learning and teaching resources must capture learners' interest and promote concrete, hands-on and interactive learning. Moreover, since learners' attention span is still limited, an extensive range of resources is required. These should be attractive, colourful, relevant, durable, as well as multicultural and free from bias.

Day (2008:244) notes that curriculum change demands more of teachers because of increased academic and social responsibilities. Teachers require additional time and resources and should be rewarded for leadership responsibilities.

2.8.1.3 Support

ECE teachers need ongoing professional support since they often struggle to maintain ideal practices when confronted with classroom reality (Noble & Macfarlane 2005:55). They also require regular and intensive one-on-one technical assistance, as well as opportunities to meet other teachers in training sessions and talk about their efforts to change (Ryan 2004:683). The professional isolation of ECE teachers limits their access to new ideas and better solutions, increases their stress levels, fails to recognise and praise success, and permits incompetence. When teachers participate in "critical colleagueship" (Wood & Bennett 2000:636) they have access to professional development opportunities that support collaborative inquiry focused on learners' understanding, and operate within a supportive context for sustained reflection on their own teaching practices, their responses to change are more likely to be positive (Pickard Kremenitzer & Myler 2006:165; Rowan & Miller 2007:255; Zahorik 1987:394; Zech, Gause-Vega, Bray, Secules & Goldman 2000:207). Ethridge and King (2005:295) argue that such systematic reflection is important for teachers to know why they do what they do. Collaboration among colleagues must, however, be balanced with the ability to think and work independently. Independence is essential for curriculum change since it allows personal reflection which in turn is necessary for teachers to cope with change (Hargreaves 1994:ix). Noble and Macfarlane (2005:55) assert that ECE teachers need strong professional networks to remain confident about their role in the pedagogical process, as well as opportunities to critically reflect on the complex nature of the workplace, share ideas, and debrief each other on issues as they arise.

Smylie and Perry (2005) found that teacher learning is enhanced by opportunities to work and learn from other teachers of similar position and status. This encourages teachers to gradually transform their practice through ongoing negotiation of meaning as they engage with one another and respond to changing conditions in their environment. The processes and dynamics of teachers' collegial interactions create opportunities for learning that facilitate or constrain policy implementation (Coburn & Stein 2006:27; Muncey & McQuillan 1996:286). McLaughlin (2002) and Coburn and Stein (2006) are in accord that teachers need communities of practice to develop shared practices, resources, and common

perspectives. Learning occurs as teachers participate in the social and cultural activities of their communities, sharing and exchanging information (Coburn & Stein 2006:26; McLaughlin 2002:110). Collective learning opportunities increase exposure to new ideas and provide access to additional sources of feedback and referents for self-assessment (Smylie & Perry 2005:310). Open communication and collective examination of beliefs and assumptions that encourages critical reflection and innovation are essential.

In Coburn and Stein's (2006:28) view, communities of practice could support teachers in moving from working in isolation under a strong norm of privacy, towards planning lessons together, observing each other's instruction, and watching and jointly analysing videotapes of their classrooms. By establishing a collaborative culture (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:385) teachers are exposed to new ideas about curriculum and instruction. This enables them to expand their knowledge and improve their classroom practice (Smylie & Perry 2005:312). Laverick (2007:248) notes that mentors and role models help teachers to progress along a continuum of pedagogical expertise.

Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness, Trew, Rafferty and Sheehy (2006:219) argue that successful curriculum change in ECE requires substantial financial support, especially for additional training. However, the informational base as well as fiscal and moral supports required to sustain change are rarely available (Bascia & Hargreaves 2000:19). Bailey (2000:121-122) contends that "orphaning" of mandated programmes occurs when there are budgetary constraints. The overarching consequence of systemic constraints is teachers' increasing reluctance to try anything new. Some of the teachers in Bailey's (2000) study had enthusiastically supported the innovation, but while they were making paradigmatic shifts in their teaching, they found that they did not have the authority to bring about the kinds of structural changes necessary to realise the promise of those shifts. For these teachers, the process of change was frustrating because they were unable "to go all the way with the changes".

Paradoxically, Ryan and Ackerman (2005:3) argue that supports alone can be insufficient, especially when key implementers do not generate the motivation required to comply with a new policy. Furthermore, innovation takes time and energy, increases normal workload and decreases competence during initial implementation (Fullan 1991). Although policymakers rely on policy "tools" to increase motivation, the use of mandates is the most common form of policy implementation.

Such policy tools assume that individuals have the capacity to take action, but "will not be positively motivated" to take the action unless they are influenced, encouraged or coerced by tangible pay-offs. Nevertheless, the mere provision of pressures and supports does not guarantee intended outcomes, although evidence suggests that there is more likelihood of implementation when these policy tools are employed. Ryan and Ackerman (2005) note that ECE teacher development programmes have benefited from the combination of "pressure and support"—pressure through advocacy and strong leadership/expertise and support through financial resources. Significantly, Ryan and Ackerman's (2005:9) study revealed that one-third of the teachers enrolled in some kind of professional development programme intended to leave their positions once they had completed the programme.

In South Africa, the White Paper 5 signals the government's intention to establish one Grade R class per school, meaning that teachers receive very limited opportunities for peer support. Therefore, while the literature on professional development notes that teachers require collegial support, South African Grade R teachers often work in isolation. Besides peer support, ECE teachers need outside evaluators such as district officials, to visit their classrooms and provide feedback on their teaching (Clark & Huber 2005:182). Although ongoing support should be available from departmental officials, Phatudi, Biersteker and Joubert (2008) found that this capacity is very limited since officials are not necessarily familiar with Grade R practice.

The role of the district is crucial. Individual schools can become highly innovative for short periods of time without the district, but they cannot stay innovative without the district action to establish the conditions for continuous and long-term improvement (Noble & Macfarlane 2005).

2.8.1.4 The Role of the Principal as Instructional Leader in Fostering Curriculum Change

The success of change implementation has much to do with the quality of leadership; there is a need to develop effective leadership, particularly instructional leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi 2006:202). Similarly, Rous (2004:267) stresses that instructional leadership is an important administrative function. In-school support positively affects teachers' commitment and effectiveness, especially if teachers view the principal as being strong, with a clear vision for the school (Day 2008:252). In a study on how teachers cope with educational change, Kilgallon *et al.* (2008:27) found that principals play a significant role in ECE teachers' coping abilities. Principals offer teachers opportunities for professional development, facilitate networking with professional colleagues, involve them

in decision-making processes within the school, and keep them abreast of impending changes. Participants in Kilgallon *et al.*'s (2008) study also reported that their principals encouraged them to extend their role beyond the classroom and take on administrative and collaborative roles in the change process. Similarly, Rosenholtz (1989:430) argues that school principals play a pivotal role in fostering collaboration among colleagues.

However, principals should not only support teachers, they also need to be visible and be seen to appreciate teachers' efforts. According to Rosenholtz (1989:427) certain organisational features of schools could make a significant contribution to teachers' efficacy, their psychological rewards, and hence to students' learning. Such organisational features include values and patterns of interaction between teachers and principals. In particular, principals shape the organisational conditions under which teachers work, as well as the definitions of teaching they come to acquire. Moreover, principals should facilitate frequent opportunities for discussion among colleagues about the school's instructional priorities, regularly monitor teaching and learning, and provide feedback and assistance to teachers (Rosenholtz 1989:429).

Rous (2004:267) asserts that instructional leadership in ECE encompasses providing specific direction in curriculum design, implementing supervision of classroom instruction, and offering opportunities for curriculum development and professional development. Instructional leaders therefore influence teachers through (i) their ideology and their assumptions about early learning experiences for children; (ii) interpreting research and theory for teachers; and (iii) playing a critical role in assisting in reflection on curricular issues and instructional dilemmas. In a study conducted by Hertberg-Davis and Brighton (2006:90), it was found that principals encourage teachers to change by exhibiting "critical support, desire for change, belief that change is possible, and long-term vision of implementation." These authors recommend that the buy-in and enthusiasm of principals should be secured prior to introducing any curriculum change to teachers, since teachers take their cues on how to respond to change from their principals (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton 2006:100). Principals should be the first to attend training and then support teachers in their school by providing ongoing mentoring and coaching (like a master trainer).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006:222) conducted a study on the effects of school leadership on students, teachers and their classroom practices. These authors found that principals had significant effects on teachers' classroom practices, but not on student achievement:

Although principals positively influenced teachers' motivation, capacity and work settings, there was a gulf between "practices that are 'changed' and practices that actually lead to greater pupil learning; the potency of leadership for increasing student learning hinges on the specific classroom practices which leaders stimulate, encourage, and promote.

2.8.2 Internal Factors

Much of the existing literature focuses on how affective factors such as beliefs motivation and job satisfaction, influence teachers' responses to curriculum change (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008; Day 2008; Fullan 1993; Hargreaves 2005; Hsueh & Barton 2005; Levin 1998; Noble & Macfarlane 2005; Richardson & Placier 2002). These studies found that teachers often experience negative emotions such as fear and anxiety that influence their responses to curriculum change.

Day (2008:244) argues that there are significant negative consequences of reform on teachers' work lives and well-being. A cognitive socio-psychological theory of emotions should therefore be employed to help researchers understand how individual teachers perceive themselves and their work, and how they experience their context (Van Veen & Sleegers 2006:108). Bailey (2000:123) cites empirical evidence that the context and process of mandated change often leads to the marginalisation of teachers, especially when it is not rooted in their realities and expertise. Because of curriculum change, teachers doubt their efficacy and their moral commitment to implementation may be undermined. Bailey (2000) believes that disregarding teacher demoralisation, as well as teachers' knowledge about real and sustained change, underlies implementation failure.

2.8.2.1 Beliefs and Attitudes

Since there is an integral relationship between beliefs and actions, teachers' beliefs play a major role in their decision making about curriculum and instructional tasks (Keys & Bryan 2001:635). Similarly, Wilcox-Herzog and Ward (2004:2) view teachers' beliefs as a screen through which behaviour is enacted. However, teachers form beliefs during their own schooling that create filters through which they process subsequent education and teaching experiences. These authors (Wilcox-Herzog & Ward 2004) argue that assessing teachers' beliefs and interactions could be useful in guiding them toward practice that is more appropriate with young children, because beliefs inform intentions. Moreover, intentions are a mediating factor between beliefs and actions and are the best predictor of eventual behaviour.

Teachers' beliefs are not only targets of change; they also affect change by serving as a filter through which teachers interpret new information, including curriculum content and recommendations for change (Collopy 2003:288). As teachers attempt to implement instructional practices in their classrooms, they may develop new beliefs which are essential ingredients for successful curriculum change (Mager, Myers, Maresca, Rupp & Armstrong 1986:344). Terwel (2005:660) argues that meaningful curriculum change requires new skills, behaviours and beliefs. Policy makers need to be mindful that beliefs and practices are grounded in the social and educational contexts in which teachers work (Smith & Shepard 1988:308; Van Driel, Bulte & Verloop 2007:119). Beliefs are like emotional attitudes—one can believe a proposition without realising it and there are unconscious or repressed beliefs. Furthermore, beliefs are distinct from knowledge (Smith & Shepard 1988:309).

According to Hsueh and Barton (2005:179), teachers' beliefs, values and professional behaviour play an influential role in children's early experiences at ECE centres. Differences in teachers' engagement levels and their impact on beliefs and behaviours in the classroom occur in four combinations: (i) high engagement and high impact, (ii) high engagement and moderate impact, (iii) moderate engagement and moderate impact and (iv) low engagement and low impact. For example, when teachers' philosophies contradict the assumptions underlying the practice being encouraged, the result is low engagement and low impact (Richardson & Placier 2002:909). Similarly, Fink and Stoll (2005:37) urge policymakers to pay attention to the personal and biographical influences on teachers and their work. These authors regard teachers as strategic thinkers since they make decisions on a daily basis as to what is ideal and possible in their specific contexts. They further recommend that understanding how teachers' lives affect their work would unlock how teachers relate to educational change

Paese (1996:11-13) notes that teaching behaviours are shaped by a teacher's attitudes. However, empirical evidence cited by Paese (1996) indicates that many of the effects of teacher education on attitudes and beliefs are temporary. As novice teachers are socialised into the profession, they often abandon the innovative practices and progressive attitudes developed during their pre-service experience. Paese (1996) regards teachers' sense of efficacy as a multidimensional construct, since it relates to their ability to bring about positive change in their learners and to motivate them to learn. Teachers' beliefs in their personal efficacy are positively related to their ability to maintain a secure classroom

climate, support learners' initiatives and meet the diverse needs of their learners (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:384). Teaching efficacy is defined as the belief that learners are capable of learning, regardless of their home environment, motivation or context.[16]

Day (2008:244) notes that accountability demands have challenged teachers' substantive identities, threatened their sense of agency and resilience, and challenged their capacities to maintain motivation, efficacy and commitment. The negative consequences of curriculum change impact on teachers' work lives and well-being. In addition, the changing definition of professional performance often conflicts with the daily practices and professional orientation of teachers. According to Perryman (2007:182), few teachers thrive under a performative regime, although managing change is clearly part of being a teacher (Mager *et al.* 1986:353). Mentor (in Mentor, Hutchinson & Ross 2002:2) found that curriculum change is directly responsible for the low morale in the teaching profession. The new assessment and accountability requirements of the curriculum were cited by Mentor (2002) as treats to teacher retention. In addition, teacher autonomy is one of the main tenets of professionalism and is essential for job satisfaction (Wilson & Loewenberg Ball 1996:128; Zech, *et al.* 2000:215). In England, Kwon (2002:8) notes that as government intervention in the curriculum has increased, so teachers' autonomy has decreased.

In a study on how change influences teachers' beliefs, Day (2008:257-258) found that change has a negative impact of teachers' commitment to their work. He recommends that policymakers should address the associations between teachers' well-being, commitment, resilience and effectiveness by providing more robust, comprehensive support structures. In addition, strategies should be developed for sustaining commitment in initial and continuing professional development programmes, which should differentiate between the needs of teachers in different phases of their professional lives. National organisations and schools particularly need to support teachers in the later stages of their career.

On a more positive note, Hsu (2008:268) found that professional development of ECE teachers in Taiwan led to the development of a positive self-concept and that teachers felt more satisfied with themselves. Most notably these teachers felt more confident to address parents' concerns about their children's learning. If teachers can be convinced of their "personal purpose" in relation to organisational change, they are more likely to support it

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[16] Paese (1996:13) contends that "context" includes the physical school context, affective school context, physical classroom context, affective classroom context, as well as student behaviour.

(Fullan 1993:14). Similarly, Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008:54) argue that teachers' willingness to innovate depends on their feeling supported and valued.

Since teachers are often only involved in the implementation of the curriculum change, not in the design thereof, they have very limited control over the actual improvement process (Van Veen & Sleegers 2006:86) and consequently experience change as being "extremely difficult and painful" (Richardson & Placier 2002:906).

2.8.2.2 Motivation

Motivation to implement curriculum change is closely related to a teacher's personal interpretations and emotions regarding change (Sleegers *et al.*, 2002:90). According to Torquati, Raikes and Huddleston-Cases (2007:262), better compensated ECE professionals are motivated to produce higher quality care and education. These authors have illustrated how motivated teachers positively impact ECE programme delivery. Since the turnover within the ECE sector remains high, teacher motivation is receiving more attention (Torquati, Raikes & Huddleston-Cases 2007:262).

Work motivation and commitment have less to do with personal qualities people bring to the workplace than the design and management of tasks within it (Rosenholtz, 1989:423). For teachers to be motivated to implement curriculum change, they require knowledge of the success of their efforts. In particular, teachers are strongly motivated by the academic success of their students and external recognition from colleagues, parents and instructional leaders because this makes their work more meaningful (Rosenholtz 1989:425).

Teachers are demotivated as a result of the "climate of accountability for quality outcomes" (Woodrow & Brennan 1999:78). In addition, the loss of professional autonomy and discretion associated with curriculum change, negatively impacts teachers' motivation (Rosenholtz 1989:424). Day (2008:247) notes that excessive workload as a result of curriculum change has a detrimental influence on teachers' motivation and commitment. In particular, teachers are demotivated due to the negative consequences of curriculum change on their work lives and well being, especially if they feel challenged to maintain a work-life balance. A feeling of career stagnation causes detachment and a loss of motivation (Day 2008:248).

Considering the importance of teacher knowledge in the implementation of the curriculum, Keys (2007:57) developed a "knowledge filter model" to promote change in teachers' beliefs. He believes that in order to implement curriculum change, teachers' need to be motivated to connect their new knowledge to their existing knowledge (Keys 2007:57). This requires professional dialogue, reflective teaching and coaching as well as communities of learning. Similarly Day (2008:244) and Rosenholtz (1989:430) found that teachers' sense of efficacy is enhanced by support and trust from their instructional leaders and colleagues. This confirms that external factors impact on internal dynamics.

2.8.2.3 Job satisfaction

ECE teachers rank among the most poorly paid professionals since in most developing countries these programmes are mainly privately or community funded (Wallet 2006:34). Yetmar, Uhlenberg, May and Trew (2006:270) found that the extremely low wages paid to ECE teachers resulted in qualified staff leaving the ECE centre to work in local factories. Staff turnover had a direct effect on programme quality, causing a downward spiral. Papanastasiou and Zembylas (2006) studied job satisfaction of Grade R teachers in Cyprus and found that teachers located in public programmes were paid nearly three times the salaries of private ECE teachers. Conversely, the environment of private Grade R programmes was far better resourced compared to public Grade R programmes.

2.9 Summary and Conclusion

Awareness of the importance of early childhood education is increasing in developing countries. However, developing countries are far more focused on increasing access to ECE programmes than on the quality of such programmes (Myers 2006:7). Unlike developed countries, accountability demands are not institutionalised, although teachers are still held accountable for the success (or otherwise) of children's learning. Myers (2006) and Jambunathan and Caulfield (2008:257) note that there is a dearth of research on ECE in developing countries. The literature on curriculum change in ECE is particularly sparse in terms of teachers' responses to curriculum change in developing country contexts.

There is a significant gap in the literature on how internal factors influence South African ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change. No ECE studies in South Africa have examined this phenomenon. In a study conducted by Hall, Altman, Nkomo, Peltzer and Zuma (2005:1) on (non-ECE) teachers' job satisfaction in South Africa it was found that

curriculum change contributes significantly to teachers "frequently considering leaving their profession". Since the mandated curriculum has an impact on teachers' autonomy, it negatively affects job satisfaction among ECE teachers (Bottery 2006; Hacker & Rowe 1998). Hargreaves (2005:12) deserves credit for enhancing our understanding of the emotional dimensions of change since emotions are an integral part of academic learning and reasoning. Emotionally intelligent teachers have clear emotional goals for and strong emotional bonds with their learners and are therefore more likely to respond to change in positive ways. This desirable outcome demands avoiding strategies, leadership styles and work conditions that create negative emotions such as hopelessness, guilt and shame because these reduce teachers' sense of efficacy and their ability to provide quality education for learners.

The amount of time and energy curriculum change requires impacts on the emotional lives of teachers (Hargreaves 2005:3; Van Veen & Sleegers 2006:85). Since teachers are often only involved in the implementation of the curriculum change, not in the design thereof, they have very limited control over the actual improvement process (Van Veen & Sleegers 2006:86) and consequently they experience change as "extremely difficult and painful" (Richardson & Placier 2002:906). This "sense of fear has replaced a sense of possibility" as a driver of change in education (Levin 1998:131). Teachers are unable to react to calls for change if these threaten their sense of competence and skills, and might eventually result in loss of self-esteem and identity. In examining accountability demands, Perryman (2007:182) found that teachers experience a panoply of negative emotions such as "fear", "stress", "huge panic", "loss of control" and "resentment".

According to Hargreaves (1998:89), when curriculum changes are introduced, teachers commonly experience feelings of uncertainty, inadequacy and may even feel that their professional identity is at stake. Some teachers experience "stress, burnout, loss of enjoyment and motivation and withdrawal from the job as a whole" (Hargreaves 1998:69). Such personal interpretations of change are highly significant since they connect to the issue of teachers' emotions, which is an integral part of teaching (Sleegers *et al.* 2002:90). Hargreaves (1998:93) asserts that teaching involves significant emotional labour because the tasks of teaching are emotional and motivational, not simply technical. Wolf (2002:118) argues that enforcing curriculum change destroys the trust that should underpin any professional relationship. According to Noble and Macfarlane (2005:55) and Fenech *et al.* (2008:1), ECE teachers' capacity is significantly affected by a marked increase in burnout.

This is attributed to the highly romanticised images of childhood in ECE teacher preparation programmes that do not withstand the complexity, uncertainty and insecurity of working with young children and their families in the current social context.

McLaughlin (1987) proposes that external factors (professional development, resources and support) and internal factors (beliefs, motivation and job satisfaction) influence how teachers respond to curriculum change. But the relative importance of the internal vis-a-vis the external factors is determined largely by teachers' contexts. In developed countries, teachers generally have greater access to external factors. However, these are often overshadowed by the internal factors, especially when these are negative. In developing countries, much of the emphasis of policy and research is placed on external factors, to the exclusion of internal factors.

In South Africa, in terms of external factors, we seem to be following the pattern of developing countries, with great emphasis on the establishment or provision of infrastructure and support structures. However, as far as internal factors are concerned, the lack of research makes it impossible to say with certainty whether this also follows the pattern of developing countries. Against this background, I will seek to investigate how Grade R teachers respond to curriculum change.

Chapter 3: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Understanding ECE Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

3.1 Introduction

The literature on education policy implementation highlights the role of teachers in any effort to improve instruction and conceptualises the relationship between teachers and curriculum change as a process of fidelity, adaptation or implementation. The success of change is therefore largely a function of teachers' responses to curriculum demands (Mager, Myers, Maresca, Rupp & Armstrong 1986:344) which are shaped by their individual conceptions of teaching and learning, knowledge and skills, and beliefs and interests (Smylie & Perry 2005:318). Therefore, the culture of teaching enables or limits curriculum change (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:378). These authors would agree with Keys and Bryan (2001:635) that teachers are active creators who make instructional decisions based on a complex system of beliefs and knowledge.

Teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning is the strongest determining factor in their educational practice. According to Hsu (2002:58) teachers' knowledge is formulated in concrete and context-related terms and develops from their experience and interpretations. In addition, teachers' knowledge is based on personal practical knowledge and is reflected in their professional attitudes.

Spillane, Reiser and Gomez (2006:47) note that even when teachers adopt policy implementation, failure may still result. This may be attributed to the complexity of human sense-making processes, rather than poor policy clarity or deliberate attempts to ignore or resist policy. From a cognitive perspective, implementation depends on local implementing agents' understanding of policy demands and the extent to which policy demands reinforce or alter their practice (Reiser and Gomez 2006:48). Therefore, a recurring question related to curriculum change is how to ensure that schools demonstrate significant changes in instructional practice. Rowan and Miller (2007:252) examine two conflicting strategies of implementation: (i) programmed approaches, which seek to promote conformity to a well-defined set of instructional practices to produce faithful implementation, and (ii) adaptive approaches to curriculum change, which rely strongly on enhanced coaching and implementation support by principals at school sites. However,

principals play a key role concerning implementation asymmetry because of their inability to monitor teachers' work.

3.2 Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Curriculum Change

The literature reveals several theoretical approaches to the study of curriculum change. Bailey (2000:119) contends that educational change efforts are underpinned by particular theories about the nature of teaching. Curriculum change is prevalent when society is changing rapidly, when educational practice is under pressure to respond, and differing reform ideologies compete with each other for influence. Although four conceptions of teaching are activated by policymakers: technical, intellectual, socio-emotional and socio-political, they are usually overlooked.

Change is a far more complex process in schools than had earlier been assumed (Mager *et al.* 1986:346) specifically because politically motivated reforms have neglected the problems of implementation (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:377; Jansen 1998:323). In response to the implementation problem, educational change theorists have developed three models (Rowan & Miller 2007:253). The first model, "cultural control", occurs within local professional communities. Teachers are encouraged to discover effective practices and they have the discretion to adapt these practices to suit their needs. The second model, "professional control", relies heavily on socialisation to professional standards by expert authorities to promote implementation of the favoured instructional regime. The third model, "procedural control", occurs within professional development programmes and relies heavily on scripted instruction to secure faithful implementation.

Richardson and Placier (2002:906) note that phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches could be useful in understanding how individuals make sense of and contribute to the situations in which they live and work. Such approaches could replace earlier empirical-rational change strategies that have been unsuccessful. The new thinking constitutes a normative/re-educative approach to change, which assumes that change may be enhanced through teachers' reflection on beliefs and practices (Richardson & Placier 2002:906). According to Ryan and Ackerman (2005:1), pressure and support are recurring themes in the school reform literature. Teachers as policy actors require motivation and adequate assistance, such as updated knowledge or financial resources, to implement curriculum change successfully. Furthermore, teachers use their prior knowledge and experience to make sense of policy. Policy to practice connections are

mediated by teacher sense which produces qualitatively different understandings among teachers, thus leading them to *ignore*, *resist*, *adopt* or *modify* policy (Spillane & Burch 2006:95).

Pinar (1999) contends that the thoughtful practice of everyday educational life requires a theoretical understanding of teachers' practice.

> So understood, curriculum becomes intensely historical, political, racial, gendered, phenomenological, postmodern, autobiographical, aesthetic, theological, and international. When we say that curriculum is a site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and the world, we are engaged in a theoretically enriched practice. When we say that curriculum is an extraordinarily complicated conversation, we are underscoring human agency and the volitional character of human action (Pinar 1999: xvii).

3.3 Research on Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

My research utilises the relational theory of change which enhances our understanding of how teachers address multiple voices in their work (Leander & Osborne 2008:44) in considering the demands made by parents, school principals, colleagues, departmental officials, policy makers and the public. Rowan and Miller (2007:256) draw upon cognitive theories of implementation to enhance our understanding of how teachers make decisions when they interpret and respond to change. Similarly, Paris (1993:15) notes that "teacher agency" provides an alternative conception of teachers and curriculum, since it involves personal initiative and intellectual engagement:

> Teacher agency therefore involves initiating the creation or critique of curriculum, an awareness of alternatives to established curriculum practices, the autonomy to make informed curriculum choices, an investment of self, and ongoing interaction with others (Paris 1993:16).

Paris' (1993) argument is extended by Bailey (2000) who notes that getting teachers deeply involved in envisioning and managing change means abandoning the idea of a preconceived outcome, as well as the notion that there is one best way to teach. It should also not be assumed that enough is known about particular school cultures or the needs of individual classrooms. It is therefore impossible to design a one-size-fits-all programme, which will repair the ills of school and society. This realisation may enhance our understanding of why some teachers resist research results or policy content. However, it

should also not be assumed that teachers have all the answers, or that local problems cannot be informed by a broader perspective and a more comprehensive knowledge base (Bailey 2000).

Teachers therefore play a pivotal role in school reform and are essential to the success of curriculum change. However, when teachers are viewed as technicians who implement carefully designed plans using teacher-proof materials prepared by 'experts', their effectiveness is limited. The "top-down process of mandating change sacrifices teacher autonomy in favour of managerial efficiency" (Bailey 2000:120). Such an approach essentially discourages teachers from developing the abilities to set goals, develop skills, respond to feedback, and become engaged in improving their practice. Instead, they are encouraged to become dependent on the latest innovation, alienating them from a sense of their own expertise and professionalism:

> While teachers should be asked, and be asking, the questions that drive educational reform, the process of mandating change is not in their hands. Even when a new curriculum is presumably teacher and student centred, teachers are seldom given the opportunity to help conceptualise the programme that they are expected to teach. There is neither time nor support for building the personal philosophies or communal reflection that might support teachers to work more effectively (Bailey 2000).

Much of the existing literature focuses on how affective factors such as motivation, job satisfaction and emotions of change, influence teachers' responses to curriculum change (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008; Day 2008; Fullan 1993; Hargreaves 2005; Hsueh & Barton 2005; Levin 1998; Noble & Macfarlane 2005; Richardson & Placier 2002). The listed studies found that teachers often experience negative emotions such as fear and anxiety which influence their responses to curriculum change. Day (2008:244) argues that there are significant negative consequences of reform on teachers' work lives and well-being. Tensions are therefore inevitable if individual teachers' perceived needs for self-improvement differ from system demands on them for changes in curriculum and teaching approaches (Ashdown 2002:116).

A cognitive socio-psychological theory of emotions should therefore be employed to help researchers understand how individual teachers perceive themselves and their work, and how they experience their context (Van Veen & Sleegers 2006:108). Bailey (2000:123) cites empirical evidence that the context and process of mandated change often leads to

the marginalisation of teachers, especially when it is not rooted in their realities and expertise. Sometimes, because of the demands of curriculum change, teachers doubt their efficacy and thus their moral commitment to implementation is undermined. Bailey (2000) believes that disregarding teacher demoralisation, as well as teachers' knowledge about real and sustained change, underlies implementation failure.

When teachers are conceived as students of curriculum, who bring considerable intellect and skills to curriculum problem solving, they do not merely receive and implement curricula created by others (Darling-Hammond 2005). Instead, they make reasoned, self-conscious curriculum decisions in response to their evaluation of the needs and interests of their learners and a shared commitment to educational excellence.

Crump (2005:2) asserts that teachers need a clear and well-motivated reason for change, especially when it comes to the curriculum. If teachers disagree with the need for change, they often respond by resisting the change (Leander & Osborne 2008:28). Policy makers therefore need to be mindful that policy is not so much implemented as it is re-invented at each level of the system (Darling-Hammond 2005:363). Bell and Stevenson (2004:20) describe the "multiplicity of interpretations" as the effect of multiple readers' "decoding" of policy texts, since each reader has his/her own context, history and values. In addition, policy responses are shaped by the wider structural factors that have a cogent effect on individuals' capacity to influence and interpret policy. Teachers therefore rarely simply adopt and implement the curriculum; they have an active relationship with the curriculum and subsequently adapt it to suit their teaching practices (Paris 1993:36).

While policy change occurs because of collective action, it is essential to understand how individuals come together, organise themselves and constrain or promote change. Schlager provides the following insights into individual decision-making and action:

> The parts of the inner world that are empirically verified are a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions. Belief systems, not characteristics of the situation determine individual choices and actions. Belief systems, as well as limited information-processing abilities, affect how individuals acquire, use, and incorporate information (Schlager 1999:240).

The above viewpoint enriches our understanding of curriculum change by highlighting that the manner in which teachers respond to curriculum change is related to their information-processing capabilities.

Teachers adopt strategies and respond to curriculum change in order to improve their situation, in the sense of making them feel "better off" (Schlager 1999:241-243). They are constrained and guided by norms of behaviour, which affect how they perceive alternatives. The context of the situation and the information that is available at a particular point in time have a strong influence on how teachers respond. Teachers' preferences are relatively fixed and are activated by how they interpret their context (Schlager 1999:243). This combination of preferences and context offers a point of choice, resulting in action or response. Teachers' belief systems and preferences could change incrementally over time if they are persuaded to accept others' arguments, or as they gather information through their personal experience.

Since this study is focused on individual teachers, Ostrom's (1999:41) contention that individuals directly influence the physical world as they make operational decisions is pertinent. Ostrom suggests therefore, that the action arena should be utilised to analyse, predict and explain behaviour within institutional arrangements. This approach involves making assumptions about how and what the participants in my study value; what resources, information and beliefs they have; what their information-processing capabilities are; and what internal mechanisms they use to decide upon strategies (Ostrom 1999:44). In addition, teachers' engagement with curriculum change requires commitment and motivation to implement change in order to gain a sense of efficacy (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:380).

According to the fidelity perspective, it is presumed that teachers faithfully implement a curriculum designed by outside experts (Ryan 2004). Consequently, research from this orientation focuses on evaluating the extent to which a curriculum is implemented as intended and on the factors that hinder or support implementation. The majority of studies on ECE curriculum change have presumed a fidelity approach and focused on evaluating both the short and long-term impact of specific curriculum models (Ryan 2004:665). However, these studies do not focus specifically on the daily interactions of teachers as they practice the curriculum. By assuming fidelity, these studies provide insights into exemplary programmes, but little information on the kinds of practices and teaching actions that contribute to these outcomes. More often than not, teachers do not comply with top-down curriculum change. Instead, teachers either *resist* implementing the curriculum change, or *adapt* and shape the curriculum according to their particular contexts and the learners they teach.

McLaughlin (1987) notes that the successful implementation of change necessarily requires adaptation rather than "pure" implementation. Mutual adaptation occurs when proposals are adapted to accommodate local conditions and local conditions are adapted to accommodate reform proposals. While the mutual adaptation and fidelity approaches examine the ways teachers work and respond to a set of externally developed curriculum materials, the enactment perspective views curriculum as an emergent process created jointly by learners and teachers. This perspective views teachers as curriculum makers. Curriculum change is a process of observing over time how the curriculum is created and shaped by teachers through everyday classroom experiences (Ryan 2004:666). Smylie and Perry (2005:318) cite evidence that curriculum control alters the basic nature of teachers' classroom practice and while teachers do make some accommodations, change in practice is limited and occurs at the margins.

Referring to recent implementation research, Spillane and Burch (2006:93) contend that elementary teachers' response to the policy environment varies depending on the subject. For example, teachers' conceptions of themselves as teachers differ from languages, to the arts, to mathematics, thus also influencing how they respond to policy. The institutional environments, the activity formats teachers use, their conceptions of knowledge and instruction, the extent to which teachers cooperate with one another, and the ways leaders operate to manage instruction all depend on the subject area:

> Academic subjects organise instruction, shaping how the technical core operates and connects with the institutional environment even in elementary schools. Not only do norms of subject matter pervade schools, but they also work in and through policy making and governance at other levels. Implementation research suggests that the policy environment connects unevenly with instructional practice (Spillane & Burch 2006:94).

In addition, there appears to be a "loose" coupling of policy and practice around issues of teaching strategies and "tighter" coupling around issues of academic content (Spillane & Burch 2006:96). Teachers in particular are active agents in the development of the common meaning systems and symbolic processes that build up within and around particular aspects of the "technical core" (Spillane & Burch 2006:100).

Teachers need to balance multiple issues, including a host of new demands, their own ideologies, and past pedagogical practices, as they attempt to implement reforms. Therefore, school change is rarely a linear process, and variation in the implementation of

curriculum change is inevitable. Even policies regarded as "straight-forward" are often implemented very differently across localities, schools, and classrooms. This variation could be explained either in terms of the flexibility of policies or new curricula, or as a lack of accountability. In addition, teachers are strongly influenced by what they believe is required to practically respond to their students' needs and as a result, they adapt policies accordingly (Datnow & Castellano 2000:779). Policymakers should encourage teachers to identify school level problems and consider how various reforms could solve these problems. Such a critical inquiry process can play a meaningful role in selecting the most appropriate reform, creating teacher buy-in, and promoting long-term teacher development and empowerment for change. Policymakers should also consider how the process of building consensus for change among teachers could be more genuine.

Ryan (2004) argues that the tensions between policy and pedagogy have direct implications for practice. This opinion relates to the assumptions being made in the early childhood arena that curriculum policy can be pedagogically motivated. Instead of realising that any policy is dependent on teacher buy-in, the current emphasis in the USA on a standardised curriculum through the use of models is an attempt to bypass teachers and their professional interpretations of pedagogy. Paradoxically, although empirically validated curriculum frameworks can be justified given the underqualified nature of the ECE teaching workforce, it is also likely that these teachers will adapt the curriculum to suit their needs, but in doing so, may possibly implement less appropriate practice.

The main difference between ECE teachers in developed countries, as opposed to those in developing countries, is the voluminous academic literature in relation to standards and accountability. Teachers in developed countries are working in an "audit society" (Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson & Goodfellow 2008:2). In many cases, such ECE teachers have a high degree of access to professional development opportunities, resources and ongoing support which influences their capacity to implement curriculum change.

Although teachers do not have a choice between change and non-change, they do have a choice about how they respond and they have considerable discretion as to whether they implement change in their classrooms (Richardson & Placier 2002:909). For teachers to change their practices, they must believe in the process in which they are engaged (Crump 2005:9). Teachers either assimilate teaching strategies into their current repertoire with little substantive change, or they reject suggested changes altogether (Penuel *et al*. 2007:929). Teachers therefore filter policy demands and messages from professional

development about teaching through their own interpretive frames (Penuel *et al.* 2007:931). In addition, the social context of schooling has a strong influence on teachers' interpretive frames and thus their decisions about how to enact (or resist) particular innovations. Consequently:

> If teachers perceive the demands to be aligned with their district's goals and with the social pressures within their schools, they are more likely to perceive professional development focused on a particular innovation as congruent with their own goals and thus commit to adopting or adapting the innovation (Penuel *et al.* 2007:931).

Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008:62) argue that an analysis of teachers' complex and creative responses to curriculum change shows that each teacher copes with change in his/her own way. Each teacher is therefore involved in a unique experience (Mager *et al.* 1986:352). This diversity reflects differences in the way teachers give meaning to the demands made on them. Teachers' receptivity towards curriculum change depends to a large degree on their level of involvement and buy-in to the change effort. In particular, ECE teachers can respond to curriculum change by pushing or sustaining curriculum change, resisting, or actively subverting change. Teacher agency in curriculum change can be passive or active – teachers could decide to leave the profession or on a more positive note, use the reform as an opportunity for new career prospects. Furthermore, since teachers' ideologies are rooted in their life experiences and interactions, teachers' responses to change can be deeply embedded within a larger societal context (Datnow & Castellano 2000:777). It is therefore essential to focus on schools as units of change, as well as the external communities of which the schools form a part.

Lindblad (1990:169) notes that teachers respond to curriculum change in a number of different ways: (a) "the alienated" teacher regards him/herself as a victim of external forces of change; (b) "the independent" teacher believes that he/she should decide how to respond to externally imposed change; (c) "the spectator" feels that vested interests are inherent in the demand for change, and that change is imposed on teachers; (d) "the loyal official" feels that the reasons for change are very reasonable and that it is his/her duty to participate; (e) "the pioneer" believes that there is a mutual correspondence between the changes demanded and his/her existing teaching practices; and (f) "the partisan" feels that there are vested interests behind the demand for change, has chosen sides and decided to use the experiential scheme as an opportunity to do what he/she regards as right.

3.4 Conceptual Framework for this Study

According to existing research, teachers respond to curriculum change in the following ways: they (i) *ignore*; (ii) *resist*; (iii) *adopt*; or (iv) *adapt* the official curriculum / the change (Lindblad 1990; Richardson & Placier 2002).

Table 3.1: Conceptual Framework

		Attitude towards change		
		Negative	**Positive**	
Knowledge & Skill	**high**	resist	adapt	**high**
		ignore	adopt	
	low			**low**

As the table indicates, this framework brings together the context, characteristics, beliefs and practices of ECE teachers, which shape their responses to curriculum change. Since these factors are complex and dynamic, teachers' positioning (and their ability to move from one position to another) on the matrix depends on the levels of support they receive, their professional development opportunities, their motivation to change, and on the "point they have reached in their own lives and careers" (Hargreaves 2005b:ix). Consequently, change rarely occurs as a linear process and variation in curriculum implementation is therefore inevitable (Datnow & Castellano 2000:779). I therefore expect that the teachers in my case study might respond to curriculum change in the ways described below, as I discuss each of the four possible actions.

3.4.1 Ignoring Curriculum Change

Many studies, such as those conducted by Chirume (2007:45) in Zimbabwe, Mweemba and Chilala (2001:36) in Zambia, and Samuel (2004:162) in India found that limited resources and inadequate professional development constitute significant barriers to effective curriculum implementation. How teachers respond to and implement the official curriculum is significantly influenced by their experiences within the organisational culture of schools (Papanastasiou & Zembylas 2006:150). In addition, most developing countries fund ECE programmes at a lower rate than formal schooling (Kamerman 2006; Porteus 2004).

In developing countries, the emphasis of ECE programmes is to improve the survival, growth and development of young children, prevent the occurrence of risks and ameliorate the negative effects of risks. Most are directed toward disadvantaged children (Engle *et al.* 2007:229).

Although a major objective of reform in Nepal is institutionalisation of a school support system, 61% of teachers reported that their classes were never supervised, 19% were supervised once a year and 8.4% twice a year (Khaniya & Williams 2004:316). Therefore this aspect of curriculum change was largely ignored.

Montero-Smith *et al.* (2007:229) note that awareness of child development is increasing in developing countries. However, developing countries are far more focused on increasing access to ECE programmes than on the quality of such programmes (Myers 2006:7). Unlike developed countries, accountability demands are not institutionalised, although teachers are held accountable for children's learning. Since very limited research has been conducted on ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change, studies on teachers' responses in different education sectors (not just ECE) are referred to below.

Myers (2006) and Jambunathan and Caulfield (2008:257) note that there is a dearth of research on curriculum change in ECE in developing countries, particularly on teachers' responses to curriculum change. Sorour's (1997:643) study in Egypt, found that "teachers are the most important factor in making reform work, as long as they understand and assimilate it, are convinced by it and—most importantly—benefit from it". Mohammed and Harlech-Jones' (2008:48) examination of implementation failures in Pakistan, emphasises the need to understand the realities of the lives and professional environments of teachers as the implementers of curriculum change. Similarly, Cisneros-Cohernour, Merchant and Moreno's (1999:8) study on curriculum change in Mexico, notes that the design of the change had failed to consider the capacity of teachers or the context of implementation.

In 2000, Kenya introduced a mandated curriculum, which promotes active learning and play. Despite this, ECE teachers are teaching reading, writing and mathematics skills and using formal methods. ECE teachers felt compelled to ignore the guidelines because parents demand that their children be taught to read and write before entering Grade 1 (UNESCO Nairobi 2005:30). According to Cisneros-Cohernour, Moreno and Cisneros (2000), teachers face a dilemma when the curriculum emphasises values that are opposite to the cultural traditions of society. For example, the new Mexican curriculum emphasises

assertiveness and individualism. Since parents and teachers disagree about children learning these values, they elect to ignore these aspects of the curriculum (Cisneros-Cohernour *et al.* 2000:146). In addition, Cisneros-Cohernour *et al.* (2000) argue that policy borrowing has disregarded the local context.

Cleghorn and Prochner (1997:346) found that despite the Zimbabwean policy mandate for teachers to provide children with a gradual transition to school life in a play-based, child-centred environment, they ignored it. Teachers' responses were shaped by their large class sizes (average pupil:teacher ratio of 50:1), the shortage of materials to support a play-based curriculum, and pressure from departmental officials to achieve a certain amount of progress in academic subjects within the first three months of the academic year.

Significant disparities between policy and implementation emerged in Kallery and Psillos' (2002:59) study on how Grade R teachers in Greece responded to curriculum change. The teachers in their study ignored many of the official requirements. Datnow and Castellano (2000:777) found that the most common reaction of teachers to top-down mandates is to reject the change and carry on as before. This, Rowan and Miller (2007:256) argue, is the result of the failure of policy makers to obtain teacher buy-in or "moral purpose".

3.4.2 Resisting Curriculum Change

The power of teachers to resist change is substantial (Johnson 1969:146). Because most teachers perceive themselves to be professionals, they resent and resist having policymakers and administrators tell them how to teach. Johnson (1969) further notes that such resistance to directives on how to teach and the low visibility of teachers' classroom behaviour makes it possible for teachers to avoid implementing curriculum change.

Curriculum change in India is an example of a reversal of the international trend of standardised mandated curricula. India's national curriculum has changed from being centralised to what is now a decentralised arrangement (Nag, Perry, Seda & Rizvi 2007). Even so, teachers resisted the decentralised curriculum since they believed that consistency across the country was being compromised. Gvirtz (2002:454) found that Argentinian teachers' resistance of top-down, punitive supervision significantly influenced curriculum change.

If teachers believe that mandated change implies a criticism of what they are currently doing, they respond by resisting the change (Bailey 2000:12). Teachers are often recalcitrant, obstructionist, and resistant (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:386; Hargreaves 2005:11; Fink & Stoll 2005:19; McLaughlin 1987:173) when they decide not to implement mandated changes (Black and William 2005:259; Richardson & Placier 2002:906). However, Gitlin and Margonis (1995:389) argue that resistance to change could represent a quest for stability. Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008:59) and Hargreaves (2005:11) are in accord that resistance is the result of fear and loss of motivation. Similarly, Gitlin and Margonis (1995:385) note that low levels of motivation may lead to resistance. In addition, these authors argue that it is not just teachers' personal task-perception and job motivation that is at stake – they resist change because their self-esteem may be threatened. Self-doubt triggers many emotional responses and can be an immediate cause of resistance to change.

Rowan and Miller (2007:256) and Gitlin and Margonis (1995:387) argue that teachers who resist change often have insufficient time or energy, or get very little reward or support locally for exercising discretion or being innovative. Teachers need time to change their thinking, preparing for, and getting used to the change before administrators can realisticly expect them to implement it. Teachers experience feelings of uncertainty and insecurity when they doubt their capability to keep up with change (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008:60). Furthermore, imposed change may create a mismatch between teachers' personal aims and purposes, and the aims and purposes in a school. Teachers resist change when the rhetoric of the change does not match the realities of their experiences (Datnow & Castellano 2000:778; Gitlin & Margonis 1995:377). Similarly Fink and Stoll (2005) argue that:

> Teachers who are constantly bombarded by an unrelenting plethora of changes over a short time period tend to be exhausted, and find it hard to keep up their energy, enthusiasm and, ultimately, willingness for change. It is therefore not necessarily the characteristics of teachers, per se, that cause resistance and the continuity it perpetuates, but the pressures on them and the limits placed on their involvement in making the decision to change (Fink & Stoll 2005:19).

Hargreaves (2005:11) asserts that a fear of change underlies teacher resistance. It is an especially common response to change by mid-career teachers. If teachers see through the "smoke and mirrors" of educational reform, they will resist the change (Hargreaves

2005:11). According to Fink and Stoll (2005) teachers resist ill-designed and poorly implemented reforms because they have been swamped by innovations and excluded from policy discussions. Resistance is therefore viewed as a natural and predictable response. Change is usually something others do to teachers, as opposed to something that teachers themselves embrace. Datnow and Castellano (2000:794) assert that attention should be paid to teachers who resist reforms, since "unhappy groups of teachers, however small, can derail reform efforts".

Bailey (2000:115) asserts that teachers who resist change may lead others to construct a "stigma-theory" against them – an ideology that implies the inferiority and possibly even danger represented by the person who dares to be different:

> Teachers who reject the ideas of the dominant culture can become labelled as problems in their school, resistant, intransigent, and too old to change. Marginalised teachers pay a price. Resistance is hard work. Teachers also suffer as a profession in terms of the marginalisation of teacher expertise and knowledge. The stigmatisation of teachers has powerful consequences for schools: marginalised teachers may retreat to their classrooms where their own ideas can be put in place and form professional liaisons only with people who share their values and concerns. When this occurs, teachers will be less willing to work collaboratively thus essentially reducing the potential for positive educational change (Bailey 2000:116).

Teacher resistance may therefore have several causes and result in various consequences for students (Bailey 2000:117). For example, resistant teachers may protect their own interests against those of their students or parents, or they may work to undermine educational equity for students and gender equity for teachers. Teachers may be placed in the position of violating their own deeply-felt beliefs about what children in their care need when they are told how and what to teach, especially if they believe that change requires them to abandon methods and materials that had previously been successful. With mandated change, their impulse to evaluate new methods before adopting them, is often disallowed. They view this as being denied their right to professional expertise (Bailey 2000:118). According to Gitlin and Margonis (1995:379), such an approach recognises that there is often "good sense embedded in teachers' resistant acts" which may result in fundamentally altering authority relations and

intensifying work conditions.[17] These authors note that resistance can signify good sense because of teachers' well-founded understanding of their institutional circumstances. They found that teachers resisted change because accountability was linked to learning results which increased their workload. Moreover, teachers resisted the lack of consultation and contrived collegiality that accompanied the process. Gitlin and Margonis (1995:403) therefore recommend that policymakers should focus on the preconditions for change and "afford teachers the authority and time they need to teach in ways they find educationally defensible".

3.4.3 Adopting Curriculum Change

One of the criteria for successful implementation relates to the degree to which teachers' adoption of the new curriculum conforms to policy makers' views of what it should look like (Richardson & Placier 2002:907). The change strategies for curriculum adoption are therefore "limited and unimaginative" (Hargreaves 2005:9). This, Day (2008:244) argues, causes teaching to become a technical activity. According to Johnson (1969:146) schools are bureaucratic organisations and teachers are bureaucratic functionaries since they have little power to initiate change. Squire *et al.* (2003:470) note that according to this view teachers are expected to preserve the integrity of externally developed education innovation through "wholecloth adoption".

Teachers' responses to curriculum change often demonstrate the typical pattern of initial improvement followed by saturation, thereby frustrating politicians' promises of continued improvement (Black & William 2005:259). In addition, compliance might mean that the behaviour of teachers may change, but their attitudes remain the same. This situation reinforces the view that "values and attitudes are important components of motivation and performance at work" (Crump 2005:9). Penuel *et al.* (2007:927) would concur with Ryan (2004) that the adoption approach constitutes implementation fidelity. Datnow and Castellano (2000:778) argue that a series of imposed changes creates a "culture of compliance" leading teachers to want to know how to implement the required change "as painlessly as possible".

According to Day (2008:244), performance agendas coupled with continuing monitoring of teachers' effectiveness, implicitly encourage teachers to comply uncritically with curriculum change. Policy makers want teachers to be faithful to the goals of reform-based curricula

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[17] For example, Stoffels (2004) notes that curriculum change intensifies teachers' workload.

(Drake & Sherin 2006:183). Although implementation fidelity is seen as a useful goal, when it is accompanied by tight restrictions on teacher autonomy and a corresponding narrow focus on teaching practices, there are many negative side-effects, such as: (i) decreased motivation among teachers whose professionalism would be undermined; (ii) a possible misfit between a change programme's narrowly prescribed teaching regime and the larger goals of teaching and learning (Rowan & Miller 2007:253). Furthermore, simply adopting curriculum change could be limited and unimaginative, especially if changes are made only "around the edges" of teaching and learning rather than affecting the classroom itself (Hargreaves 2005:9). Teacher buy-in would be far stronger if teachers created the reform themselves (Datnow & Castellano 2000:794). Gitlin and Margonis (1995:380) extend this view by noting that the most effective innovations are those which teachers have internalised because they satisfy their specific needs.

This teacher (who adopts curriculum change) is most like Lindblad's (1990) "loyal official", who exhibits a positive (or at least a compliant, non-negative) attitude towards curriculum change, but would not necessarily show much in the way of knowledge and skills. "Externally pre-specified lists of behaviourally defined competencies and objectives negate teachers' meaningful involvement in curriculum planning and diminish their extent of professional control" (Ballet *et al.* 2006:210).

Curriculum innovations must consider classroom conditions if teachers are expected to adopt them. Johnson (1969:147) notes that the "busy-ness" of classrooms is intensified by factors such as time pressures, overcrowding and the fast pace of classroom life, all of which impede teachers' ability to analyse, evaluate and modify what is happening in the classroom.

3.4.4 Adapting Curriculum Change

Teachers who embrace curriculum change and have considerable knowledge and skills do not simply adopt or passively undergo calls for change. Drake and Sherin (2008:183) note that no curriculum is "teacher-proof". Instead, teachers interpret, filter and modify curricula in order to safeguard their sense of professional autonomy (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008:54). Policy makers therefore need to recognise that teachers develop, define and reinterpret the curriculum instead of merely delivering it (Hargreaves 1994:ix). Similarly, Osgood (2006:189) argues that teachers are actively involved in reproducing, interpreting and transforming policy through individual action or agency. Smylie and Perry (2005:320)

regard teachers as active agents when they adapt elements of curriculum change to their classrooms. Today teachers are encouraged to make adaptations to the national curriculum at school level (Gvirtz 2002:460).

When working with a complex, conceptually rich curriculum, different teachers make different choices and adaptations (Drake & Sherin 2006:182). Teachers need to balance multiple issues, including their own ideologies and past pedagogical practices, with a host of new demands as they attempt to incorporate curriculum change. Top-down curriculum change disregards this power of teachers to mediate the changes (Fink & Stoll 2005:25; Priestley & Sime 2005:476). Successful innovation is better achieved through a process of adaptation, which combines central impetus with active engagement by teachers. Change must reflect the dynamic two-way relationship between the initiative and the context for enactment, and therefore local change agents must be included in every step of the process.

Teachers are also bound by what they feel they must do to practically respond to their learners' needs and so they tend to adapt policies accordingly (Datnow & Castellano 2000:779). Antifaeff, Mitzel, Porowski and Sussex (2006) found that in order to accommodate their learners' needs and simultaneously meet accountability demands, teachers adapted the curriculum. Shepherd and Smith (1988:144) found that ECE teachers are more likely to respond positively to curriculum change if the school culture supports them in adapting the curriculum to a wide range of individual differences. Wien (2002:16), Goldstein (2006:2) and Antifaeff *et al.* (2006:3) are in accord that ECE teachers experience conflict (cognitive dissonance) when they have to implement a standardised, formal, academic curriculum. Because the ECE teachers in these studies were experienced, well-trained, and received ongoing support, they were able to balance the traditional approach of learning through play, with the academic demands of the new curriculum. Examples of curriculum adaptation towards formal approaches predominate in the literature. However, Ryan (2004:661) found that teachers in the USA were confused about their role as well as the content of the curriculum.

Adaptive approaches seek to create innovations that accommodate local settings by encouraging teachers to discover and disseminate locally effective teaching practices, while simultaneously giving them sufficient discretion and autonomy to adapt their practices to their own classroom strategies (Rowan & Miller 2007:255). Therefore, successful reform of both curriculum and practice requires mutual adaptation (Drake &

Sherin 2006:183). Datnow and Castellano (2000:795) contend that strong support from the principal, trainers and facilitators is not enough to guarantee fidelity of implementation.

> Inevitably, teachers closed the doors to their classrooms and made adaptations to the programme, despite vigilant monitoring on the part of in-school facilitators and trainers, and teacher accountability in the form of student assessments (Datnow & Castellan0 2000:795).

Leander and Osborne (2008:44) note that policy makers often misinterpret how teachers respond to change. In particular, policy makers may often view teachers' modifications or adaptations of externally-driven change as corrupting the change effort. However, only partial change is achieved if the teacher is construed as a "thoughtless and relationless appropriator of (curriculum) materials" (Leander & Osborne 2008:44). Leander and Osborne (2008:42) argue that teachers are not just responsive to their learners; their work is also highly responsive to many different audiences. In addition, as teachers respond to change, they borrow and redevelop "best ideas". According to Drake and Sherin (2006:154,182), teachers' narrative identities frame the ways in which they use, alter or adapt the curriculum, before, during and after instruction. As teachers work with a complex, conceptually rich curriculum, they make different choices and adaptations. Teachers' past experiences, their current identities, and their desire to re-create intergenerational learning found in their own homes, lead them to develop different ideas about how to reach curriculum goals (Drake & Sherin 2006:183). The role of adaptation is complex since teaching requires improvisation and adaptation on the one hand, while being faithful to the goals of curriculum change on the other.

Teachers adapt the curriculum to meet local constraints, match their pedagogical goals or fulfil the needs of their learners (Squire, MaKinster, Barnett, Luehmann & Barab 2003:469). However, teachers' necessity to adapt curricula ultimately presumes "one best way" of implementing a curriculum. These authors view teachers' adaptations as curriculum innovations created in response to their contexts:

> Teachers' adaptations of innovations are not phenomena to be avoided, but rather an ongoing process to be supported. As such, the goal of instructional designers might be not how to create "teacher-proof curriculum" or to even understand teachers' adaptations of curricula so that such repurposing of curricula can be avoided. Instead, designers might reconceptualize

"implementation" as supporting teachers in contextualizing curricula to meet their local needs (Squire *et al.* 2003:471).

3.5 Summary and Conclusion

The conceptual framework for my study is based on four main responses of teachers to curriculum change: they (i) ignore; (ii) resist; (iii) adopt; or (iv) adapt the curriculum change. I will therefore examine "policy as practitioner meanings" (McLaughlin, 2005:74). Mutual adaptation occurs when "local implementers would for better or worse, modify policy goals and strategies to suit local conditions" (McLaughlin 1987; 2005:82). Moreover, teachers do not simply implement curriculum change, they interpret and modified it according to their different frames of experience. This explains why 'change is ultimately a problem of the smallest unit'—teachers are regarded as 'street-level bureaucrats' who require both professional and personal motivation to implement change. but it also depends on the extent to which they grasp policy intentions.

I conclude this chapter by returning to Lindblad's (1990:169) types of teachers and matching them to the four main responses. Alienated teachers who view themselves as victims of external change forces may resist or ignore curriculum change. Independent teachers who decide how to respond to curriculum change may fall into any of the four areas of my conceptual framework. Spectators who regard curriculum change as an imposition may ignore it. Loyal officials who view the motivation for change as reasonable are likely to adopt the curriculum change. Pioneers who identify mutual correspondence between the changes required and their existing teaching practices redefine their existing practice as already compliant, and may adapt the curriculum change. Partisans interpret curriculum change as an opportunity to do what they think is right and may manifest a mixture of responses. It is therefore possible that teachers' responses to curriculum change are complex and mixed rather than straightforward. In this study I will examine the responses of the participating teachers to curriculum change in relation to the four main responses discussed above.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Research Design: Revealing ECE Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the research methods and approach, data collection and analysis procedures, strategies for validity and the ethical and political considerations that guided this multi-case study. The main aim of this study, and of this chapter, is to investigate how Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers respond to curriculum change.

4.2 Research Approach

I employed qualitative research methods in order to understand the social context in which ECE teachers' practice (Smith & Shepard 1988:310), framed within an interpretive paradigm. I chose the interpretive paradigm because it is characterised by concern for the individual. I therefore endeavoured to understand the subjective world of human experiences and actions, as recommended by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:22). I resisted the imposition of external factors, such as my own personal views, as this would only reflect my viewpoint as the observer, as opposed to that of the participants who were directly involved. Since I was particularly interested in the participants' beliefs, I observed their actions as a way of ascertaining their intentions and thereby shared their experiences. Cohen *et al.* (2000:22-23) regards this as "behaviour-with-meaning".

4.3 Research Design

I employed a case study design to illuminate[18] the phenomenon of how Grade R teachers make operational decisions (Schlager 1999:257) as they respond to the implementation of the official curriculum (Hancock & Algozzine 2006:15). According to Cohen *et al.* (2007:253), a case study (i) is a specific instance that is designed to illustrate a more general principle; (ii) is the study of an instance in action; (iii) provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than by simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles; (iv) can enable readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles fit together; and (v) can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis. This was appropriate since

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[18] Schlager (1999) uses the term "illuminate" to describe, explain and explore phenomenon.

my aim was to discern and pursue an understanding of the issues that are intrinsic to the case itself (Schwandt 2007:28). The case study design therefore enabled me to answer how and why questions, for example: How do teachers respond to the introduction of the official curriculum at reception year level?

My case study focused on nine Grade R teacher cases in their own environments, and was bounded by time and activity (Creswell 2003:15). This study was conducted during 2009, which was six years after the NCS had first been introduced. As discussed in Section 4.9, I use preferred pseudonyms when discussing my participants in order to protect their privacy.

Cohen *et al.* (2007:253) note that case studies are conducted in specific temporal, geographical, organisational or institutional contexts. In relation to this study, all the participants, i.e. the nine Grade R teachers of the four schools in which they teach, are located at state primary schools. I have outlined the participants' characteristics, roles and functions in the literature review and this will be elaborated on in Section 4.7. Although I had initially planned to draw my sample from each of the three main types of ECE programmes, namely community-based, home-based and school-based, I altered this strategy because the majority of Grade R teachers are being relocated to state primary schools. Three of the participants in this study, Paige, Patricia and Takalani, were previously employed at community-based ECE centres, but relocated to state primary schools because of higher remuneration and improved conditions of service, such as increased vacation leave, shorter working hours and ongoing access to professional development programmes sponsored by the Department of Education. Two other participants in this study, Anna and Jane, had previously owned their own ECE centres, but due to many learners moving to state primary schools, the centres experienced financial problems. Anna and Jane then became employed at state primary schools. Reinnette and Natasha, who also participated in this study, had previously been employed as foundation phase teachers, teaching Grade 1 and 2 respectively. They became Grade R teachers as posts became available at the state primary schools. Jackie has been teaching at preschools and Isabel is a recent graduate.

In Chapter 5, I present a detailed description and analysis of each teacher case in order to provide an in-depth understanding (Creswell 2007:75) of the factors that influence teachers' responses to curriculum change and portray the richness of each case (Cohen *et al.* 2007:253). In addition, I present a comprehensive description of the context of each

teacher's perspective and of the events relevant to the case. For example, whether the Grade R teacher plans collaboratively with her Foundation Phase colleagues. The descriptions and the analysis of the events are combined and are followed by a thematic analysis of all cases (cross-case analysis).

In the final interpretive phase, I report on the meaning and significance of each case. This constitutes the lessons learnt from the case studies. Yin's (2003:4) observation that case studies are useful when the phenomenon that is being studied is not readily distinguishable from its context is relevant to the ECE sector.

I initially intended to focus on participants with a minimum of ten years teaching experience, meaning that they would have had a minimum of five years experience implementing the broad principles of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP). With 2009 being the sixth year since the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in Grade R classes, these teachers would have started their careers before the introduction of the mandated curriculum, and therefore would have had the experience of either implementing or not implementing the new curriculum.

I initially anticipated that although the participants in this study would have undergone some training on the NCS, they would not have bachelor's degrees in the subject, meaning that they would be underqualified to implement the new curriculum. This was the case for five of the participants. One participant, a recent graduate, has a bachelor's degree in education, specialising in Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase, and four remaining participants hold Higher Education Diplomas in Pre- and Junior Primary teaching. These five fully qualified teachers are all employed at the same state primary school by the school's governing body and not the Gauteng Department of Education.

4.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this inquiry:

Main Research Question:

How do teachers respond to the introduction of the official curriculum at reception year level (Grade R)?

Research Sub-questions

(i) How do Grade R teachers plan their lessons?

This reflects the process of lesson planning, for example whether the teacher planned her lessons on her own or together with her Foundation Phase colleagues. This illuminates whether or not teachers were receiving meaningful collegial support, and also enables me to examine the extent to which teachers were actually implementing their written planning in their classrooms.

(ii) Which classroom practices do Grade R teachers employ?

By focusing on teachers' classroom practices, I gained insight into their beliefs. This was particularly important because there is an integral relationship between beliefs and actions and therefore teachers' beliefs play a major role in their decision making about curriculum and instructional tasks (Keys & Bryan 2001:635). Teachers' beliefs and knowledge fields are not only the targets of change, they also affect change by serving as a knowledge filter through which teachers interpret new information including curriculum content and recommendations for change (Collopy 2003:288).

(iii) What informs Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change?

This question focused my attention on both the external factors (professional development opportunities, teaching and learning resources and support) and the internal factors (attitudes, beliefs, emotions and job satisfaction) that influence the way in which individual Grade R teachers respond to curriculum change.

4.5 Research Context

As stated in Section 4.1.3, there are three main types of ECE programmes in South Africa, namely school-based, community-based and home-based programmes (Development Bank of Southern Africa 2007:14; National Department of Education 2001b:28). In 2000[19], there were 3623 (17%) school-based ECE programmes, 10816 (49%) community-based programmes and 7453 (34%) home-based programmes, with a total of 21892 ECE centres identified in the Nationwide Audit of Early Childhood Development (ECD) provision (National Department of Education 2001b:28). I initially expected that this would provide a

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[19] Although outdated, these statistics are the most reliable that are available. The nationwide audit of ECD constitutes the most rigorous and comprehensive research on ECD to date.

wide representative picture of Grade R teachers, despite the fact that the majority of Grade R teachers are being relocated to state primary schools. Following a consultation with my supervisors, I adapted my sampling accordingly and selected teachers from a range of state primary schools only to achieve more relevant results. As noted previously in Chapter 1, Grade R is now part of the Foundation Phase of schooling and the teachers are employed by school governing bodies, not the Department of Education. Table 4.1 in Section 4.6, below, contains a summary of the participants in this research as well as an indication of their diverse contexts and backgrounds.

4.6 Participants

According to Schlager (1999:237), the setting that the analyst wants to examine and questions he or she wishes to address, will determine the unit of analysis. Grade R teachers constitute my main unit of analysis since most policy-makers and school change experts consider them to be the centrepiece of educational change (Datnow & Castellano 2000:777).

I took great care in choosing nine teachers from a range of state school settings in and around Johannesburg and Pretoria. This included a no-fee school, one low-fee school and two moderate-fee schools. None of the schools charge fees in excess of R800 per month. The average school charged R450 per month. While case studies are not generalisable in nature, one still needs to select one's subjects from a broadly representative perspective. I decided to include school principals in the study as secondary participants because of their role as leaders, which suggests that they have a powerful influence on the level of support Grade R teachers receive when implementing curriculum change. The main difference between South African principals and their international counterparts is that they are not formally required to provide instructional leadership to Grade R teachers. Although the Grade R classes have been in existence for varying periods of time, eight of the nine teachers have ten years ECE (birth to nine) teaching experience or more.

School A introduced its first Grade R class in 2001. A second class was added in 2006. These classes are located at a state primary school but are regarded as 'private' since they do not receive any subsidy from the Gauteng Department of Education. By the end of my fieldwork, the principal of School A had been informed that the Gauteng Department of Education would be taking over the running of the Grade R classes. The provincial education department's involvement would be linked to the programme's compliance with

School and Location	Context	Number of Grade R classes	Number of years the Grade R class has been in existence	Monthly school fees	Teacher/Learner Ratio	Language of Instruction	Teacher and Number of years of teaching experience
A Johannesburg	Historically white working class school, now 99% of the learners are black	2	6	R450 Learners can not attend if their parents are unable to pay.	1:32	English	Paige: 10 Patricia: 10
B Atteridgeville	African township	1	4	No-fee school but Grade R learners pay R50 per month	1:46	Sepedi	Anna: 14
C Centurion	Historically lower middle class, the majority of learners now come from townships and inner city areas	1	6 months	R600 Less than 50% of the learners' fees are up-to-date	1:25	English	Jane: 24
D Pretoria East	Historically affluent, white	5	16	R800 A small number of parents have been retrenched and are unable to pay fees; children are still allowed to attend school.	1:20	Afrikaans	Takalani: 20 Natasha: 19 Jackie: 21 Reinnette: 1 Isabel: 1

Table 4.1: Summary of Participants

the official curriculum and would provide teachers with access to increased professional development opportunities.

School B has had one Grade R class since 2005. It is a no-fee school but Grade R learners' parents are required to pay R50 per month for teaching and learning support materials.

School C began its Grade R class in 2009 and plans to add three more Grade R classes in 2011. The school governing body has appointed one teacher and one assistant teacher for the existing class of 24 learners.

The preschool section of School D has been in existence for 16 years and has five Grade R classes. The five Grade R classes form part of the pre-school section of this state primary school. There are also two three to four year-old classes and three four to five year-old classes at the school. The head of the preschool section said that she hopes to cater for babies and toddlers aged from 3 months to 3 years in the near future. The school's governing body employs a total of 14 pre-school staff members. It is important to note that the school fees are moderate and do not exceed R800 per month.

4.7 Sample Selection

Berg (2001:32) notes that purposive sampling focuses on certain types of individuals displaying certain attributes. According to Cohen *et al.* (2000:103) purposive sampling involves "hand picking the cases to be included in the sample based on their judgement and typicality". I selected the sample for this study after critically analysing the parameters of the South African population. (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport 2005:345). In this way, I built up a sample that is satisfactory and relevant to the specific needs of this study. Other teachers might use the findings of my study to compare their teaching to that of my participants. Whilst this sample satisfied the needs of this specific study, I acknowledge that it does not represent the wider population since it is "deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased" (Cohen *et al.* 2000:104).

As noted in Section 1.9, the participants were all Grade R teachers at state primary schools. Indeed, this is a key aspect of the Grade R policy target. By 2014, the majority of Grade R classrooms will be located at state primary schools. In addition, Grade R has been incorporated into the Foundation Phase of schooling. It is therefore compulsory for Grade R teachers to implement the official curriculum. I anticipated that the participants

would have certain common characteristics such as (i) a minimum of ten years experience in the South African ECE field (ii) access to professional development programmes; (iii) exposure to the official curriculum; (iv) access to learning and teaching support materials; and (v) instructional from district officials, and/or Foundation Phase colleagues and/or the Head of Department. The extent to which the above factors influence individual participants' responses to curriculum change would necessarily vary and therefore formed the basis for my research questions.

When selecting cases to include in this study, I initially intended to focus specifically on teachers who had undergone training in the Basic Certificate in ECD and the National Certificate in ECD. These qualifications are unit-standard based and teachers and training providers are finding it difficult to complete them (SAIDE 2007:20) and have since been amended. The Basic Certificate in ECD has been phased out and is no longer offered. The National Certificate in ECD has been replaced by the Further Education and Training Certificate in ECD. By 2013, all teachers must have met the minimum requirements of attaining either the Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV) 14 or Grade 12 plus four years of teacher training. However, this does not apply to Grade R practitioners. Furthermore, the new teacher qualifications framework (2010) proposes a Higher Certificate in Grade R at NQF Level 5 which is equivalent to Grade 12 plus two years of teacher training. I later included participants who had qualifications equivalent to REQV 14 to examine how this influenced their responses to curriculum change. The rapidly changing teacher education environment may also inform teachers' responses to curriculum change.

4.8 Data Collection

While conducting this case study, I used multiple procedures or methods of data collection, including interviews, observations and document sourcing. This enabled me to present richly descriptive and detailed data on the nine Grade R teachers (two teachers at School A, one teacher at School B, one teacher at School C and 5 teachers at School D) who constitute my main unit of analysis. I conducted a semi-structured interview with each of the four school principals in order to ascertain what support is provided for teachers to aid them in effectively implementing the official curriculum. As noted by Datnow and Castellano (2000:776), the principal's role as instructional leader is vital. In Datnow and Castellano's study, the principals were responsible for ensuring staff motivation and

commitment, as well as providing and allocating adequate resources to various programmes.

I undertook a qualitative pilot study to test the research instruments and ensure that I am capable of conducting the research satisfactorily (Marshall & Rossman 1999:64). The data from the pilot phase is not included in this study's findings (Yin 2003:7) but was used to refine the research instruments. The pilot study was conducted at a state primary school three months prior to beginning of the data collection for this study. The participants were one Grade R teacher and one school principal. Their responses to the questions prompted me to rephrase some questions prior to commencing official data collection. I also became aware of the need to probe for more information in the interviews.

4.8.1 Data Collection Strategies

My data collection strategies included document sourcing, semi-structured interviews with participant teachers and participant principals as well as observations of teachers' classroom presentations. I choose these strategies to enable me to focus on participants' perspectives, opinions and experiences of the curriculum change.

4.8.1.1 Document Sourcing

I undertook document analysis of Grade R teachers' learning programmes and written lesson preparation, as well as their daily and weekly reflections and assessment records. This gave me insight into how the official curriculum has or has not influenced the instructional decisions of the nine teachers sampled in this study.

4.8.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews

I used semi-structured, one-on-one interviews to enable me to address my research questions and gain a detailed picture of the participants' beliefs about and perceptions of the official curriculum (Greef, in De Vos *et al.* 2005:296). My interview schedule began with an outline, listing the broad categories that were relevant to this study. Thereafter, I developed a set of questions that were relevant to each of the outlined categories. The schedule included essential questions, extra questions, throw-away questions and probing questions (Berg 2001:75).[20]

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[20] See Appendix 4.

My aim was to explain the teachers' understanding of the purpose of the official curriculum and its assessment expectations. Smith and Shepard (1988:310) note that interviews can be useful for this purpose since teachers' beliefs are best uncovered by inference from their case knowledge. Smith and Shepard (1988:310) explain this phenomenon as "that which people know without being able to state what they know". Furthermore, I view teachers' beliefs as being tied to specific events within their immediate personal experiences, which helps them to decide what to do in a given situation. Over and above the basic questions that were included in the interviews, I asked probing questions which enabled me to converse more freely with the participants and to delve into issues that arose during the interview process itself (Berg 2001:70). Furthermore, the interviews focused on the way in which the teachers design learning tasks and implement or respond to curriculum change. I followed this by asking the teachers about the support they receive to assist them in implementing the official curriculum and then asked questions related to how their beliefs and practices have changed over the course of the implementation.

4.8.1.3 Pre-testing the schedule

I initially conducted two interviews, transcribed their tape recordings and went through them with my supervisors to enable me to identify any gaps and missed opportunities in the interview process. As the interviews progressed, my questions were adapted to address the issues that were raised by the initial test participants. My interview technique progressed from direct to indirect questions. For example, after the first two interviews, I asked teachers exactly how they were implementing the official curriculum in their classrooms. Initially, I only asked teachers whether they were implementing the official curriculum or not and why or why not.

I used interviews as the principal means of gathering the information that had a direct bearing on my research objectives (Cohen *et al.* 2007.350). Throughout the process, I remained cognisant of the fact that interviews have an ethical dimension to them since they involve personal interaction, are subjective and produce information that is embedded in human life. Three main ethical issues can be identified when conducting interviews, namely informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of the interviews. I therefore sought informed consent from all participants and their principals.

I utilised an interview schedule that Denzin (1989) termed the "nonscheduled standardised interview". These interviews consist of less-formal, open-ended protocols that allowed me to change the order and phrasing of the questions within each individual interview

according to the particular participant and situation (Ackerman 2004:293). I transcribed the conversations as soon as possible after they had taken place, and analysed the responses using a coding scheme that reflected my research questions and conceptual framework. In order to verify participants' opinions, and thus lend credibility to the study, I used member checking by providing each participant with a draft copy of the transcript and the opportunity to rectify any miscommunications through subsequent conversations. This proved to be rather unproductive as participants were inclined to paraphrase their comments and correct their grammar.

I was pleasantly surprised by how eager participants were to talk about "what we do every day", as noted by Jackie, and by the fact that I encountered no obstacles when entering the field. None of the participants had ever participated in research studies previously. My first step was to contact schools telephonically and ask to speak to the principal. I explained that I was conducting research on the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement in Grade R classes and requested an appointment to introduce myself and explain the parameters of my study. I gave each potential participant a letter requesting their participation and a letter of informed consent. I spent time before each interview explaining these letters to each participant. In all cases, I received a warm reception. One Grade R teacher noted, "I have been teaching pre-school for more than twenty years and I have never been interviewed by anyone." Another teacher said, "Our sector is so marginalised. It is exciting that you are doing research on what we do every day." Yet another said, "No-one has ever asked me what I do in my classroom." This suggests that ECE teachers in general, and Grade R teachers in particular, are under-researched.

4.8.1.4 Observations

Observation methods are powerful tools for gaining insight into particular situations. Observational data is useful as it affords the researcher the opportunity to gather 'live' data from 'live' or naturally occurring social situations (Cohen *et al*. 2000:315; Cohen *et al*. 2007:396). Observations enabled me to understand the context of Grade R programmes, to be open-ended and inductive, to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not talk freely about in interview situations, to move beyond perception-based data (e.g. opinions in interviews), and to access participants' personal knowledge.

I conducted non-participant observations of classroom interactions to enhance my understanding of the research topic. Since my main focus is Grade R teachers, I observed

them during naturally occurring activities that are commonly part of their daily programme. This enabled me to characterise the curriculum, teaching methods and organisation of classrooms as well as to describe the differences between the classrooms that were observed and to discover any contextual features of the schools that might be helpful when interpreting the data. Although I had originally planned to use video to record the classroom observations and class presentations, and to include the context or setting as well as the teaching and learning activities in my research (Creswell 2003:19, Silverman 2004:272), I was unable to obtain ethics clearance for video recordings. I therefore took extensive field notes during my observations that were guided by an observation schedule (see Appendix 6) that incorporated a checklist adapted from Cohen *et al.* (2000:312). This provided me with authentic data on how the teacher was responding to curriculum change.

I also carried a Dictaphone to record my own comments as soon as possible. I tried to remain cognisant throughout the process that "although observation frequently claims neutrality by being non-interventionist, there are several ethical considerations that surround it", particularly because "observer effects can be powerful" (Cohen *et al.* 2000:314-315). Throughout the research process, I was also aware of the risk of bias, especially since I was the only observer and I made choices concerning what observations were valid and then made selective data entries accordingly. Another constraint of observation that has been noted by Cohen *et al.* (2997:411) is that participants may change their behaviour if they know that they are being observed. I therefore spent nine months on data collection, conducting three observations of one hour each per teacher. Repeated observation enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers respond to curriculum change. I compared what I observed during classroom activities to what the teachers said in the interviews and what was recorded in their teacher preparation files. This crystallisation of the data enhanced the validity of my analysis.

4.8.2 Challenges encountered during Data Collection

A number of challenges arose once I entered the field that I had not anticipated. The interviews occurred in each of the nine participants' own classrooms in the afternoons once their learners had departed. However, time pressures persisted largely due to Grade R teachers' involvement in extra-curricular activities or/and after-school care programmes. Although I initially considered conducting the interviews away from the school, for example in a coffee shop, this was not convenient for the participants. Many of them have young

children and therefore have domestic and child-rearing responsibilities. The participants were also not available during school holidays.

After I had already made numerous visits to her classroom, one participant relocated to another province. I therefore had to exclude her data from my study. Another participant agreed to the interview but we could not find a suitable time to meet and, although I had conducted classroom observations and an interview with her principal, I decided to exclude School E from my study altogether.

4.9 Data Analysis

Once I had concluded data collection, my main challenge was that the data was very extensive and needed to be reduced. I therefore organised and presented data analysis according to the individual research participants – the nine teacher cases. I considered te total responses of each individual before proceeding to the next individual or teacher case. As noted by Cohen *et al.* (2007:467), this enabled me to "preserve the coherence and integrity of the individual's response" and to present a whole picture of the case. After carefully considering all nine teacher cases, I was able to reflect upon the issues that emerged across the individuals in order to examine themes, patterns of responses, similarities and differences and to compare individuals and the issues raised by each. In other words, I was able to summarise the data and present all nine participants' responses on the conceptual framework matrix, as seen in Appendix 14.

During the data analysis phase of my study, I remained mindful that my data analysis should be rigorous, disciplined, systematic, carefully documented and methodical (Schwandt 2007:6). My analysis was recursive and began at the outset of data collection. I employed a variety of analytic strategies that involved sorting, organising and reducing the data so that it was manageable. I then reassembled the data in order to interpret it (Schwandt 2007:7). I specifically focused on how each teacher's personal experiences created a backdrop for how he or she responded to the introduction of the official curriculum. I examined each participant's daily classroom practice from their point of view. I used Weft Qualitative Data Analysis (WQDA), a computer program, as my method of analysing the interviews and field notes in order to achieve a holistic analysis of each case (Creswell 2003:20,75). My data analysis began by breaking down the whole corpus of data (field notes and transcriptions) by categorising and coding the individual segments and establishing a pattern for the whole by relating the codes to one another (Schwandt

2007:7). As illustrated in my conceptual framework, my provisional findings were organised according to themes and categories of teachers' responses, knowledge and skills as well as attitudes and emotions. Hereafter, I focused on the similarities and differences concerning each teacher's detailed narrative. The themes evolved from a saturation of all the collected data, reflecting the purpose of the research and responding to the questions under investigation (Hancock & Algozzine 2006:16). My analysis is thorough in the context of the teacher case and includes cross-case analysis and meaningful interpretations of each teacher case (Creswell 2007:75; Yin 2003:xvii).

I used thick descriptions of teachers' contexts and systematically analysed the data in terms of the way in which the introduction of curriculum change influenced the instructional decisions of teachers, and how the kind of support they were receiving influenced their classroom practices. As noted by Marshall and Rossman (1999:61), this allowed me to focus on the views expressed by participants on curriculum change. I used quotes from interviews with participants and anecdotes "composed from interactions and other literary techniques to create a mental image that brought to life the complexity of the many variables inherent" in how teachers respond to curriculum change (Hancock & Algozzine 2006:16). Furthermore, the strategies I used to interpret, report and confirm the case study's findings are articulated in Chapter 5. I systematically searched for data that either confirmed or refuted my findings in order to remain objective and to lend credibility to my study (Smith & Shepard 1988:312).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each school's principal in order to understand their leadership role, specifically in the context of curriculum change. I sought to understand how principals support teachers in implementing the official curriculum, despite not formally being required to provide instructional leadership.

4.10 Addressing Credibility and Trustworthiness

According to Creswell (2007:205), "validation has been cast within an interpretive approach to qualitative research, marked by a focus on the researcher's role, a concern about the lack of truth in validation, a form of validation based on negotiation and dialogue with participants and interpretation that is temporal, located in a specific context and always open to reinterpretation". I used the process of validation to assess the accuracy of my findings (De Vos *et al.* 2005:345). To ensure credibility, I used thick descriptions to provide a feeling of the setting, as this is an important part of observation and taking field

notes. As noted by Schwandt (2007:296), thick descriptions are not simply a matter of amassing relevant detail. Instead, they are an interpretive characteristic of description. I described my participants' actions and began interpreting them by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies and motivations that characterise a particular response. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:393) argue that the description of people, places and events is the cornerstone of qualitative research. Furthermore, as noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, the total learning environment is a very important part of a high quality ECE programme. Therefore, I attempted to capture as much information about the setting as possible.

Schwandt (2007:299) outlines four criteria for the trustworthiness of research studies, namely that the data should be credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. My study addressed the above criteria in the following ways: I sought to accurately reconstruct and represent participants' views of curriculum change, I provided readers with sufficient information on the ways in which the findings of each case might be transferred, I ensured that the process of data collection and analysis was logical, traceable and carefully documented and I linked my assertions, findings and interpretations of the data to the evidence in readily discernible ways.

As noted by Marshall and Rossman (1999:28,54), case studies rest on the worldviews of both the researcher and the participants. Since I am a proponent of a play-based, informal and developmentally appropriate approach to ECE programmes, I needed to remain cognisant that this should not bias my study in any way. The use of multiple data collection methods, such as interviews, observations and document sourcing, as crystallisation of data was used as a method of validation (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:5). I attempted to avoid subjective interpretation and the selective analysis of data (Cohen *et al*. 2000:116).

To ensure the quality of my study, I paid considerable attention to presenting sufficient information on the research process, sufficient evidence to support my findings and addressing evidence that could potentially refute my findings (Anfara, Brown & Mangione 2002:29; Seale in Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman 2004:416). My analysis of themes was not used for generalising beyond the case, but rather for understanding the complexity of each individual case (Creswell 2007:75). I also used prolonged engagement in the field, peer reviews and debriefings, member checking, thick descriptions, detailed field notes and high quality tape recordings and transcriptions (Schwandt 2007:299). As recommended by Anfara *et al*. (2002:30), I publicly disclosed the decisions I made during

the research process. For example, I consciously decided to select participants from a range of different state primary schools: they had been implementing Grade R for varying periods.

To ensure the reliability and validity of my research findings, I used the method of crystallisation. In this study crystalisation is reconceptualised as trustworthiness, rigor and quality within a qualitative paradigm. I attempted to eliminate bias and increase the trustworthiness of the data by using multiple ways of establishing truth, or in the words of Niewenhuis, through a "constant search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes" (Niewenhuis 2007:81). I drew on the insights of Cohen and Manion (2007) regarding ways of reducing bias by being conscious of my personal attitudes, opinions and expectations, and tried not to seek answers simply to support my preconceived notions.

4.11 Political and Ethical Considerations

The reception year (Grade R) is the target of policy in the ECE sector in South Africa (National Department of Education 2001a) are reflected by White Paper No. 5 on Early Childhood Development. With the introduction of the official national curriculum (NCS), the reception year became part of the Foundation Phase of schooling. Although the majority of Grade R posts are still located at community-based ECE centres, many are gradually being relocated to state primary schools. School governing bodies, not the Department of Education, employ Grade R teachers. As a result, there are many issues regarding equity. Although state primary schools have relatively better resources and funding compared to community-based schools, teachers at state primary schools are still paid low salaries compared to Foundation Phase teachers (Clasquin-Johnson, 2007).

I applied for and received ethics clearance prior to commencing the data collection phase of this study. Throughout this phase, I was mindful of the assertion made by Cohen *et al.* (2000:49) that ethical issues could arise from the problems that are usually investigated by social scientists and the methods that are used to obtain valid and reliable data. The implications of this meant that each stage in the research sequence was a potential source of ethical problems or dilemmas.

Procedures prior to data collection included sending a letter to each of the school principals involved requesting their participation in the research and arranging meetings with the principal and the head of the Foundation Phase department in order to gain their

permission for participation in the study. I was also cognisant of the fact that the research should cause minimal disruptions to the physical setting. As noted in Section 4.6, interviews were conducted after school hours in order to minimise the interference with the normal activities of the participants (Creswell 2003:65).

Cohen *et al.* (2000:50) contend that informed consent constitutes the foundation of ethical procedures. I obtained participants' informed consent by (a) explaining the purpose of the study, so that participants understood the nature of the research and its likely impact on them, (b) explaining that participation is voluntary, and (c) assuring them that they may withdraw from the study at any time. See letter of informed consent in Appendix 3. Furthermore, I explained the procedures of the study, so that participants could reasonably anticipate what to expect in the study. I emphasised that all the participants had the right to ask questions, obtain a copy of the report and have their privacy respected. I requested participants to sign letters of consent at our initial meeting, prior to commencing data collection. I will avoid potential risk to the participants by ensuring that my study is free from any form of deceit, duress or unfair inducement or manipulation (Berg 2001:56).

The principle of informed consent arises from the participants' right to freedom and self-determination (Cohen *et al.* 2000:51; Cohen *et al.* 2007:52). Informed consent was sought in order to protect and respect these rights. However, informed consent also places some responsibility on the participants should anything go wrong while conducting the research.

Cohen *et al.* (2000:61) contend that privacy can be approached from three perspectives: (i) the sensitivity of the information being given, (ii) the setting that is being observed, and (iii) the dissemination of information. I assured the participants that I would protect their right to privacy and therefore guaranteed participants that the information they provided would in no way reveal their identities. Although a participant agreeing to a face-to-face interview can in no way expect complete anonymity, non-traceability is an important matter, and this extends to aggregating data in some cases, so that an individual's response is not identifiable.

Throughout the research process, I reminded myself that I needed to demonstrate the appropriate sensitivity and awareness of the context in which ECE programmes operate. In the interpretation and presentation of the data, I used preferred pseudonyms for individuals and places to identify their voices (views, perspectives) in the final report, while protecting their identities. I have been extremely cautious when referring to participants

and their respective settings (Berg 2001:58). This ensured anonymity by not using the names of the participants or any other personal means of identification. I also promised that I would protect participants' rights to privacy through confidentiality. This means that although I know who has provided the information and I am able to identify the participants from the information given, I do not make the connections known publicly (Cohen *et al.* 2000:62).

The data generated in this research will be stored in a password-protected file at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years. I will forward a copy of this thesis to the Gauteng Department of Education who granted me permission to conduct this study. I protected the participants from harm by ensuring their privacy and confidentiality (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:139). The names of participants and schools are not mentioned. Instead, preferred pseudonyms were used. I took special care to ensure that my thick descriptions of the settings did not compromise the privacy and confidentiality of the participants in any way.

4.12 Summary

In this chapter, I described the research design, methods and approach that guided this case study. I further described the data collection and analysis procedures I employed, as well as the strategies used to ensure validity. The ethical and political considerations throughout the study were also discussed.

Chapter 5: Findings: Presentation and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss my findings of how the nine participating Grade R teachers, namely Paige, Patricia, Anna, Jane, Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie[21], who are based in and around Pretoria and Johannesburg, responded to curriculum change. The discussion presented in the sub-sections of this chapter directly address the findings for each of my research questions.

The main research question that guided my investigation was, "How do teachers respond to the introduction of the official curriculum at reception year level?" I specifically discuss what official national curriculum requirements the teachers *ignore*, *resist*, *adopt* and/or *adapt*. In addition to this main research question, my research sub-questions were as follows:

i.   *How do Grade R teachers plan their lessons?*

I present and discuss examples of the participant teachers' lesson plans for the lessons that I observed. I specifically review the structure and content of their lesson plans in relation to the design features, such as learning outcomes and assessment standards, of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Grade R. I examine the extent to which the teachers followed departmental guidelines, which includes (a) how each participant teacher structured and presented her written lesson plan; (b) the extent to which she integrated the eight learning areas into the three Foundation Phase learning programmes; (c) whether she planned for assessment; (d) whether she reflected on her lessons; and (e) whether she planned in isolation or in collaboration with her Grade R or Foundation Phase colleagues.

ii.   *Which classroom practices do Grade R teachers employ?*

I describe and discuss each participant teacher's classroom practices that I observed during the presentation of her lessons. This will be centred on her Grade R pedagogy and her philosophy of teaching and learning.

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[21] All the participating Grade R teachers are female and the female singular personal pronoun will be used throughout.

I discuss how both external factors such as professional development, resources and support, and internal factors such as personal beliefs, motivation and job satisfaction, as identified in Chapter 2, influenced each participant teacher's response to curriculum change. In addition, I explore the influence of her knowledge and skills, as well as her emotions and attitude towards curriculum change.

5.2 Analytical Strategy

I will report the findings according to my research questions and conceptual framework. The research themes and sub-themes that emerged from the research questions above were as follows:

The first group of themes was related to teachers' lesson planning and the sub-themes included their approach to lesson planning, the content, level of comprehensiveness, whether it reflected the design features of the official curriculum, assessment requirements, integration of learning areas into Foundation Phase learning programmes, whether they planned for differentiation, how they addressed language development and transition to Grade 1.

The second group of themes relates to Grade R teachers' classroom practice and the sub-themes includes their Grade R pedagogy and philosophy of learning and teaching, their perspective of how teaching has changed. They were in accord that "Grade R is specialised".

The third group of themes relates to sub-question 3 which considered the factors informing teachers' responses to curriculum change, namely (i) the external factors: professional development, resources and support, as well as (ii) the internal factors: beliefs, motivation and job satisfaction. I scoped each participant's responses on the matrix of the conceptual framework (see Appendix 14) which provided an overview of their responses and revealed each participant's primary curriculum focus.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, the data was obtained through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and document analysis of each participant's written lesson plans and classroom practices. I asked questions specifically related to the internal and external factors that inform how teachers respond to curriculum change. In addition, I conducted a semi-structured interview and numerous informal conversations with the

principal at each of my four research sites. The purpose of these interactions with the principals was to deepen my understanding of the participants' context and to pay special attention to the external factors that informed their responses to curriculum change. It also afforded an opportunity to confirm or refute data gathered from the individual participants.

In chapter 6 I will take a broader view and discuss the emerging themes that could be seen emanating from the data. These do not necessarily fit in neatly with the conceptual framework and to some extent constitute unexpected findings.

Table 5.1: Analytical Strategy—Research Themes and Sub-themes

	Themes (integrated with Sub-questions)	Sub-themes	Interpretation	
	Lesson planning How do Grade R teachers plan their lessons? How teachers plan as a result of the demands of curriculum change	Approach Content Level of comprehensiveness Design features Assessment Integration Differentiation Language Transition to Grade 1	1: Teacher Plans What? How? What does this reveal about her response to curriculum change?	
Early childhood teachers' responses to curriculum change	Instructional practice—lens to examine how teacher's respond to curriculum change Which classroom practices do Grade R teachers employ?	Grade R Pedagogy & Philosophy How teaching has changed Grade R classroom practice "Grade R is specialised."	2. Teacher presents lesson/s Teachers' instructional practices illuminate their responses to curriculum change All four responses on matrix revealed	Response: Integrated Mainly ignore Mainly resist
Main Question: How do teachers respond to curriculum change at reception year level?	What participant principals think of the Grade R curriculum and what they say about the implementation of Grade R in their schools. What is the role of the principal in the implementation of curriculum change?	Participant principal's beliefs & understanding of Grade R	3: Relate to the school environment Broader context—origin of external and internal factors	Mainly adopt Mainly adapt
	Factors affecting response Capacity to implement curriculum change What informs Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change?	External factors: Professional development resources support Internal factors: Beliefs motivation job satisfaction	4. Beyond the school DoE, Training providers, Unions, Professional bodies 5. Focus returns to the teacher Efficacy Emotions of change	
Conclusion	Primary curriculum focus	The child The curriculum The teacher		Interpret findings

5.3 Grade R Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

The conceptual framework that I used for this study is described in Table 5.2. The conceptual framework relies on the theoretical concepts of knowledge or skills and the attitudes or emotions associated with change. For example, teachers with high levels of knowledge or skills and a positive attitude to change are more likely to *adapt* the curriculum change (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008:54; Richardson & Placier 2002:909). Therefore, I discuss my findings in relation to this conceptual framework.

Table 5.2: Conceptual Framework

	Attitude towards change		
	Negative	**Positive**	
Knowledge & Skill high	resist	adapt	high
low	ignore	adopt	low

I present my research findings according to my analytical strategy, research questions and research themes and sub-themes, as outlined in Table 5.1. I examined my coded data in great detail in order to identify any emerging patterns, themes and sub-themes. Although none of the participants' responses was straightforward, each participant did have a dominant response (i.e. all the teachers typically *adopted* some requirements and *adapted* other requirements of the curriculum change). The coded data and dominant themes provided the basis of my classificatory mechanism. In addition, I discuss the similarities and differences between the nine Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change. Table 5.3 introduces the research participants.

5.4 Introducing the Research Participants

The table below provides an overview of the nine teacher participants (Grade R teachers). It lists their preferred pseudonym, the number of years of teaching experience, the number of years of Grade R teaching experience as well as the number of years that they have been implementing the NCS.

Table 5.3 Research Participants—Grade R Teachers

Participant (preferred pseudonym)	Site	Years of teaching experience	Years in Grade R / teaching 5-6 year-olds	Years participant has been implementing the NCS	Previous employment, location and context	Qualifications
Paige	A	10 years	10 years	5 years	Community-based ECE centre	NQF Level 5 ECD Diploma
Patricia	A	10 years	10 years	3 years	Community-based ECE centre	NQF Level 5 ECD Diploma
Anna	B	15 years	4 years	4 years	Manager of community-based ECE centre	Studying towards NQF Level 5
Jane	C	24 years	24 years	3 years	Preschool owner	No formal qualifications. Entered Level 5 programme through RPL. Now studying towards NQF Level 5
Takalani	D	20 years	15 years	5 years	Preschool	HDE (Higher Diploma in Pre-primary and Junior Primary Education)
Natasha	D	19 years	6 months	5 years	Grade 1	HDE
Reinnette	D	15 years	1 year, 6 months	5 years	Grade 2	HDE
Isabel	D	1 year, 6 months	1 year, 6 months	1 year, 6 months	Full-time student	B.Ed Degree in ECD and Foundation Phase
Jackie	D	14 years	2 years	5 years	Grade 2	HDE

The nine teacher participants were teaching Grade R classes at four different state primary schools. Paige, Patricia and Jane have between 10 and 24 years of experience teaching 5-6 year olds and have been implementing the NCS since relocating from community ECE centres to state primary schools. Participants Natasha, Reinnette, Jackie and Isabel have relatively limited experience teaching Grade R, despite three of them having many years of experience as Foundation Phase teachers, as well as several years of experience

implementing the NCS. In addition, these participants (Natasha, Reinnette, Jackie and Isabel) hold qualifications across the ECD phase (birth to nine years).[22]

5.5 Lesson Planning

As noted in Table 5.1, the analytical strategy that guided my data analysis assumes that teachers' lesson plans reveal the first level of their response to curriculum change. In this section, I describe and discuss each Grade R teacher's approach to lesson planning, content and sequence of activities, as well as her planning for progression, integration, assessment, differentiation and transition to Grade 1.[23] I discussed each teacher's lesson plan with her after observing her lesson presentation. This enabled me to assess the extent to which she followed her plan and to pose questions about what I had observed.

Sub-question i. How do Grade R teachers plan their lessons?

5.5.1 Process

As noted in section 2.5.6, Grade R teachers are required to follow the *Teacher's Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes for the Foundation Phase* (National Department of Education, 2003) stipulates that lesson plans should form part of a broader planning process across learning programmes, consisting of whole phase planning, work schedules involving year-long or grade planning, and lesson planning including groups of activities.

All nine participants noted that they had *adopted* the guidelines for learning programmes mentioned above as well as the Gauteng Department of Education's Circular 28/2005 (see Appendix 1) when planning their lessons. All participants also noted that the planning requirements of the NCS were radically different from how they had previously planned their lessons. Natasha (Site D) summed this up as follows:

> *Natasha: The planning is different because the challenges are different, there is much more creativity, group work has been added and needs to be planned. It's not suddenly more work. You know, the first thing you look at is the theme. Then you look at what you want to achieve during the next week, which learning*

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[22] The Higher Diploma in Pre-primary and Junior Primary is no longer offered by teacher education institutions and is currently equivalent to a four-year Bachelor in Education degree with specialisation in ECD and Foundation Phase.

[23] This will reveal the extent to which she is following the departmental guidelines to lesson planning

outcomes you want to address because you are on your way to your assessment. So then, you begin to plan your lessons.

The participant teachers all agreed that the NCS compelled them to be more organised and systematic in how they planned their lessons. Takalani (Site D), Reinnette (Site D) and Anna (Site B) described the process of lesson planning as follows:

Takalani: I think one is much more organised… You begin with the learning outcomes and assessment standards, then your lesson planning and your assessment task … Initially it is more difficult, but once you master it, your teaching task is easier. I think the major change is that I now first consider what the child should be able to do. I first look at the assessment standards, which tell me what skills and abilities the child must master and then I plan my lessons accordingly. In the past, I looked at my lesson and then I asked myself, 'what do I want to achieve from this lesson? Now it is exactly the opposite.

Reinnette: We plan very carefully. First, we look at the learning outcomes and assessment standards and see what we want to use, and select the important things that we will assess. We plan our themes accordingly. The assessment standards give us guidelines and we find appropriate learning and teaching resources. Everything we do must link to an assessment standard. We do not just do something without a purpose. We must be able to assess learning.

Anna: When I plan my lessons, I use the worksheet (planning form), the teacher's guide and the policy document. I start doing the work schedule first for the whole term. Out of that work schedule, I make a lesson plan.

All the participant teachers stated that they were implementing the three Foundation Phase learning programmes and that their planning documentation reflects the design features, specifically learning outcomes and assessment standards, set out by the NCS. The teachers were unanimous in the view that it was initially a challenge to understand the complex planning requirements of the NCS because the process was so different to what they were used to. Moreover, they noted that planning their lessons according to the NCS had significantly increased their workload because lesson plans now have to contain more detail than they did before.

The National Department of Education's 98-page guideline document instructs teachers "to find ways to make the planning process manageable" (p.5). Regardless, participants, including those who had been implementing the NCS for several years, described the

challenges they encountered in preparing their lesson plans as "time consuming", "demanding", "tedious", "very difficult" and "exhausting". This is revealed below by excerpts from their responses:

Takalani: I think that for a young (novice) teacher just beginning her teaching career, the administrative tasks related to writing out the lesson plan is very difficult. Whereas in the past, we developed weekly lesson plans and we completed written planning for every lesson. Now it is work schedules and annual planning, it is all very time consuming, together with all the different lessons for numeracy, literacy and life skills. In addition, they must understand it all before they can plan effectively. We never had that in our training, so it is like using a foreign language; it makes it difficult for people to buy into the new ideas.

Jane: There's so much filing that they want. You have one file with all your work in it and then they want you to have another assessment file. Then they want you to have a portfolio file with all the work that you have done with the learners, then you have another assessment file for the learner.

The participant teachers pointed out that, with the exception of assessment reports on their learners, their lesson planning was the main mechanism of accountability because their work was largely assessed by their planning documentation and other "administrative tasks"[24] such as detailed assessment recording sheets (See Appendix 12). This method of accountability was introduced based on the assumption that others–instructional leaders, colleagues, departmental officials–could gain insight into what teachers were doing in their classrooms from their planning documentation. Only Site D's principal regularly reviewed teachers' written lesson plans, which they were required to submit to him on a weekly basis. He argued that their planning documentation enabled him to know exactly what they were doing in their classrooms because he assumed that they were not deviating from their plans when they were in fact doing so.

Site D principal: I'm quite sure that they are implementing the NCS because I look at their files, so I see the end product. I see how they compile a lesson… I

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[24] The administrative tasks referred to here have been addressed in the Department of Education's most recent review of the curriculum (Government Gazette No. 1227 dated 29 December 2009). Subsequently, the Gauteng Department of Education issued Circular 2/2010 to strengthen curriculum implementation. In particular, administrative tasks have been significantly reduced in order to "allow more time for the core business of teaching and learning in order to improve the quality of education and improve learner outcomes" (Gauteng Department of Education, 2010:2). However, this occurred after my fieldwork.

will see the whole process and they write it down so that I can see exactly how it happens.

The participant teachers stated that it was unlikely that anyone would see the presentation of their lesson plans. As noted by Natasha, "the departmental officials do not have the time to visit every teacher and mainly look at the files". Only Natasha and Anna had ever received class visits from departmental officials. Moreover, the teachers themselves revealed that in practice, they deviated from their planning for a range of reasons, as discussed below in section 5.5.3. Jane's (Site C) statement, "My classroom is my private space", reveals her beliefs and attitude towards what she perceives to be interference in her work. This contrasts radically with the international literature on teacher accountability, discussed in Section 2.4.5, particularly in terms of the importance of collegial and instructional support for Grade R teachers to implement the official curriculum. Rowan and Miller (2007:252) have noted that this is "why change frequently flounders at the classroom door"—teachers deviate significantly from their planning. The participant teachers followed different approaches in responding to the challenge of lesson documentation, as discussed further in section 5.5.3 below.

5.5.2 Purpose

In separate interviews, Natasha, Takalani, Isabel, Reinnette and Jackie (Site D), expressed the opinion that thorough planning ensured that their teaching had more purpose and a clearer direction because they knew what the policy expected from them, namely the minimum knowledge and skills that their learners had to acquire by the end of Grade R. The statements below explain the teachers' views of the new planning guidelines.

> *Jackie: The planning is more thorough than before. The planning must be much better as well. Otherwise, your class will be in chaos if you are unable to guide the lesson.*

> *Natasha: The NCS can enrich your approach to teaching. For example using group work and understanding that children are progressing at their individual pace. I think it is good. It offers you more opportunities in your teaching. You must be ready. You must be organised. You must plan your lessons thoroughly. I think for us, in Grade R it is easier because we work in groups on a daily basis. It allows us to be much more creative. We are not confined to books and pen-and-paper tasks. Everything is very concrete.*

However, Jane (Site C), Anna (Site B), Patricia and Paige (Site A) were slower to praise the guidelines. They argued that although the NCS had given their teaching more purpose and direction, they did not understand the need for the new planning requirements. In addition, they noted that they were not against planning *per se*, just the new "complex" and "more demanding" requirements for lesson planning.

> *Paige: Well, I definitely think the main change is that the NCS gives everyone a set level of what is expected of them—the learners, as well as the educators. Now there is a set standard of what they should be doing. I think that that is useful … I think telling teachers 'this (identifying learning outcomes) is what you need to be doing first before doing your activities' gives teaching a purpose. 'Why am I teaching this specific skill?'*

According to Jane, although she has *adopted* the new planning requirements, she still believes that it is "so demanding that I think teachers are exhausted by the time they get to the actual teaching". In Jane's opinion, there is a greater focus on written lesson planning than on actual teaching. In addition, Jane said that the planning requirements encroached on her leisure time.

> *Jane: Well, I usually do my planning in my holidays and weekends and I sit up very late at night. I have to tell you, my whole July holiday went because I just sat and I planned.*

5.5.3 Approach

The Grade R teachers at Sites A and B *adopted* the whole phase curriculum planning requirements, although this was not done immediately at Site A. Paige and Patricia revealed that they had previously *ignored* this requirement because they viewed the NCS as too formal for Grade R, but due to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) district officials' insistence on the new planning requirements, they *reluctantly complied*. The five Grade R teachers at Site D *adapted* this requirement by taking turns to do the planning for the whole group. However, although the five Grade R teachers planned as a group, they did not include their Foundation Phase colleagues in the planning. Jane (Site C) explained that she *resisted* including her Foundation Phase colleagues in her planning because she believed that they did not understand Grade R. She dismissed their feedback because she did not consider it to be constructive. Therefore, Jane planned her lessons completely in isolation.

Jane: They (referring to her Foundation Phase colleagues) looked at my work and they said when they checked my file, nothing was right.

The file Jane referred to above contained her lesson planning. In addition, she noted:

Jane: In order to follow the NCS more closely, I would say the school, the HoDs need firstly to be educated about how to work with Grade R, they first need to know it … but they must have a clear understanding that Grade R is a different concept to the Foundation Phase.

In contrast to Jane (Site C), Anna (Site B) noted that she enjoyed a good working relationship with her head of department (HoD) and Grade 1 colleague, who assisted her with her planning.

Anna: I am doing my own programme with the help of my HoD. She helps me with my planning, how to use the assessment standards. The Grade 1 teacher is next door to my class. Initially I asked her for help and she showed me how to use the assessment standards.

Anna (Site B) further stated that it took her a long time to make sense of the new lesson planning requirements, largely because she only received training in the NCS after she had begun implementing it.

Anna: The head of department first introduced me to the ASs (assessment standards) and LOs (learning outcomes). I found it difficult, because she was giving me a lot of work, including a lot of homework. She showed me and then she would say, "go and do it alone at home". I would go home and I would struggle and struggle. I would get a headache. The next day I'd come back and I'd show her what I'd done and then she'd rectify my work and then we would sit down again and she'd show me again and then I would sit down again (on my own) and it's then that I started understanding. Later the school organised the workshops on the NCS.

Anna further noted that when the National Department of Education introduced the Foundations for Learning Campaign (FFL) in 2008, her workload increased even further due to the additional requirements for lesson planning.[25] Anna explained that the FFL

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[25] This study is based on the NCS and not the FFL. I only mention the FFL here to illustrate that Anna experienced this as a further intensification of her already demanding and time-consuming lesson planning requirements.

required teachers to combine the "national curriculum with the milestones. I don't understand it." However, following her attendance of a GDE workshop that provided examples of lesson plans, Anna could explain what the GDE requirements were. Anna and her colleagues followed these examples and other scripted materials slavishly.

Anna: I am teaching according to the ACE book. The ACE book has the work set out according to themes for the whole year. Therefore, I choose the theme, and then I use it for two weeks or three weeks. When I finish it, I move on to the next one.

Jane's (Site C) experience was similar to Anna's. She noted that she struggled to understand the planning requirements of the NCS and that training had followed implementation.

Jane: I was actually put in the deep end. I did not have a clue what they were talking about. Then I taught myself from the NCS documents, I kept reading it and reading it… I finally got some idea what was happening. Then the Department decided to offer us a training workshop where they taught us how to do the learning programmes and work schedules, the lesson plans and how to assess…

At the time of my research, Patricia (Site A) had been implementing the NCS for three years without receiving any training. All three participants (Jane, Anna and Patricia) stated that they "figured it out" for themselves, using the NCS policy and Foundation Phase guidelines documents to do so.

Although Paige (Site A) stated that she *adopted* the NCS, she also stated that she regarded the NCS only as a "guideline". During my fieldwork in 2009, Paige received her first ever visit from a district departmental official, who was impressed with her classroom teaching but not with her lesson plans. As a result, Paige was compelled to change her planning to reflect the design features of the NCS, and stated that it amounted to a drastic increase in her administrative workload.

Paige: I do not even know anymore why I became a teacher. I am swamped with paper work. I feel as if I am a secretary. It is so much work. I do not get time for anything else. I am exhausted.

In contrast to Paige (Site A), Anna (Site B) and Jane (Site C), Isabel (Site D) argued that the benefits of planning according to the NCS outweighed the negative aspects.

> *Isabel: People always complain that the new statement forces them to do a lot of paperwork but it actually gives teaching more structure…The national curriculum statement forces all the schools to use one system… it's easier to communicate with other teachers what you've been doing in your class.*

When I first met Paige (Site A) at the beginning of 2009, she stated, "I am planning my lessons the same way I always have". By the middle of 2009, her lesson plans were compliant with the Department of Education's requirements. In addition, Paige noted that the instructions she received from district officials were clearer than before and that she understood what was required of her. However, 2009 was the sixth year of the implementation of the NCS in Grade R.[26] As her lesson plans reflect, Paige initially planned according to the actual sequence of activities in her daily programme. Despite complying with the planning requirements, Paige noted:

> *Paige: Can I be honest with you? I do not even look at it (my written lesson plans). I just follow my weekly forecast.[27]*

This suggests that Paige's compliance with the curriculum change was superficial.

As mentioned previously in section 5.5.2, the Grade R teachers at Site D also regarded the planning requirements as having resulted in the intensification of their workload. As a result, they *adopted* what they termed "an innovative team approach" to curriculum planning and implementation. Takalani, Natasha, Jackie, Reinnette and Isabel noted that they began their annual curriculum planning with group discussions of what they wanted to achieve during the year. This formed the basis of their work schedules, lesson plans, classroom activities and assessment tasks. Each teacher planned two themes per quarter. This included the preparation of all the required learning and teaching support materials, such as story illustrations, literacy flashcards and other apparatus. Their approach was developed as a solution to the time-consuming administrative tasks related to the NCS requirements.

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[26] It has taken six years because Grade R has gradually been phased-in since 2001 when the White Paper No. 5 on ECD was introduced.

[27] Paige's "weekly forecast" consisted of a single page summary of her written lesson plans for the week.

Takalani: All five Grade R teachers sit together and consider what we need to achieve for the year, what fits with the various themes. And then we sit with our assessment tasks, we plan that and then we go to our lessons, we then design activities that will suit the theme and the assessment standards and learning outcomes.

Isabel said that it had been easy to *adopt* her colleagues' team approach to curriculum planning when she commenced her teaching career the previous year.

Isabel: We are very lucky in the sense that all our planning is already linked to the national curriculum and the learning outcomes and assessment standards. Therefore, we know that everything we do is useful. Some people say they don't implement the national curriculum because they don't see how it relates, but once you really start working with it, whatever they've been doing for the past twenty years fits in with it anyway.

Takalani and Natasha were GDE master trainers on the NCS and facilitated training for teachers at other schools. Despite their identical written planning, all the participants at Site D pointed out that deviation was possible because each teacher could adapt the plan according to her "individual teaching style".

Isabel: Even though we all have the same planning, the five Grade R classes, we each have our own style of teaching and the children guide us.

In addition, they noted that it was important to be flexible during the execution of the lesson plan in order to accommodate learners' individual needs and responses to lessons, especially if their learners required additional challenges or support. According to these teachers, their flexibility in *adapting* their lesson plans meant that learners' prior knowledge and experiences could also be accommodated. Isabel further noted that the teachers allowed learners' interests to direct the teaching and learning process.

Isabel: We let the children's personalities and their previous knowledge guide us in what we are supposed to be doing. Sometimes I have a lesson planned and we have our activities for the day but then the children will come and they will say, "oh but look, I got this yesterday" and if the children are interested in that you take it from there.

Isabel incorporated her learners' comments and questions into her lesson presentations more than any other teacher participant did.

5.5.4 Content

Although the principals or heads of departments and officials from the District Department of Education monitored teachers' lesson plans, the Grade R teachers said that they did not receive feedback on the content of their lesson plans. According to the Grade R teachers, the most important thing for departmental officials was whether their planning illustrated that they followed the NCS.

The Foundation Phase is especially important for the development of language proficiency. By the end of Grade 3, learners must be able to read and write. For this reason, 40% of the Grade R daily schedule is devoted to literacy (National Department of Education 2003). The Grade R teachers at Sites B and D *adopted* home language instruction, since their learners all spoke Sepedi and Afrikaans at home respectively.[28] The Grade R teachers at Sites A and C pointed out that home language instruction was not possible for them because their learners had diverse home languages. Their schools were historically English-medium and they opted to retain English as the language of instruction.[29] Since the majority of their learners were not learning in their home language, the Grade R teachers at Sites A and C noted that this affected the content of their lesson planning. In particular, they focused extensively on developing oral language skills because their learners' English communication skills were limited. Jane stressed that some of her learners were unable to communicate in English at all at the beginning of the Grade R year.[30] She therefore devoted a considerable amount of time to teaching them English.

5.5.5 Assessment

The participant teachers adopted the new assessment requirements and were unanimous that the NCS contained clear assessment requirements and that teachers needed to be mindful of how their lesson planning was linked to the assessment of learning. Therefore, when teachers planned their lessons, they simultaneously planned for assessment. All the Grade R teachers indicated which assessment standards they were working towards in

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[28] Information provided by the Grade R teachers participating in this study.

[29] The learners at Sites A and C spoke a range of official South African languages as well as international languages (specifically French and Portuguese).

[30] According to Jane, these learners and their parents did not have the option of home language instruction because they originated from other African countries and their home languages included Portuguese and French.

their lesson plans. They agreed that assessment strategies for Grade R should be informal.

> *Jane: The NCS is useful because we now know what to assess. However, what I find difficult is that our activities are so vast in comparison to what they expect. I sometimes find it difficult to incorporate my activities with the actual assessments because I am doing so much more … It actually does not make sense to me … I do not think that Grade R should be like the other grades.*

All nine participant teachers said that they divided the assessment standards for Grade R into four groups, one for each quarter of the school year. Once each assessment standard was covered, the teachers did not focus on it again. For example, in the quotation below, Takalani described how the 142 assessment standards for Grade R, across the eight learning areas of the NCS, determined the content of learning, teaching and assessment.

> *Takalani: We take all the assessment standards and we divide them according to the four terms. During each term, we then only assess one lot of things. If a child does not achieve certain assessment standards, it carries over to the next term. Therefore, during the next term we go back to those things. So then you know, the first term I assessed this, the child can do it. What the child did not achieve I will focus on during the following term.*

The participant teachers held similar beliefs about how teachers should conduct assessment. For example, Anna stated that assessment should mainly occur through observation and should be unobtrusive so as not to detract from the learners' enjoyment of learning. In addition, she noted that assessment should be ongoing and should focus on all domains of the learner's development.

> *Anna: I assess my learners individually, according to the ASs… I assess every day, while they are playing outside, how they are listening, how they are eating, whether they are sharing with each other while they are playing, whether they are communicating with each other. In addition, I watch them during the story and that is when I record.*

Jackie noted that recording assessment was also a continuous process.

> *Jackie: Assessment is a continuous process. We do it every day. Each of us has a file with class lists and as we present our lessons and cover particular*

learning outcomes with their assessment standards, we note it on the class list and later record it on the department's assessment sheets.

Patricia's lesson planning was very detailed and revealed careful monitoring of each learner's skills and development throughout the Grade R year. She kept a detailed record of each learner's progress towards his or her attainment of the assessment standards.

5.5.6 Integration

All the teachers who participated in this study *adopted* the use of themes as an organisational framework and planned related activities for the three learning programmes, namely literacy, numeracy and life skills. The written planning of the Grade R teachers at Site D reflected a heavy reliance on themes and the majority of their activities were based on the chosen theme. However, although a theme was indicated in their written planning, some of their activities were unrelated to both the theme and the three learning programmes. For example, although Paige (Site A), Patricia (Site A), Anna (Site B) and Jane (Site C) planned according to the Foundation Phase learning programmes, there was limited articulation among the activities for literacy, numeracy and life skills. As a result, in many instances there was no clear connection between the theme and their classroom activities. This reveals pedagogical shortcomings. All the teacher participants described the sequence and content of their daily programme. They explained how each activity targeted one or more domains of learner development. All the Grade R teachers mentioned that they integrated the eight learning areas into the three Foundation Phase learning programmes.

> *Takalani: I think you need to look at your child. Then you decide. If the children require more stimulation, you would do much more around your interest table and group discussions and your language extension. Then you look at the skills that they still need to acquire and you focus on developing those skills.*

The participants at Site D stated that they planned for all domains of development according to the needs of their learners.[31] This is reflected in their written lesson plans (see Appendix 11). The theme provided the focus for the entire daily programme. There was strong articulation between the theme and the activities for the literacy, numeracy and life skills learning programmes. In addition, Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Jackie and

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[31] The domains of development include physical, social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual, aesthetic and moral development.

Isabel highlighted the importance of planning outdoor play activities. This is consistent with their views on the way in which Grade R learners should be taught and what they should learn. Patricia (Site A) described how her lesson planning integrated different skills.

> *Patricia: I think the assessment of the children is different. I plan my activities according to how far the assessment has progressed and I plan my activities so that they are progressive … I am not just looking at cutting skills. I am looking at whether they follow instructions. Can they cut? Can they paste? I have tried to integrate it more. I think the [national curriculum] statement is more of an integration using all the skills.*

In addition, Paige and Patricia's (Site A) second set[32] of planning illustrates that they followed a whole Foundation Phase lesson plan.[33] They linked their lesson plans to skills, knowledge, values and attitudes (SKVAs) as illustrated in Appendix 14.

The Grade R teachers at Site D also stated that they planned for "differentiation"[34], in that their written lesson plans could be *adapted* to accommodate the diverse needs, interests and abilities of their learners. The way in which they achieved this is not indicated in their written lesson plans.

5.5.7 Policy Time Allocations

Anna was the only participant whose planning clearly indicated that she *adopted* the time allocations stipulated by policy, the National Curriculum Statement.[35] The 26 Grade R assessment standards for the learner's first additional language also feature in Anna's lesson planning. Anna was the only participant who focused on first additional language by planning additional language activities. She taught English as the first additional language to her Sepedi learners. No other participant mentioned the assessment of additional language learners.[36] In Anna's case, this encroached on the 40% of time allocated for first

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[32] Their first set of planning consisted of a single-page table that summarised the objectives and materials of their main activities for the week.

[33] The whole Foundation Phase lesson plan contains the planning of lessons for the entire Foundation Phase.

[34] The term differentiation is used to refer to activities with varying degrees of complexity to accommodate learners' diverse needs, interests and abilities.

[35] The time allocation for the Foundation Phase Learning Programmes is 40% Literacy, 35% Numeracy and 25% Life Skills.

[36] Additional language learners are not learning in their home language but in their first or second additional language.

language development and instruction, since she was teaching two different languages in the same time allocation. As noted by Johnson (2005), choosing to learn in an additional language in Grade R is due to parents' demands that their children learn English as soon as possible. However, teachers are not required to introduce an additional language before Grade 3. By the end of the Foundation Phase[37], many African schools switch to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT).

5.5.8 Progression

The sequence, content and structure of lesson plans should promote a logical progression of learning. This should reveal how teachers will stimulate their learners' prior knowledge, how that prior knowledge relates to new knowledge and how the activities done in the classroom link to assessment. There should also be articulation across learning programmes, work schedules and lesson plans. Since the Grade R teachers randomly assigned assessment standards to four sets of themes (as noted in section 5.5.5), one for each quarter of the school year, it appears that they are not consciously planning for the progression of learning. Only Patricia (Site A) mentioned the importance of planning for progression. However, she worked towards the attainment of the assessment standards very gradually, which suggests that she was unaware that they are only minimum requirements. This contrasts with Site D's participants who emphasised that the assessment standards are merely the minimum requirements for each grade.

> Patricia: I think it gives you a clear indication of what you're supposed to be teaching, you're given pretty clear guidelines on the assessments that you should be making and that's what I base my activities on—the assessments, which is a progressive thing that we're supposed to be doing, that's basically what I base my activities on.

5.5.9 Differentiation

All the participant teachers stated that they were mindful of their learners' diverse needs and abilities. They therefore planned for a variety of activities that would maintain their learners' interest and active participation.

Despite all the participant teachers mentioning the importance of accommodating a range of needs and abilities, only Paige and Patricia's combined lesson plans included

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[37] The Foundation Phase is from Grade R to Grade 3.

'expanded opportunities'[38] and planning for learners who required additional support to achieve the assessment standards. These two participants were also able to explain how they *adapted* their activities to accommodate learners who required either additional challenges or additional support.

5.5.10 Review and Reflection

Only the participant teachers at Site D stressed the importance of the continuous reflection and improvement of their lesson plans. Planning for one year formed the basis of the following year's planning, which was *adapted* to suit the needs of their learners. Takalani, Reinnette, Natasha, Jackie and Isabel met weekly to plan and review their work schedules and lesson plans, and to reflect on their planning and instructional practice. They regarded this as an essential part of effective learning and teaching. All five teachers spoke about "ongoing learning", "constant improvement" and professional development, stating that, "you never know it all" and "you can always improve".

> *Isabel: Last year we planned all this year's lessons. We take each theme, we think about activities that link with that theme, and we think about activities we haven't done yet, what learning outcomes we haven't really done and we try to find things that can fill it up so that we cover all the outcomes and all the assessment standards. And the easiest thing, because we did it last year it's now just a repetition and things that didn't work last year, we put new things in and if we come across new ideas we put them in, we do this on a weekly basis. Then we know the lessons are all planned and ready.[39]*

5.5.11 Transition to Grade 1

Although all the participant teachers were unanimous in the belief that they were responsible for ensuring that their learners were prepared for the demands of formal learning in Grade 1, the approached learners' transition to Grade 1 in different ways. Some deliberately planned for transitions, while others were only mindful that their learners needed to be well prepared for Grade 1.

Only the participant teachers at Site D consciously planned for their learners' transition to Grade 1. Phatudi (2007) notes that very few teachers plan for transitions even though she

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[38] Expanded opportunities refers to more cognitively challenging activities.

[39] The Grade R teachers at Site D also mentioned that they planned and prepared their learning and teaching support materials two weeks in advance

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regards this as essential to learners' adjusting to Grade 1. Throughout the year, Takalani, Reinnette, Natasha, Jackie and Isabel held regular combined activities with the Grade R and the Grade 1 classes. Their learners met their Grade 1 teachers before the end of the Grade R year. The learning and teaching activities were also more structured towards the end of the Grade R year. Anna and Patricia said that they taught their learners "the skills they require in Grade 1". These skills related to gross and fine motor skills, perceptual motor skills and cognitive skills such as problem solving and language skills.

5.5.12 Summary of Findings related to Lesson Planning

As illustrated above, teachers' lesson planning is an individual activity although the teachers at Site D took turns to plan for the whole group and they regularly met to review their planning.

The Grade R teachers *adopted* the planning requirements of the NCS. They agreed that despite the fact that the complex planning requirements of the NCS was very time consuming and increased their workload, there were several benefits to the system. In particular, it had made their teaching more focused, organised and systematic. With the exception of the Grade R teachers at Site D[40], their main concern was the lack of feedback on their planning. They constantly asked me to evaluate their planning documentation, saying, "You teach this at the university". I explained that I could not do so because it would conflict with my role as a researcher

5.5.13 What does Grade R teachers' lesson planning reveal about their responses to curriculum change?

The teacher participants' lesson planning revealed their compliance with the curriculum policy, since all participants either *adopted* or *adapted* the NCS requirements for lesson planning. The Grade R teachers were aware that they would be assessed against their planning documentation. Furthermore, their lesson plans revealed their conceptual understanding of the NCS and their pedagogical knowledge. Participants with lower qualifications were more reliant on scripted materials. Paradoxically, the fully qualified teachers at Site D said that they had found that the NCS encouraged creativity. In addition, the qualified teachers consulted a wide range of resources to "get fresh ideas", and said that they continuously reflected upon and revised their planning. All the Grade R teachers

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[40] The Grade R teachers at Site D were confident that their planning was correct. As noted previously, two of the five participants were previously master trainers on the NCS.

agreed that the NCS demanded more intensive and time consuming planning, but that it was essential to be organised so that their teaching efforts would be more focused.

5.6 Classroom Practices

In this section, I describe the classroom practices I observed during lesson presentations that were based on the planning documentation discussed in the previous section.

Sub-question ii: Which classroom practices do Grade R teachers employ?

5.6.1 Grade R Philosophy and Pedagogy

When asked to describe their classroom practices, the Grade R teachers were unanimous that Grade R was a specialised programme that differed significantly from the rest of the Foundation Phase. In particular, the Grade R teachers agreed that Grade R learners should learn through play and that the entire curriculum should be informal. Hirsh-Pasek *et al.* (2009) describe this philosophy as "playful learning". The Grade R teachers pointed out that the NCS infringed on this because of its emphasis on the acquisition of formal skills. The Grade R teachers were unanimous in the belief that they aimed to develop their learners holistically, i.e. in all developmental domains.

> *Interviewer: How should Grade R be taught?*
>
> *Reinnette: Definitely through play. In the Foundation Phase, the whole approach to teaching children is formal. All we do is play. Well not really, our whole teaching methodology is learning through play but the children cut and paste and paint every day. It is all about creativity and outdoor play. You cannot believe at the end of the year when you stand back, how much the children have developed. Learning is play. Play is learning. That is how you will get children ready for Grade 1.*

With the exception of the Grade R teachers at Site D, the teachers were unsure of how to integrate the NCS into play-based activities. Instead, they presented formal academic tasks such as skill drills[41], and some gave their learners homework. However, all the Grade R teachers, including those at Site D, used worksheets at least once a day. Therefore, despite saying that learners should learn through informal, play-based

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[41] For example, they practised skills such as the pencil grip, cutting along lines, letter formation, number formation, rote counting and reciting the alphabet, the days of the week and months of the year on a daily basis.

activities, they all presented formal activities to some extent. All the Grade R teachers asserted that they regarded worksheets as a preparation activity for formal learning.

Despite being the only participant who had not had any formal ECE training, Jane (Site C) was also the only participant who noted that teachers could present worksheets in developmentally appropriate and fun ways.

> *Jane: The best way for a child to learn is through play. They need to develop their gross motor skills; they need a lot of outdoor play (and) fine motor development, which is very important and perceptual development. They need to see how things are done. Everything must be concrete for the Grade Rs… I would convert the worksheet into a board game.*

Jane was articulate regarding the differences in classroom practices between Grade R teachers and their Foundation Phase counterparts. She noted that there were increasing tensions between her and her Foundation Phase colleagues because of their lack of understanding of the Grade R teaching methodology and pedagogy. Similarly to Jane, Natasha (Site D) could explain the differences between Grade R and Grade 1. For example, she noted that Grade 1 teachers did not know what Grade R teachers did to prepare their learners for formal schooling. She emphasised that through outdoor free play, learners develop abilities such as hanging onto a bar of the jungle gym with their arms. This in turn develops their muscle tone[42], which is essential for concentration during classroom activities. Natasha began teaching Grade R in 2009 after being a Grade 1 teacher for 19 years which gave her a unique understanding of both Grade R and Grade 1.

> *Natasha: We are working hard, especially since I have come from Grade 1. I enjoy knowing where I am going. Therefore, I think it is important for a Grade 1 teacher to see "Wow! This is everything that these teachers are doing to prepare the children for us". Personally I think, especially regarding the outdoor play, I want it to be more structured.*

The Grade R teachers also agreed that they had changed their instructional practices when they *adopted* the NCS. For example, Jackie noted:

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[42] Muscle tone helps concentration by enabling children to sit upright. Children with low toned muscles tire quickly and tend to be restless and fidgety.

Jackie: Where we used to drill the answers into the learners, we must now teach them to discover it for themselves… through what they are doing, what is right and wrong so that they can explain what is right and wrong. I find that wonderful. They do not need us to give them the answers.

The above quotation suggests that Jackie grasped the implications of the constructivist approach and her role as a facilitator of learning. In Anna's (Site B) opinion, the NCS, combined with her relocation to a state primary school, significantly influenced her instructional practices. She believes that she has become a better teacher. However, although she expressed the opinion that learning should be informal, her learners completed formal academic tasks, in particular worksheets that required them to write.

Takalani, Natasha, Jackie, Reinnette and Isabel (Site D) pointed out that it was possible to be relaxed because the majority of their learners had prior preschool experiences and early stimulation in childcare settings as well as from their parents at home. They were also confident that their classroom practices were consistent with international best practice in preschool teaching. These participants noted that they could therefore extend their learners' prior learning experiences since they were already familiar with classroom routines and procedures. In addition, they noted that there was a seamless progression from the pre-reception year programme to Grade R and onto Grade 1. As a result, they were able to prioritize the well-being of their learners while still meeting the requirements of the official curriculum. Moreover, this explains why it was possible for them to "go beyond the curriculum" and do much more than the official curriculum required. They stressed that this did not mean that they proceeded with formal academic work, but rather that they were able to offer their learners opportunities for the reinforcement, practice and enrichment of the basic assessment standards.

Interviewer: What should children learn in Grade R?

Takalani: The most important skill is for the child to develop a positive self-concept and to believe in himself… It is important that we do not yet do formal work with them. So the skills are related to his physical development, language skills, everything through play.

Jackie: Every child must be treated as an individual according to their individual needs… emotional needs must be addressed. In addition, for next year (Grade 1), emotional intelligence is an important need so I think they need strong emotional support. I would say that activities need to ensure that the child

experiences success, they must be able to achieve it because it influences their emotional development.

As illustrated in the comments above, Jackie and Reinnette were mainly concerned about learners' emotional development. Although Takalani mentioned the importance of each learner developing a positive self-image, she included other domains of development, particularly physical and language (cognitive) development, as important areas. Jackie was the only member of the group who specifically mentioned social development. Significantly, they viewed Grade R as part of a progression of development and not as an isolated year-long programme. They all stated that they felt positive about the curriculum change and that they adjusted their teaching to meet the demands of the official curriculum. However, they readily admitted that they found some aspects of the curriculum challenging to implement, such as allowing children to take a more active role in their own learning.

Takalani, Natasha, Jackie, Reinnette and Isabel appeared to have a sound conceptual understanding of the official curriculum. However, they argued that with the exception of the time consuming planning requirements, there was not a major difference between the old and the new curriculum. They pointed out that the changes in their pedagogy were limited to their interactions with learners and the range of teaching strategies at their disposal, such as group work. Although Natasha, Jackie and Reinnette argued that a "mind shift" was initially required when implementing the new curriculum, Takalani stated,

> *Takalani: I think it was very important for schools that the entire approach to education changed. As far as Grade R education is concerned, the changes were not that radical. Mainly things got new names. In Grade R education, we have always been doing outcomes-based education.*

Takalani therefore believed that Grade R teachers were not implementing curriculum change because their existing practices were already compliant with the principles of the NCS.

5.6.2 Daily Programme and Routines

The daily programme consists of an outline of activities and routines that Grade R teachers follow in much the same sequence each day. The daily activities usually have the same duration and occur at roughly the same time each day. All the Grade R teachers noted that have always followed the same daily programme consisting of a variety of

structured, or teacher-directed, activities, free choice activities and routines for simple activities such as tidying up or going to the bathroom. It should be noted that the daily programme itself is viewed as a "routine". According to the participant teachers, routines are important because when the learners know what to expect, they feel more secure in themselves. Paige noted that if she left out an activity that was usually included in the sequence of daily activities, her learners would remind her that it still needed to be completed.

The sequence of daily activities is reminiscent of traditional preschool programmes. All the participant teachers noted that each day began with a morning ring[43], consisting of greeting each other, taking the attendance register, a bible story[44], prayers, learner's news, weather, Letter Land™ or Thrass™ and a themed discussion.[45] The participant teachers explained that sharing their news allowed learners to speak about their families and that this gave the teachers insight into their learners' domestic situations. As the learners told their news aloud to the class, the teacher wrote a sentence or two on a flip chart (modeling writing). Thereafter, the learner drew a picture about their news on the flip chart.

The participant teachers tended to focus on a specific aspect of the theme each day in the theme discussion. For example, if the theme was wild animals, the teacher would focus on a specific type of wild animal each day. The discussion would include aspects such as the appearance and characteristics of the animal, where it lived and what it ate. The theme table contained a display of posters, pictures and objects related to the discussion. Anna was the only teacher who did not have a theme area in her classroom. Although during interviews the Grade R teachers stated that the learners guide the lessons and are more active participants than before the NCS was introduced, their lesson presentations suggest that learners have limited influence on the content or manner in which the lesson unfolded. For example, if a learner said, "a pony is a wild animal", the teacher would respond, "no, we're not talking about that now" without clarifying whether or not a pony was a wild animal. Anna's learners mainly responded "yes" or "no" to her questions, suggesting the absence of higher order questions. Jane provided a great deal of information on the theme and did not ask questions. Instead, she repeatedly enquired, "Are you listening? You need

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[43] "Rings" are also referred to as "circle time" in the international literature. It is a whole class activity, directed by the teacher.

[44] Despite the National Policy on Religion and Education (2003) stating that bible stories should not be part of the curriculum, all nine participants are still presenting (telling or reading) bible stories on a daily basis.

[45] Letter Land™ and Thrass™ are phonics programmes designed to help learners to read, write and spell.

to know this in Grade 1". Several participants noted that they perceived themselves to be under pressure to cover what they planned and therefore could not allow the learners to sidetrack them. This is similar to Hacker and Rowe's (1998:95) observation that official curricula are overloaded, resulting in ECE teachers needing to cover more curriculum content than they did previously.

The Grade R teachers at Site D pointed out that the morning ring presented an opportunity to integrate many learning areas and to cover all three Foundation Phase learning programmes. For example, Isabel stated that her discussion of the days of the week (the number and names of the days of the week)[46], the seasons of the year and the weather conditions dealt with the passage of time and included both literacy and numeracy. Isabel stressed that she implemented the NCS "all the time… integrated into all activities".

After the theme discussion, the Grade R teachers introduced the day's creative art activities such as modeling clay or dough, painting, drawing, cutting and pasting, collage, box construction and weaving activities. These activities varied each day so that learners could experience and experiment with a variety of materials and techniques. For example, drawing activities were offered using charcoal, pencils, oil pastels, crayons, pencil crayons or felt tip pens and the teachers rotated the materials. In addition, there was most often a choice available from a variety of activities prepared by the teacher.

The Grade R teachers at Site D put their learners into groups, and each group completed an activity before moving onto the next one, until all the activities were completed by all the learners. During this time, the teacher moved from group to group, commenting on what they were doing, offering suggestions and assisting those who needed help. They also reminded their learners to "use enough glue" so that their pictures would stick to the page, to "cut along the lines" and to "colour in between the lines" and in one direction. The teachers emphasised that a variety of skills were acquired through these activities, including decision making when choosing an activity, completing the activity they chose, sharing materials, tidying up where they had worked before moving on to the next activity and cooperating with peers during group activities. Site D's participants did not combine indoor free play with the creative art activities. Instead, their learners engaged in free play

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[46] Learners completed the weather chart each morning. It required them to complete the following sentences: "Today is … Yesterday was … Tomorrow will be …" using flashcards printed with the names of the days of the week.

activities prior to commencing the daily programme as they arrived in the morning or while they waited for their parents to fetch them in the afternoon.

With the exception of Paige, Patricia and Anna, the Grade R teachers offered a choice of four or five activities during indoor free play. In addition to creative art activities, teachers allowed their learners to play freely in the fantasy area, book area, discovery area, block area and writing area. In some cases, the teachers insisted that art activities should be completed before allowing their learners access to other areas.

The second ring of the day consisted of music or movement activities. Singing and dancing were included in all nine teachers' daily routines. At Sites A and C, music activities featured more prominently than movement activities. At Site B, music and movement activities were integrated into literacy and numeracy activities. For example, Anna presented a numeracy lesson on the number five. While her learners sang, they clapped their hands five times, hopped five times and stamped their feet five times.

At Site D, the learners had separate music and movement activities. Once a week, movement activities took place on the sports field. Activities such as throwing balls, balancing on beams and hopping from hoop to hoop were presented as group activities. In addition, a part-time music teacher presented a theme-related music ring once a week.

In all instances, the daily programme concluded with a story ring. Some participants told a story using illustrations such as puppets or pictures, while others read the story directly from a children's book. All the Grade R teachers viewed the story ring as an informal and relaxed activity. They stated that they encouraged their learners to develop a love for books and reading. The Grade R teachers at Site D noted that they often presented joint story rings and puppet theatres for all five Grade R classes.

With the exception of Anna, the Grade R teachers noted that they alternated structured activities with free choice activities. The Grade R teachers at Site D noted that they designed a large variety of activities to meet the holistic needs of their learners. In addition to the activities mentioned above, they presented technology and science activities, educational games such as building puzzles and Lego™ construction, water play, sand play and food preparation activities. The daily programme was uninterrupted and they remained with their learners from 07:00 until 13:30. The preschool staff observed and supervised the outdoor play area from seven "observation points" located next to the apparatus.

Jane and Anna noted that they accommodated the three Foundation Phase learning programmes in their daily programmes (see lesson in appendix 11).

> *Jane: Once the children have all arrived in the morning we do numeracy—the date and the calendar and literacy—the theme discussion. Then we do the lesson that has been planned for the day… Then we have our lunch break and then we have life skills then we go outdoors to play and then it is time to go home or to after-care.*

> *Anna: In the morning, the children arrive and we go to assembly. We have a prayer and then go back to class. Then we start with greeting each other. Asking each other 'how do you feel?' We talk about our birthdays and our weather chart. Then we can start with our numeracy programme and then we do literacy and then life skills. That is what we do for the whole day. We paint, we cut, we paste, we draw, and we do exercises outside. It depends on our theme.*

Jane noted that a large number of her learners had to get up very early in the morning because they travelled a long distance to get to the school. She therefore allowed them to sleep on a mat for up to an hour before starting her activities, which greatly reduced her teaching time. When some of the children were sleeping, the rest of the class engaged in free choice indoor activities such as puzzles, reading books or fantasy play.

Reinnette stated that although teachers followed their lesson plans as far as possible, it was also important to be flexible.

> *Reinnette: The typical school day, at least how it's on paper, is what you follow each day. You plan certain activities and then there are the routines… However, it does not always happen exactly in that order. Often the moms want to chat to you, so you may be busier in the mornings, or you may have a sick learner or a heart sore learner so you always have to be well prepared so that everything is ready but you also have to be flexible. If a child is not well, that is your priority. Sometimes the programme is disrupted by the school's extra-curricular activities if these occur during school time.*

5.6.3 Rapport with Learners during Lesson Presentations

All the participant teachers, with the exception of Patricia, mentioned the importance of establishing a rapport with their learners and getting to know them, their backgrounds and

their home circumstances well. Some of them noted that they were substitute mothers to their learners while they were at school. The participant teachers frequently mentioned that their learners' happiness was a priority. They generally smiled a great deal during their lesson presentations and appeared relaxed. As noted at the start of this chapter, the participant teachers stated that they would do whatever it took "to get the learner going" (Jane), and that the teachers' role included entertaining the learners (Takalani and Natasha). Several participants voluntarily mentioned that they enjoyed their work. Bearing this in mind, note the contrast between the two extracts below::

Extract 1: Observation notes, February 2009

Paige kicked off her high-heeled sandals and danced among her learners while they sang together. The classroom atmosphere is relaxed and busy. The learners appear carefree and happy. They seem eager to please her. They keenly follow her instructions, promptly respond to instructions and participate actively. Everyone is smiling.

Extract 2: Observation notes, February 2009

Patricia sat at her desk calling out instructions. She frequently raised her voice and sounded impatient. She repeatedly instructed her learners to listen and pay attention and not to speak to members of their group while they were completing their worksheets.

5.6.4 Classroom Management

The Grade R teachers' classrooms strongly resembled informal preschool environments. This was most noticeable at Site D, since the Grade R classes were part of the preschool section of the primary school and separate from the rest of the school. Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie emphasised that their learners were still too young for too much structure. For example, they stated that their learners could snack from their lunchboxes if they were hungry at any time during the daily programme. They also emphasised the importance of allowing learners to choose their own activities from a range of activities prepared by the teacher.

The two Grade R classrooms at Site A were located at the back of the school and slightly apart from the rest of the school. However, Paige and Patricia differed in their classroom management approaches. Paige's learners appeared free and the noise level was consistent with a busy and active classroom. On the other hand, the atmosphere in Patricia's classroom was much more controlled. Throughout the first lesson I observed, Patricia constantly reprimanded her learners, saying, "you're not listening". On my second visit to Patricia's classroom, the atmosphere was far more relaxed. Patricia was actively involved with the learners at their tables while they were engaged in group work activities and lively discussions as they cut and pasted pictures from newspapers and catalogues. The learners appeared to be enjoying the activity and helped tidy up the classroom afterwards. On the first occasion, my presence as a researcher may have inhibited Patricia, but this disruption seemed to have decreased by my second visit. One consistent observation was Patricia's efficient classroom management. Her classroom had a low noise level, which is atypical for Grade R. Perhaps this was consistent with the fact that her priority is to prepare her learners for formal school.

Sites B and C's Grade R classes were located next door to the Grade 1 classes. The Grade R teachers at these sites frequently reminded their learners to lower their voices so as not to disturb the neighbouring classes.

5.6.5 Continuous Assessment

The Grade R teachers continuously assessed their learners, and said that they preferred informal assessment methods, particularly observation. As the Grade R teachers presented their lessons, they took note of their learners' attainment of the assessment standards. Everyone did this, except Paige, as indicated below.

> *Paige: We cover all the assessments. At the end of the year I say, "Right, have I gone through this assessment standard, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes". I make sure I cover all the assessment standards. However, I do not go and say, "Right, I'm doing this activity, which assessment standard links up with this activity?" I do not do that. I do my prep as normal and then just make sure I cover all the assessment standards, by the end of the year.*

During separate interviews, Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie all stressed that the official curriculum specifies "the very minimum requirements" for each grade. This

contrasts with Paige and Patricia's (Site A) view that the assessment standards denote exactly what should be achieved by the end of the year.

> *Natasha: I assess continuously. I am among the children the whole time, involved with them. This morning, quite incidentally, I noticed a child who needs assistance with his pencil grip. Then I made a note of it so that I remember that I have to check it again.*

Patricia noted that the results of Grade R assessments determine the learners' readiness for school. She noted that the Department of Education, and even more so the parents, held teachers accountable for their learner's progress. This is consistent with the international literature on "high stakes assessment".

5.6.6 The Prevalence of Worksheets

All the Grade R teachers presented worksheets[47] as either a group or whole class activity and either separately or part of indoor free play. Paige, Patricia and Anna used literacy and numeracy worksheets extensively. Jane largely used life skills worksheets. Paige also sent worksheets home as homework tasks to "foster parent involvement". The Grade R teachers at Site D stated that they favoured perceptual worksheets to develop perceptual skills.

All the participant teachers used worksheets on a daily basis and agreed that one of the reasons for doing so was preparing their learners for Grade 1, which required familiarising them with worksheets. Furthermore, producing tangible evidence of learning was often the underlying motivation for the use of workbooks and worksheets.

Patricia pointed out that although parents in particular placed pressure on teachers to demonstrate tangible evidence of their children's learning and development, it was difficult for Grade R teachers to produce this evidence.

> *Patricia: It is very difficult to justify to parents how much work you have done if you cannot put it in a file. Not everything you do can be put in a file. Like sequencing and threading, and fine motor. These things cannot be put in a file; their gross motor skills, their social skills, they cannot be put in a file.*

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[47] The learners were very enthusiastic to complete the worksheets. The Grade R teachers noted that parents "like worksheets because it looks like real work".

Paige also noted that she used workbooks because "parents want to see what they are paying for". In sites with abundant resources, teachers could record learners' engagement in activities with the use of digital cameras or video recordings[48]; however this is not possible at sites with limited resources.

As noted above, the Grade R teachers at Site D said that they used perceptual worksheets on a daily basis as activity to prepare the learners for formal schooling. This contrasts with Paige's view that perceptual worksheets were not developmentally appropriate for Grade R learners.

> *Paige: I do believe that by the time our kids get to Grade 1, they have been exposed to worksheets so they know what to do. It does benefit them. I do not believe that they should be doing perceptual worksheets, I do not, and they are. I am doing four worksheets a week…*

5.6.7 Accommodating Parents' Demands

Several participants argued that the content of their lessons was partly influenced by parental demands, particularly for increasing formal academic skills. These participants emphasised that the majority of parents expected their children to learn to read and write during the Grade R year. Paige noted that parents were enthusiastic above homework tasks such as completing worksheets which required written work to be completed because it "looked like real work to parents". As illustrated below, Paige also stated that parents had clear expectations of the Grade R programme.

> *Interviewer: What do parents want their children to learn in Grade R?*

> *Paige: That is a very, very interesting question. Because you know what every single parent says to me? "Is my child ready for Grade 1?" They do not care what they are learning now, their only concern is whether their children will be ready for Grade 1.*

5.7 Factors Informing Grade R Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

Sub-question iv. What informs Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change?

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[48] One example is the Reggio Emilia programme where teachers have no written planning and the learners' interests and reactions to exploration of their environment determine the direction of the emergent curriculum. However, these teachers are very highly qualified and are able to follow the children's interests and facilitate their learning in a dynamic way.

5.7.1 Teacher Capacity

I begin my discussion on the factors informing Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change by considering their existing capacity to implement the NCS. As noted in Table 5.2, the participant teachers held various qualifications but all except Jane have undergone accredited specialised training on ECE. Jane did not have any formal qualifications but had undergone extensive non-formal NGO training on ECE and GDE training on the NCS.

All the participant teachers were confident in their ability to work with young children. Some of them were more knowledgeable and articulate about the universal milestones, particularly where typically developing five-year-old learners should be in their development at various stages during the Grade R year. For example, Patricia frequently referred to the universal milestones for five-year-olds. Since she had not undergone any training on the NCS, she was using the traditional approach.

As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, teachers' responses to curriculum change are categorised according to McLaughlin's (1987) study on the internal and external factors that influence how teachers respond to curriculum change.

5.7.2 External Factors

Professional development, resources and support constitute the main external factors that influence teachers' responses to curriculum change. As noted in section 2.5.2, these are organisational conditions and characteristics of the infrastructure teachers require in order to implement change effectively.

5.7.2.1 Professional Development

In this section, I focus specifically on Continuing Professional Development for Teachers (CPDT). The Grade R teachers regarded continuous professional development as essential for increasing their capacity to implement curriculum change. However, they differed in their opinions on the usefulness of GDE sponsored professional development opportunities. Takalani was critical of the Department of Education's emphasis on the curriculum itself in their professional development programmes. She argued that this was the reason why many teachers did not find departmental training useful.

> Takalani: I think as far as the Department of Education is concerned, they focus so strongly on the National Curriculum that they sometimes forget that teachers in Grade R are looking for practical things that they can do.

Similarly, Jane emphasised the need for practically orientated professional development opportunities.

> *Jane: I think we need more workshops. Workshops not just in the sense of giving us information, but also allowing teachers to do hands-on work. I still remember when I attended workshops 24 years ago it was hands-on. Teachers need to know, "How are we going to apply this?"*

It appeared that Grade R teachers' access to training depended largely on how long they had been teaching at state primary schools. If their relocation from community-based or private preschools was relatively recent, their access to training programmes had been very limited when they were employed at other institutions. This implies that Grade R teachers at non-school settings had even more limited access to training on the NCS than their counterparts at primary schools. For example, Patricia has been teaching at a state primary school since 2006, but all her colleagues at the school attended training on the NCS in 2003. It is also worth noting that training followed implementation of curriculum change.

There appeared to be competing priorities for professional development for ECD teachers. On the one hand, teachers required training on the curriculum, and on the other hand, they required training on children's development and teaching methods. In particular, skills programmes appeared to compete with more general qualifications. For example, Patricia, who holds a Level 5 qualification in ECE, noted that it was her understanding that all the GDE-sponsored training opportunities prioritized teachers without NQF Level 4. She noted that this was the reason why she had not attended any GDE professional development, including training on the NCS. She noted, "I am figuring it out for myself". However, she readily acknowledged that she needed training on the planning requirements of the official curriculum.

> *Patricia: I think you could go through it on your own, even with the amount of experience that I have, but there are certain areas that need clarification. You know, looking through it with somebody else's eyes, they can give you an easier way to do it. This is why I have this book, this works for me. But maybe there is another way. I have not been exposed to it so I do not know.*

In addition, Patricia stated that she would like to undergo training that dealt with the assessment requirements of the official curriculum, the different methods of assessment

and "different levels of assessment". Planning for differentiation and different levels of assessment is especially important within an inclusive classroom where learners have diverse needs, interests and abilities. Differentiation was a challenge mentioned by the fully qualified teachers[49] as well. Identifying this complex issue demonstrated the depth to which Patricia had grappled with the official curriculum. As noted by Jansen (1999), a sophisticated curriculum such as outcomes-based education demands well trained teachers with access to continuous professional development.

Since her employment at a state primary school, Paige had increased opportunities for ongoing professional development. These training programmes were unrelated to the NCS. Her only training on the NCS was a single five-day-long workshop sponsored by the GDE "back in 2003". She had not had further training on the NCS specifically, possibly because she already holds a Level 5 Diploma. According to Paige and Patricia, Grade R teacher training programmes were prioritising teachers with Level 4 certificates. During my interview with Paige's principal, he stated that the GDE would be providing increased opportunities for ongoing professional development for his staff. However, this had not occurred during the period of my fieldwork. In Paige's opinion, she had limited access to professional development opportunities because "the department's training is for teachers who still needed to complete Level 4." She also indicated that she perceived departmental training to be of "poor quality."

> *Interviewer: Are you following the official curriculum?*
>
> *Paige: I do have it (the curriculum policy). Can I be honest with you? I went on the training course and I was very confused, very, very confused. It was like a stack of information, blasted at us at the same time, over one week and we had to know everything. If you ask me, "what's LO1?" I cannot tell you the LOs and I cannot tell you the assessment standards. I cannot tell you that off by heart. I just look at the policy and that tells me. However, they expected us to be learning this all off by heart and to me that is not my job.*

There was a great deal of consistency between Paige's views and those expressed by her principal. They were in agreement that the Department of Education's professional development programmes were not useful and that there was insufficient support for Grade R to be implemented effectively in all state primary schools.

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[49] The fully qualified teachers hold the equivalent of Bachelor's degrees specialising in ECE.

Principal Site A: The Department of Education should give us clear guidelines, exactly what they want… specifically for Grade R and training for teachers…

The principal also expressed concern that the GDE training for Grade R teachers had not led to significant changes in their instructional practice because he "did not observe any major changes … because the NCS basically ties in with what they are already doing".

Anna repeatedly noted that she was motivated to study further and that professional development programmes had enabled her to *adopt* the curriculum changes. She regularly attended workshops.

> *Anna: I can say that this curriculum has influenced my teaching because we have workshops, we are learning skills, and the clusters are useful. That is why I have decided to further my studies. I have started enjoying my teaching.*

Takalani, the head of the preschool department at Site D, facilitated on-site training for Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie. According to Takalani, the school budgeted for training and every staff member had a minimum of two opportunities per year to attend training. These five teachers were all fully qualified and met the requirements of the Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) since they had four years of specialised ECE teacher training. In addition, some of them were enrolled in postgraduate programmes. They did not find the Gauteng Department of Education's workshops useful because "we are ahead of what they are offering". However, although they *ignored* advice from GDE workshops, they continued to attend to ensure that they did not miss anything and remained up-to-date.

> *Takalani: We have training weekly… I would say, every week in meetings, we focus on something, for example policy documents or how does your classroom look? On the other hand, how do you do outdoor supervision? Every teacher gets an opportunity once a term to attend a course of the AECYC[50] or the SAOU. Therefore, we give teachers the opportunity. Every year, we budget a certain amount for training. Teachers are encouraged to attend at least one or two courses every year.*

All five participant teachers at Site D indicated that they were satisfied with their access to professional development opportunities. They stressed that "one never knows enough",

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[50] The Association for the Education and Care of Young Children (AECYC).

that they regarded professional development as an ongoing process and that they were committed to ensuring that they kept abreast of developments in order to continuously *adapt* and improve their practice. In addition, they were training teachers at poorer schools to support them in implementing the new curriculum.

(i) Recognition of Prior Learning

Although Jane had no formal qualifications, she has 24 years of experience as an ECE teacher, and entered a Level 5 training programme at the University of South Africa (UNISA) through recognition of prior learning (RPL). She attended several workshops organised and presented by the Gauteng Department of Education. Jane noted that she found the quality of the training impressive because she had learnt a great deal and was implementing the GDE officials' advice in her classroom.

(ii) Unintended Consequences of Professional Development

The participant teachers at Site D were qualified and received salaries comparable to their Foundation Phase counterparts. However, the rest of the Grade R teachers pointed out that professional development would eventually lead to them leaving their Grade R posts in search of better remuneration. For example, Anna noted that she planned to pursue further studies in the Foundation Phase and was likely to teach Grades 1, 2 or 3 in the future. This was the dilemma for all the participant teachers undergoing programmes that would lead to a recognised qualification. They argued that their need for career advancement compelled them to teach higher grades.

5.7.2.2 Resources

In this section, I address human and material or financial resources separately.

(i) Human Resources

Jane was the only participant teacher who had a full-time teaching assistant. She noted that this enabled her to provide her learners with more individual attention. This may also explain why Site C's school fees were the highest. The teachers who did not have full-time teaching assistants said that they had to be present and alert "every second of the day" because it was their responsibility to ensure their learners' safety. They further noted that their ability to provide individual attention was limited. This was especially applicable to Anna who had 46 Grade R learners in her classroom. Paige and Patricia had a ratio of 1:32. The participant teachers at Site D had a ratio of 1:18. In addition, the participant

teachers at Site D had three teaching assistants for their 10 preschool classes. They also noted that they often had students from several higher education institutions doing their practice teaching in their classrooms. The teachers attributed this to the high quality of mentoring the students receive from them. They welcomed the students' presence in their classrooms because it increased their human resource capacity.

Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie were qualified and therefore collectively constituted a considerable Grade R resource, especially since they worked as a team at the same primary school. Two of them had been master trainers for the GDE when the NCS was introduced and facilitated training for teachers at schools across the district.

(ii) Material Resources

Material resources consist of indoor and outdoor resources that can be used for learning and teaching during the daily programme.

(a) Indoor Resources

Indoor resources refer to learning and teaching resources used inside the classroom. In this regard, the situation of participants differed significantly.

With the exception of Anna, all the participant teachers stated that they were largely satisfied with their indoor resources. Takalani, Reinnette, Isabel, Jackie and Natasha were especially satisfied with what they described as their "typical preschool classrooms". The other three Grade R teachers were unanimous in the belief that their classrooms were not conducive to preschool learning and teaching because they had infrastructural inadequacies, such as insufficient space to accommodate the various discovery areas[51], and limited access to running water and child-size toilets. The most urgent need identified by Anna was books suitable for Grade R learners. She explained that the only books in the classroom belonged to her own children. Anna also identified the need for a sandpit, adequate outdoor space (even though this is not possible due to a lack of space), child-size toilets and hand basins as well as running water inside the classroom. Three of the four research sites had inadequate outdoor play facilities.

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[51] Discovery areas inside a preschool classroom include a theme area, nature area, book area, writing area, science area, fantasy area, block area, quiet play area, music area, etc. Grade R teachers combined these areas into a numeracy area, literacy area and life skills area—one dedicated to each Foundation Phase Learning Programme.

Anna: We have limited space and children need space to explore without hurting other children. Therefore, it is just too small even inside the class. Our classrooms are too small for the number of learners. For example, our life skills area is too small. I cannot put ten children there. Even our play area is too small; we do not have shelter there, no trees.

Anna noted that her access to learning and teaching support materials was severely restricted because of her location at a no-fee school. The Grade R learners' were expected to pay school fees of R50 per month, which was specifically intended for purchasing learning and teaching support materials, but the majority of parents were unable to pay due to very high unemployment rates. Anna's principal confirmed that very few parents actually paid the fees on a regular basis and argued that the Department of Education should therefore provide all the required resources.

Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie stated that they regarded themselves as privileged to be teaching at a well-resourced school. They reported that they had "everything we need" since the school had gradually acquired resources over a 16 year period and that they took great care to ensure that their resources were well maintained. These teachers were therefore able to plan their lessons with a range of resources that they consulted to get "fresh ideas". This also enabled them to constantly review, *adapt* and improve their curriculum planning. During the past three years, they contributed to building up the resources of an inner city school. Although these participants readily acknowledged that their school was well resourced, they stressed that this did not mean that there were no challenges at the school. In particular, the principal, Mike, noted that the majority of buildings were prefabricated and that the school wanted to replace these with brick structures.

Patricia was largely satisfied with her classroom and her indoor resources. She identified her needs as running water inside the classroom and lockers for learners to store their bags so that they would no longer be a tripping hazard. This may have contributed towards her reluctance for her learners to move around the classroom. According to Patricia, the only equipment in her classroom supplied by the Department of Education was a first aid box containing basic supplies such as gloves and plasters.

As expected, the underqualified[52] Grade R teachers rely heavily on scripted materials, despite having a wealth of practical experience. They were uncertain how to implement the NCS in informal, developmentally appropriate ways. In addition, they perceived themselves as under pressure to ensure that their learners were school ready by the end of the year-long Grade R programme.

(b) Outdoor Resources

All the participant teachers have *adopted* outdoor play as an activity in their daily programmes. Only Site D had a well-resourced outdoor area. Most of them had also *adopted* the department's recommendation that the outdoor play area should be reserved for the exclusive use of the Grade R class. At Sites B, C and D, the outdoor play area was fenced off and older children were not allowed to use the equipment. At Site A, the participant teachers pointed out that they too would be *adopting* the recommendation in the near future, because the children in the after school care programme, who were much heavier than their Grade R learners, had damaged the equipment.

The greatest need Patricia, Paige and Jane identified was for safe and durable outdoor play equipment. They stated that although they wanted to *adopt* this requirement, their schools lacked the money to purchase suitable equipment. The participants at Sites A, B and C all stated that they relied on their principals to improve their outdoor play resources. All three principals also mentioned this as one of their priorities in their resource planning.

5.7.2.3 Support

Teachers need a range of support to enable them to respond positively to the NCS. This is discussed under two separate headings: (a) support from within the school, and (b) support from outside the school.

(i) Within the School

The literature confirms the importance of providing teachers with ongoing school-based support in implementing curriculum change. School-based support includes the provision of instructional leadership as well as support from the principal and Foundation Phase head of department. While the international literature highlights the role of the principal as an instructional leader, this is not applicable in South Africa since policy mandates that instructional leadership should be provided by heads of departments. All four sites

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[52] These teachers are classified as underqualified because their qualifications do not meet the requirements for REQV 14.

principals confirmed that they did not provide instructional leadership and referred any technical questions related to Grade R pedagogy or content to the Foundation Phase head of department. Principals also noted that they relied on the Foundation Phase heads of department for feedback on the Grade R teachers' curriculum implementation. Two of the four principals regularly visited the Grade R classrooms and only one participated in classroom activities.

From the data it emerged that teachers received support from heads of department and officials from the District Department of Education. The participant teachers were unanimous in the view that their principals had created the conditions that enabled them to adopt and adapt the new curriculum. This is consistent with Rosenholtz's (1989:430) view that principals create the organisational features that support curriculum change in schools. Moreover, principals influence the teachers' capacity to implement curriculum change by exhibiting critical support, a desire for change and the belief that change is possible (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006:90). While external factors affected internal factors, principals themselves greatly influenced internal factors, particularly Grade R teachers' job satisfaction due to remuneration and conditions of service as well as their efficacy, commitment and effectiveness (Day 2008:252) and emotions regarding change (Hargreaves 2005).

There appeared to be very limited pedagogical engagement between Grade R teachers and their principals. The principals were all more knowledgeable about Grade R than the participant teachers credited them to be. Significantly, although several teachers viewed their principals as "ignorant" of Grade R, their principals and the teachers held similar views on the introduction of the NCS in Grade R. This suggests that principals and teachers seldom discussed pedagogical matters. The participating teachers were unaware that all four principals agreed that the NCS was too rigid and formal for Grade R learners. Instead, principals believed that Grade R learners should "mainly be playing". Anna and her principal (Site B) held opposing views on what Grade R learners should be learning. Although her principal stressed the importance of learners being active, learning through play and having fun while learning, Anna's learners sat quietly on the mat most of the time because there was no space for them to move around and play. Similarly, Jane (Site C) was unaware that her principal agreed with her views regarding Grade R pedagogy. Instead, Jane assumed that her principal did not know much about Grade R at all.

As noted previously in section 5.7, Anna stated that she received support from her HoD, Foundation Phase colleagues and GDE officials, especially the GDE officials who facilitated the training sessions she attended and who visited her classroom on an annual basis. Anna was the only participant who received any GDE visits prior to 2009. She noted that these visits aided her in *adopting* the curriculum change. Anna further said that she received support from her Foundation Phase colleagues, especially the Grade 1 teacher, and her HoD, and practical assistance from her colleagues mentioned above, in completing her written lesson planning.

Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie received a great deal of support from one another. They regarded themselves as friends as well as colleagues. They individually stated that they enjoyed a positive collegial relationship that provided support for them on a professional and personal level. They had worked together for several years and viewed their approach to curriculum planning as fundamentally designed to enable them to work as a collective and to make positive *adaptations* to the curriculum. The rapport among them was obvious. They stated that they enjoyed a strong support network. In particular, within the school, the Grade R teachers received support from the principal, their Foundation Phase colleagues and therapists who rented classrooms on the premises and provided support for the learners. This enabled the teachers to be responsive to individual learners' needs and to provide early identification and intervention where problems occurred.

> *Takalani: I can also say that we have a very strong support network of therapists. We have an occupational and a speech therapist on the premises…*
> *We have very strong support from the therapists. Moreover, if we need anything, the principal is supportive. We actually have a strong support network.*
>
> *Interviewer: How do you relate to the Foundation Phase teachers at your school?*
>
> *Reinnette: We have a very open relationship. Once a week, we attend meetings. Because we are working according to the learning outcomes and assessment standards, the Grade 1 teacher can just carry on.*

Natasha noted that it was sometimes necessary for Grade R teachers to clarify their curriculum focus for their Grade 1 colleagues:

Natasha: We always have meetings where we sit together and they may say '
you know, it seems to us that certain things are not yet in place'… then this side
will say, 'no, it's not in our curriculum. We can't really do that for you yet.'

At other schools, however, the lack of collegial support and the absence of feedback on their teaching resulted in professional isolation. This may explain Jane's assertion that "my classroom is my private space".

(ii) From Outside the School

Sources of support from outside the school include other Grade R teachers who belonged to the same cluster, departmental officials, training facilitators, professional associations and teacher trade unions. Significantly three of the four principals expressed the view that the support role of the Department of Education was inadequate and that increased funding was required for infrastructure. Site A and B's principals stated that the needs of Grade R teachers and learners were unique such as child-size toilets and separate outdoor play areas and that compelled the department to make additional funding available. This was most strongly expressed by Site B's principal and appropriately since it is a no-fee school.The participant teachers at Site D stated that they received limited support from the Department of Education and that departmental officials had not visited them.

Takalani: In June, we will be receiving our first visit in six years. They have
previously told us that they will be visiting us but then they do not pitch.

However, Natasha noted that she received three departmental visits at her previous school and experienced it as "extremely stressful". With the exception of Paige and Patricia (Site A), all the Grade R teachers attended cluster meetings which afforded them ongoing opportunities to network with other Grade R teachers. Those who utilised these opportunities noted that they found it beneficial, especially since it enabled them to obtain information regarding NCS implementation at other primary schools in their area.

Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie (Site D) stated that they regularly attended seminars organised by the Association for the Education and Care of Young Children (AECYC), a professional ECE body. The AECYC provided them with the opportunity to network with other preschools as well as ECE stakeholders such as higher education institutions who train ECE teachers and independent ECE consultants. The Grade R teachers at Site D also mentioned that they received ongoing professional advice on

Grade R policy and curriculum from the South African Teachers' Union, (SATU/SAOU)[53]. No other Grade R teachers mentioned that they received support from either professional associations or teacher trade unions.[54]

> *Takalani: What we have found is that we are ahead of what is offered by the Department of Education. We often attend their training but we do not learn anything new. I think what is more meaningful is the training we receive from the SAOU and AECYC. We are affiliated to AECYC.*

5.7.3 Internal Factors

In this section, I focus on how affective factors such as beliefs, motivation and job satisfaction, influenced the nine participants' responses to curriculum change. Successful implementation of the NCS requires teachers to possess the beliefs, understandings and intentions that will enable them to respond positively either by *adopting* or *adapting* the new curriculum.

5.7.3.1 Beliefs and Philosophy of Grade R Teachers

As noted in Chapter 2, teachers' beliefs influence their decision-making processes and actions (Collopy, 2003; Keys & Bryan, 2001; Wilcox-Hertzog & Ward, 2004). The participant teachers' beliefs relate to their philosophy of Grade R, which in turn shapes their beliefs about pedagogy.

The participant teachers were unanimous in their opinion that the Grade R curriculum should be accompanied by informal, sensory stimulation and experimentation with a rich variety of concrete apparatus. They noted that they believe that playful learning is the hallmark of the Grade R curriculum. All the participant teachers stated that learning should be informal and enjoyable. Several participants stated that learners' happiness and well-being was their priority. They also noted that other than school readiness, this was the parents' main concern.

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[53] The South African Teachers' Union is mainly an Afrikaans-speaking organisation and is known mainly by its Afrikaans acronym, SAOU.

[54] In South Africa, preschool teachers have historically not been unionised because it is often difficult to determine who the employer is and also because of the large number of different employers. State employees have all have the same employer and are therefore easy to unionise.

Takalani: I think the most important thing that parents want is for their children to be happy. These children must wake up every morning with a smile and want to come to school. It must be fun for them to be here.

Jackie: Parents need to know that the building blocks for Grade 1 are being laid here so that they can carry on with formal work in Grade 1. Parents want their children to be loved, they need to develop in all the developmental domains, they want their children to be happy, to be allowed to play, and make friends and adjust well to school, and develop all the skills they will need in big school, especially the emotional aspect.

The participant teachers unanimously believe that the Department of Education should recognise them as professional teachers and that the status of their work should be elevated. They all regard themselves as committed to their work with young children.

The teachers were unanimous in the view that the daily programme should be designed to meet children's needs in a holistic and balanced manner. Although all the Grade R teachers stated that they have adopted the curriculum change, only the qualified teachers referred to the learning outcomes and the assessment standards for Grade R. The underqualified teachers referred mainly to the universal milestones of development for 5-year-olds. Prior to the introduction of the official curriculum, all ECE teachers used these milestones to design developmentally appropriate curricula for children. ECE teacher training programmes still place great emphasis on the universal milestones of development. However, the Grade R teachers participating in this study emphasised different developmental domains that they regard as essential for ensuring success at school. All the teachers believe that these domains should therefore be considered when *adapting* the new curriculum.

The participant teachers differed significantly regarding their beliefs on what children should learn during the Grade R year. In particular, they emphasised different content areas. For example, during my interview with Anna, she listed what she regards as important for Grade R learners to know prior to Grade 1. This included knowing colours, counting, identifying numbers, sorting objects, measuring, weighing, knowing their home language and an additional language and listening to stories. All these areas fall into the cognitive domain, and involve knowledge acquisition.

Patricia stated that she believes social skills, for example, playing with peers and sharing, are the most important thing that Grade R learners should learn. In addition, she believes that the Grade R programme should develop learners' gross and fine motor skills as well as their perceptual skills.

Natasha stressed that gross motor skills were the basis for the development of fine motor skills. According to Natasha, Grade R teachers must understand what knowledge and skills their learners will require in Grade 1. This view reinforces the importance of whole phase planning and may provide insight into the increasing emphasis on school readiness by the end of the Grade R year.

5.7.3.2 Motivation

Motivation to implement curriculum change is closely related to a teacher's personal interpretations and emotions regarding change (Sleegers *et al.*, 2002:90). Hargreaves (1998:89) observed that teachers commonly experience feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy because of curriculum change. Although these affective factors are related, I discuss the participant teachers' motivations and emotions separately.

All the participant teachers noted that their location at state primary schools and their increased access to professional development opportunities have motivated them to teach Grade R and implement the NCS. However, they acknowledged that the relatively better conditions of service of their Foundation Phase counterparts was motivating them to pursue further training and seek posts as Grade 1, 2 or 3 teachers.

> *Anna: I see myself remaining in Grade R as long as in Grade R. I have the Persal[55] number and the good salary. I enjoy the small kids. Therefore, I see myself remaining, even in the Foundation Phase because ECD covers birth to Grade 3.*

All the participant teachers noted that their main motivation to implement the NCS was the compliance monitoring of the GDE. They also noted that they were motivated to remain in their state primary school setting because of their largely satisfactory working conditions. These teachers appeared to be positive, motivated and enthusiastic. They noted that training programmes had motivated them to implement the required curriculum change.

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[55] Persal is the payroll system for state employed teachers.

Jackie: Yes, I think a teacher is more motivated. She feels as if she has learned something new. It is easy to get into a rut and stagnate if you are just in your classroom. Therefore, you need exposure, and you come back (from workshops) with new ideas and you are more motivated to teach.

However, they stated that they did not all feel positive about the NCS when it was first implemented. After attending training sessions and understanding the need for the change, they *adopted* the curriculum change.

Natasha: I think initially everyone was very negative. It's was a very big mind shift for everyone to be positive. A person feels that there are so many changes and a person works so hard at it but you do not see the results. It was a very big mind shift for the people and to get everyone around you positive and say, 'it's going to work', even though you yourself do not yet know if it will work. For the first period, we felt like headless chickens. It was completely out of our comfort zone.

Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Jackie, Isabel and Paige all mentioned that they were strongly motivated by parents' expectations and "demands".

Natasha: You know, the parents are very involved. I must tell you, at this school, they are almost over-involved, they have high expectations, some parents are demanding. I think it is because of the community where we are. They want things "my way". They will very quickly question, "Why have you done it like this and not like that?" Yes, but we are still not negative. If parents are involved it is actually a good thing, we do have a good relationship with our parents. Therefore, I think after years of experience a person learns how to handle it.

Jackie: This is a community where people are well educated and they want their children to be appropriately stimulated. They do have their own demands that they make. In addition, one should try to treat the child in the way that parents want them to be treated.

One influence on their motivation appeared to be their concern for maintaining the school's reputation. These participants were very cautious because they knew that if parents were dissatisfied with something, they would question the teachers' actions. This occurred most notably at Site D where the participant teachers as well as their principal repeatedly referred to the importance of "keeping children and their parents happy". Site D's teachers also made frequent references to the importance of protecting the school's reputation.

5.7.3.3 Job Satisfaction

The participant teachers were unanimous in the opinion that the introduction of the NCS in Grade R had raised the profile and status of preschool teachers. Although they still do not enjoy the same benefits as Foundation Phase teachers, their conditions of service have drastically improved compared to when they were teaching at community-based ECE centres. In particular, the Grade R teachers mentioned that their salaries and vacation leave had increased while their working hours decreased.[56]

With the exception of the Grade R teachers at Site D, who were not required to participate in any extra-curricular activities, the Grade R teachers noted that their involvement in extra-curricular activities had enhanced their job satisfaction. This was attributed to the fact that it helped them to feel "more a part of the staff", since they were often involved in extra-curricular activities with teachers from other grades.

While Jane is responsible for her learners' after school care, she receives additional remuneration and therefore this additional responsibility does not detract from her job satisfaction. Rather, she pointed out that it was the animosity between herself and her Foundation Phase colleagues that undermined her job satisfaction, as discussed in section 5.5.3.

The participant teachers at Site D noted that teaching in an aesthetically appealing, well-resourced context has positively affected their job satisfaction levels. Isabel summed this sentiment up well by stating, "I could not believe my luck when I got this post." In general, all five teachers made statements such as, "We are lucky to work here", "We have everything we need" and "Everybody who comes here says they also want to work here".

Takalani noted that parents could negatively affect teachers' levels of job satisfaction. When asked if she experienced any challenges regarding demands from parents, she stated,

> Takalani: Yes definitely. We are in an area where parents have a strong academic background. Many of our parents have doctorates. In fact, sometimes they look down on us as teachers; they do not think we have the necessary qualifications… They think that because they pay higher fees they can decide what happens in the school. Therefore, very often we get difficult parents who

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[56] The working day at community-based ECE centres is much longer in duration than that of state primary schools.

are condescending and tell us, 'you are just a teacher, who do you think you are?' and do you know how important they [the parents] are?

All the Grade R teachers who participated in this study were unanimous in the opinion that parents "are more demanding" and "want a guarantee that their children will be ready for Grade 1". In addition, all the Grade R teachers noted that parents demanded that they teach their children to read and write during the Grade R year. With the exception of Site D, all the Grade R teachers noted that parents demanded that their children are taught English.

The participant teachers at Site D argued that they are deeply aware of the need to constantly review and improve their instructional practice. This relates to their consistent references to the school's reputation, their need to satisfy parents' demands and their need to ensure that by the end of the Grade R year, the children are ready for formal learning. They are also motivated to ensure that their Grade R learners remain at the school and proceed to Grade 1 and onwards. The teachers see themselves as proactive in relation to dealing with parents. Their experiences have taught them that parents will demand formal instruction for their children and therefore they arrange a meeting with the parents within the first two weeks of the school year to explain what the Grade R programme entails.

Paige, Patricia, Anna and Jane said that they either *ignore* or *resist* these parental demands, while Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie respond to the demands by convincing parents why formal instruction should not be included in the Grade R programme.

All the participant teachers in this study agreed that parental demands, specifically for formal academic tasks and rote learning, had increased since the introduction of the NCS in Grade R. Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie pointed out that they found parents "very demanding" and noted that the more educated parents were, the more likely they were to challenge assessment reports. This significantly detracted from the teachers' job satisfaction.

5.7.4 Summary of Findings Related to Factors influencing ECE Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

The findings of this study confirm that Grade R teachers' access to professional development, resources and support influenced their responses to curriculum change. Furthermore, despite being critical of the implementation of the NCS in Grade R because they believed that it was developmentally inappropriate, they acknowledged that their relocation to state schools had increased their job satisfaction and motivation.

5.8 Synopsis of Findings

With one exception, the teachers who participated in this study all had at least 10 years' teaching experience. One group of underqualified participant teachers viewed the NCS as developmentally inappropriate for five-year-old learners because it has resulted in rigid, formal academic learning at the expense of playful learning. Another group of underqualified participant teachers *adapted* the curriculum in such a way that their classrooms strongly resembled their Grade 1 colleagues' classrooms. The qualified participant teachers *adapted* their classroom practices to accommodate more formal activities and claimed that they had always been doing outcomes based education.

The participant teachers articulated the belief that Grade R differs significantly from the rest of the Foundation Phase. The qualified teachers argued that Grade R should be part of a seamless continuum of development from pre-reception year programmes and that its main purpose should be to facilitate learners' gradual transition into the Foundation Phase and structured learning.

Although the mounting pressure to ensure school readiness was stressful for the participant teachers, they have embraced their relocation to state schools. They have all had increased access to professional development opportunities and resources.

The main unintended consequence of professional development programmes is that Grade R teachers may not remain in their current posts, since they plan to pursue Foundation Phase posts in the future. The current funding formula acts against the retention of qualified Grade R teachers in Grade R classrooms. Teachers' success in professional development has boosted their confidence to embark on further training.

Historical inequalities are being reinforced in Grade R programmes. The well resourced schools enjoyed teacher:learner ratios as low as 1:17 and abundant resources, while the

no-fee school had a ratio of 1:46 and was inadequately resourced. State schools do not rely exclusively on parents to pay fees, but instead they raise funds aggressively from the private sector.

The Grade R teachers who participated in this study regarded themselves as knowledgeable about preschool education. Instead of referring to the learning outcomes and assessment standards of the NCS, they constantly referred to the universal milestones of development and where typically developing Grade R learners should be in relation to each domain. They did not regard their principals, heads of departments or departmental officials as knowledgeable of Grade R and therefore did not seek instructional leadership from them. Instead, the Foundation Phase heads of department provided instructional leadership to Grade R teachers. If they regard the Grade R teachers as knowledgeable and experienced, they give them autonomy in curriculum implementation. However, if the HoD does not regard the Grade R teacher as knowledgeable and experienced, the HoD's own Foundation Phase orientation leads to an emphasis on formal school readiness.

While the participant teachers in this study had all complied with the planning requirements of the NCS, there was little evidence of the NCS in their lesson presentations. The current approach to teacher accountability appeared to reinforce superficial compliance with curriculum change and education policies. For example, the teachers used the NCS to report assessment results even if they did not actually follow the guidelines during the assessment process.

Chapter 6: Synthesis, Conclusions and Implications of the Study. Responses of Early Childhood Teachers to Curriculum Change

6.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I present a synthesis of previous chapters, reflect on my research design and methodology, revisit my data, draw conclusions based on my findings, and suggest implications of my study for policy, practice and future research.

6.2 Main Findings

The Grade R teachers in my study produced a farrago of responses to curriculum change. Their responses were chaotic, random and inconsistent. Despite appearing to be adopting and adapting the curriculum change, they expressed reservations about what they were doing, in other words they reluctantly complied with the curriculum change. For example several participant teachers did not personally agree with the departmentally produced learning support material that consisted largely of worksheets. Despite this, they used the material on a daily basis. In addition, while some participants were critical of the new planning requirements and did not regard them as useful, they reluctantly complied because they knew that their planning files would be checked by their heads of departments and departmental officials.

The Grade R teachers in my study had one outstanding characteristic in common – they are passionate about their work. They described themselves as having a deep love for children, being committed to doing their best for their learners, and enjoying working with young children. My examination of the internal factors influencing Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change revealed that their beliefs played a significant role in how they implemented the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). Overall, the teachers reported that the NCS had detracted from their enjoyment of their work. All the participants stated that they believed that the Grade R curriculum should be play-based, flexible and informal.

Paradoxically, their curriculum planning reflected a more formal, academic approach. They attributed this to the learning outcomes and assessment standards prescribed by the NCS. This was further compounded by the location of their Grade R classrooms at state primary

schools and the role of their heads of department who are Foundation Phase teachers. In particular, their HoDs are responsible for their curriculum planning and monitoring. The Grade R teachers perceived themselves to be under pressure to ensure that their learners are better prepared for Grade 1 and formal learning. During a classroom observation one of the participants repeatedly enquired of the children: "Are you listening? You need to know this in Grade 1." This contrasted sharply with the views she expressed during interviews which revealed tensions between her theory and practice. As noted in Section 5.7.2.3, the Grade R teachers were unaware that their principals held similar views to their own on the implementation of the NCS in Grade R. The principals could have provided crucial support in convincing parents that the teachers should not introduce formal academic skills for which their children were not yet ready for. Instead, teachers gave in to this pressure because they felt overwhelmed by parents' demands, despite the costs to their job satisfaction as discussed in section 5.7.3. In addition, principals were unanimous in the view that Grade R learners should "mainly play" and that learning should be enjoyable since it was their first experience of school and that the main purpose was to orient learners to the school environment. Two of the four principals had never visited the Grade R classes due to a lack of time, the third visited the class regularly and the four participated in classroom activities.

With one exception, the participants' teaching experience ranged from 10 to 24 years and they regarded themselves as competent and knowledgeable. Their unhesitating responses to questions posed suggested a high level of self-confidence. No participant regarded herself as being unqualified. Participants were willing to divulge their qualifications and were able to list all the training programmes they had attended. Their actual lack of formal qualifications was pointed out by their principals. For example, at sites B and C the participants regard themselves as competent, even though the principal said that they are "unqualified", and in fact they are unqualified in terms of the Norms and Standards for Educators (National Department of Education, 2000). Much of the international literature has grappled with questions related to the most appropriate preparation for ECE teachers (Ackerman 2006; Wallet 2006). There appears to be agreement that a four-year Bachelors degree with specialisation in ECE should be the minimum qualification (Lobman & Ryan 2007). Although qualifications do not equate to competence, a positive correlation has been found between professional development and effective classroom practice if accompanied by adequate support (Fullan 1993; Hargreaves 2005; Hirsh-Pasek *et al*. 2009; Walsh *et al*. 2006). Since teachers need to possess foundational, practical and

reflective competence, a strong focus on practical classroom application is essential. In South Africa the minimum qualifications for ECE teachers has also steadily been increasing. Surprisingly, the underqualified participants seemed to be more highly motivated than the qualified participants. This could be attributed to the fact that they previously had only poorer contexts as a form of comparison, while the qualified participants had always worked in well resourced contexts. In addition, underqualified teachers appeared to have a higher status in their communities than qualified teachers. This could be attributed to parents being unaware of their underqualified status.[57] Participants in the well resourced context were not without challenges. They reported that they are under more pressure from parents, particularly educated parents who are more inclined to prescribe to teachers and to question or even challenge teachers' assessment of their children's progress. The participants were also very aware of the fact that "we have a good reputation and we have to maintain it and continuously improve". Ironically, the underqualified teachers reported higher levels of appreciation and respect from parents. This could be attributed to parents being unaware of their underqualified status.

The first phase of my data collection involved the analysis of teachers' written lesson plans. In all cases the plans were largely compliant with the Department of Education's directives. I was therefore surprised when my classroom observations revealed that teachers' implementation of the NCS was largely superficial. The participants in my study *adopted* the departmental directives regarding lesson planning and assessment reports, but their instructional practice revealed very limited change. McLaughlin (1998) and Stoffels (2004) argue that in the face of curriculum change, teachers tend to *adopt* only the superficial features of the innovation, which my study confirms. Their main reason for doing so was their belief that the NCS is inappropriate for their learners.

This raises the question: Could the NCS be implemented in appropriate ways that would benefit their learners? According to the international literature it could, provided that teachers understand how to implement it effectively (Darragh, 2007; Goldstein, 2006).[58] These authors argue that the emphasis should be on developmentally appropriate outcomes, content and assessment. Furthermore, the international debate has shifted from questioning ECE standards to the way in which they are applied (Scott-Little *et al*.,

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[57] This appears to be determined by teachers' qualifications in relation to that of parents. The qualified teachers noted that very highly educated parents did not regard them as sufficiently qualified even though they held the equivalent of bachelors degrees.

[58] See section 2.4.3.

2003), with the emphasis on the provision of professional development, resources and support (NAEYC, 2004).

These external factors are significant in influencing how the teachers in my study responded to curriculum change. I found that the teachers expected their principals to facilitate their access to ongoing professional development and resources.[59] Unexpectedly, they did not want pedagogical support from them. The Grade R teachers regarded themselves as the most knowledgeable persons when it comes to Grade R practice. They perceived their principals and HoDs as being ignorant about the Grade R area of expertise. As a result, they did not desire instructional leadership from either their principal or their HoD. Where instructional leadership was provided, it was the responsibility of the HoD. In these instances, the Grade R class strongly resembled the Grade 1 classes. Regardless of teachers' negative attitudes towards pedagogical support, the literature insists that teachers require a comprehensive system of support (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Ryan & Ackerman, 2005) and effective school management (Jansen, 1999). Their *resistance* was more than "avoiding the challenge of change" (Richardson & Placier, 2001:905); they fundamentally disagreed with the way in which curriculum change was being implemented. The main issue therefore is certain aspects of Grade R teachers' classroom practice as gleaned through my repeated observations of their lesson presentations. Since I did not observe significant levels of implementation of their lesson plans, there may be a need to consider how instructional practice could (appropriately) reflect the official curriculum. Due to the lack of buy-in from teachers and the lack of enforcement of accountability, they appear to comply with the policy's directives, but in reality they are not implementing curriculum change. However, it should be noted that ECE teachers working in community-based centres historically were not accountable for learners' learning and development, largely due to the absence of national standards. This could also explain why the teachers in state primary schools were so reluctant to participate in communities of practice that would include their colleagues observing their teaching, and why they were so relieved that district officials do not have time to visit their classrooms.

Although Grade R teachers were enthusiastic to participate in professional development programmes, they appeared to be most strongly motivated by extrinsic factors, particularly higher salaries paid to qualified teachers. With the exception of the qualified teachers, they

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[59] See Refer to section 6.4.3.

did not associate professional development programmes with improved classroom practice or learner performance. This is an area for concern since these issues constitute central considerations when introducing curriculum change.

In most cases, the Grade R teachers noted that they would pursue Foundation Phase posts because of the absence of a career path for Grade R teachers. Initially, the Grade R teachers were satisfied with their conditions of service and remuneration. However, over time their basis of comparison has shifted from their former community-based contexts to their Foundation Phase colleagues who earn much higher salaries, despite doing what was perceived to be the same work. A few of the Grade R teachers even pointed out that Grade R teachers work harder than their Foundation Phase counterparts. Their work is physically more demanding because they need to be more actively involved and constantly present with their learners. For example, they also pointed out that Grade R teachers "never relax" because they were required to be present during outdoor free pay to supervise their learners and ensure their safety while their Foundation Phase colleagues drank tea in the staffroom. Implementing the official curriculum in Grade R was viewed by some of the participants (e.g. Anna) as a stepping stone into the Foundation Phase.

The Grade R teachers' lack of professional recognition as teachers caused considerable insecurity and influenced their responses to curriculum change. Ensuring that their contracts would be renewed each year motivated them to implement the curriculum change. They perceived themselves as under pressure to accommodate the demands of departmental officials, their colleagues and parents. Frequent comments were made related to the high expectations of Grade R programmes and the importance of "keeping everyone happy". Teachers also frequently mentioned not feeling appreciated by parents and openly acknowledged that they found it particularly stressful when parents challenging their assessment reports, especially if these were negative. The underqualified teachers said that they were intimidated by Foundation Phase colleagues, especially Grade 1 colleagues who regularly questioned what they taught their learners during their Grade R year. Several participants noted that their record keeping was far more detailed than required because they wanted to ensure that they protected themselves and had evidence of their assessment judgments readily available when parents or colleagues challenge it.

Teachers' critical comments on the Grade R policy choice revealed their dissatisfaction with the lack of consultation with and buy-in from Grade R teachers themselves. They

experienced the curriculum change as top-down. Several teacher participants expressed the view that the NCS was not developmentally appropriate and that Grade R would be better suited to preschool than primary school environments. In this regard, as researcher I am compelled to acknowledge my bias since I agree with them and this view is consistent with the international literature. An isolated year-long programme cannot sufficiently address the needs of our South African schooling system; neither can it prepare learners for formal learning. But the expectations on the Grade R programme are compounded by/ undermined by the fact that 23% of five year olds enter Grade 1 with developmental delays, immediately begin learning in an additional language and are often taught by underqualified teachers in poorly / inadequately resourced classrooms.

6.3 Reflections on the Research Process

In South Africa, very limited research has been conducted on Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change. My study attempted to fill this gap in the available research findings and focused on school-based Grade R teachers in different contexts in Gauteng Province. In particular, their contexts ranged from a no-fee school that is poorly resourced, to moderately resourced and well resourced institutions. All the research sites are government-run primary schools.

I undertook a qualitative study from the perspective of Grade R teachers in order to illuminate their responses to curriculum change. I was pleasantly surprised by their eagerness to participate in my study. The fact that I had previously been a Grade R teacher enabled me to establish rapport with the teachers. With each visit they were more comfortable and more prepared to share their experiences. I was often challenged to make sense of what initially appeared to be contradictory data. None of them had ever participated in a research study before, which suggests that the South African ECE field is under-researched. Some of the participants' responses were:

> *Reinnette: Our sector is so marginalised. It is exciting that you are doing research on what we do everyday.*

> *Jane: No-one has ever asked me for my opinion. Policymakers should ask teachers what would work in their classrooms.*

I was fortunate to have repeated engagements with all the participants. When I informed the principal of Site A, that the participants in my study were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, he responded, "but we want publicity, we want recognition. People are quick to

complain and slow to compliment." I explained that the ethical considerations of my study prevented me from mentioning any participant or school's name.

I spent the first year of my study immersed in the literature on how teachers in general and ECE teachers in particular, in various countries respond to curriculum change. This literature study led to the development of my conceptual framework which provided a lens to understand how the participants in my study responded to curriculum change in comparison to the literature findings.

Data collection involved an initial introductory meeting to explain my study, collecting data from semi-structured interviews, which were recorded and transcribed, and follow up informal discussions and telephonic conversations. The follow up methods involved member checking and seeking clarity to ensure that opinions were accurately captured. Thereafter, I conducted repeated classroom observations, as well as document analysis of teachers' written lesson plans, teaching resources and assessment reports. In addition, I interviewed the principal of each of the four research sites and was privileged to be invited to have tea in the staff room of each research site on several occasions. This enhanced my understanding of the context of curriculum change.

My findings suggest that Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change were complex and farraginous. All the participants confirmed that they were implementing the curriculum change according to the requirements of the NCS. In contrast the data suggested that they were selectively compliant since there were aspects which they intentionally ignored and resisted. Some of the participants pointed out that they were reluctantly complying because they did not personally agree with the curriculum change. I therefore conclude that the participant teachers' responses to curriculum change were consistent with the four main responses discussed in the literature, and on which I based my conceptual framework, namely *ignore*, *resist*, *adopt* and *adapt*. Each teacher in my study exhibited each of the responses, though some responses were more prominent than others. My analytical strategy presented in Table 5.1 enabled me to dissect different aspects of teachers' responses according to the initial main themes and sub-themes of my study and to examine their similarities and differences more closely. In this final chapter I will revisit and reflect on the shortcomings of my conceptual framework in relation to the themes that later emerged during my data analysis.

One of the main weaknesses of my study is that I did not conduct in-depth interviews with the Heads of Departments (HoDs) of the four sites. In general, the teachers did not view them as being knowledgeable about Grade R, but I could not verify this unless the HoDs themselves were to mention it during informal discussions. Such discussions occurred only at Site A.

6.4 Implications of the study

Despite appearing to implement curriculum change, the teachers reported experiencing change in overtly negative ways. For example, it encroached on their leisure time. This is consistent with the findings of other studies on curriculum change such as those conducted by Falk (2000) and Harlen (2005). These studies found that teachers have become more test orientated than learning orientated as a result of increasing accountability demands. Since my findings suggest that Grade R teachers' main response to curriculum change was *reluctant compliance*, I will draw related conclusions and highlight the implications of my study for policy, practice and further research, according to my main research themes.

6.4.1 Implications for Teachers' Lesson Planning

Teachers' lesson plans were compliant with policy because they knew that they would be checked by their principals, HoDs or departmental district officials. Despite reflecting the main design features of the NCS, some lesson plans revealed gaps in teachers' conceptual understanding, for example limited integration of the eight learning areas into the three Foundation Phase learning programmes, and a lack of cohesion or articulation across the learning programmes.

The teachers reported that departmental directives pertaining to lesson planning were too labour intensive and detracted from their enjoyment of teaching.[60] Only the qualified teachers appeared to understand the importance of planning, collaborating with their colleagues, reflecting on their planning, and constantly reviewing their plans in order to improve their instructional practice (Pickard, Kremenitzer & Myler, 2006; Ethridge & King, 2005).

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[60] As noted previously, this was addressed after my fieldwork through Circular 2/2010.

6.4.2 Implications for Lesson Presentations

It appears that relatively limited attention has been paid by policymakers to how teachers implement the official curriculum in their classrooms. Rowan and Miller's (2007:255) argument that "change frequently flounders at the classroom door" is particularly relevant to my study. The view expressed by one of the participants that "my classroom is my private space" is not only inappropriate, it is also a source for concern since it suggests that she was *resisting* being held accountable for implementing curriculum change. It appears that more attention should be devoted to teachers' instructional practice. The Grade R teachers in my study were forthright about the fact that due to the intensification of their workload, they mainly implemented only what would be checked. I therefore regard them as *reluctantly compliant* with curriculum change.

If the Department of Basic Education were to conduct more classroom visits, even random classroom visits, teachers may be more likely to accept accountability for implementing the official curriculum. This should be accompanied by building the capacity of departmental officials in relation to their instructional support role. Since the majority of the teachers believed that the curriculum should be play-based and informal, departmental officials should be knowledgeable of how teachers could apply this to the official curriculum. Teacher trade unions should be lobbied to convince their members of the importance of being held accountable for improving teaching and learning.

In the sections that follow, I discuss separately each of the external factors, namely professional development, resources and support, which constitute the main infrastructural requirements that influence how teachers respond to curriculum change.

6.4.3 Implications for Professional Development

The literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 indicates that across the education spectrum, there is consensus that professional development is essential to enable teachers to implement curriculum change. Furthermore, a cogent argument is presented in Chapter 2 for the provision of training prior to the implementation of curriculum change.

In Gauteng Province, the Department of Education introduced professional development for Grade R teachers in 2003. However, as Grade R teachers have relocated from community-based ECE centres to state primary schools, training has not kept pace with curriculum implementation. Moreover, professional development programmes are often

fragmented and unrelated to Grade R teachers' instructional practice. Although the majority of participants in my study stated that professional development programmes were practically valuable, others stressed that departmental workshops emphasised policy without providing adequate classroom implementation strategies, with the result that they did not find the training practically useful.

According to some of the participants, Grade R teachers require further training on new learning areas such as technology and mathematics that were not part of their initial training. The Grade R teachers pointed out that in such cases there is a need for training to focus on isolated aspects of the curriculum. Given the historic marginalisation of the ECE field and the lack of accredited training programmes, the focus until now has been on qualifications rather than on skills programmes. Nevertheless, in addition to qualifications, Grade R teachers need specialised training. It also appears that those providing instructional leadership and support to Grade R teachers should understand the nature of their work and the fundamental pedagogical differences between Grade R and the rest of the Foundation Phase.

All Grade R teachers need to undergo training on the NCS, regardless of the qualifications they already hold. The debate as to whether professional development for Grade R teachers should focus on skills or qualifications may be misplaced. It is more importantly a question of recognising that both these aspects require attention, rather than one or the other. Professional development should be practically orientated and should strengthen and support Grade R teachers' instructional practice.

All the participants regarded Grade R programmes as being unique, distinct from, and fundamentally different to Grade 1 to 3 programmes, even though Grade R to Grade 3 teachers implement the same official curriculum, the NCS. How they implement it is where the real difference lies. Grade R teachers' teaching methodologies and teaching strategies vary from those of both pre-reception year teachers and foundation phase teachers. They vary because they are more structured than pre-reception year programmes but less rigid and formal than foundation phase programmes. My findings suggest that other teachers have a limited conceptual understanding of the uniqueness of Grade R as well as how young children learn and develop. Furthermore, Grade R teachers require specialised knowledge and skills to implement the NCS in developmentally appropriate ways. ECE teachers must be responsive to their learners' needs and context and be able to teach in a range of ECE settings and programmes. Reception year teaching programmes should

focus on developing teachers' understanding of emergent literacy and emergent numeracy. In addition, Grade R teachers must give life skills more attention, as this is essential to the holistic development of learners. This will ensure that learners are not simply prepared for formal schooling and academic learning but for life.

Initial teacher education programmes in South African institutions and organisations are not flexible enough to allow Grade R teachers multiple routes to acquire recognised qualifications. This appears to be a significant barrier to the career paths of Grade R teachers. Many South African higher education institutions only offer Foundation Phase initial teacher education programmes. Teachers therefore have a limited understanding of early learning and development, specifically that it begins at birth

The Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) in ECD does not facilitate a career path or progression to higher education programmes. Patricia, Paige and Jane hold NQF level 5 qualifications but universities do not recognise these in terms of university entrance requirements. ECE training providers who offer continuing professional development for Grade R teachers should have a strong focus on strengthening teachers' instructional practice.

Furthermore, continuing professional development for Grade R teachers should be part of a broader national strategy to enhance the status of Grade R teachers. It should therefore be part of their ongoing professionalisation. Such a strategy should link with their registration with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and the national system of continuing professional development for Grade R teachers.

Access to professional development can enhance Grade R teachers' job satisfaction and career advancement, especially if it leads to a qualification. Although continuous professional development for teachers does not necessarily have to lead to qualifications, various possibilities may need to be reconsidered in relation to Grade R teachers because the majority of them are underqualified. Grade R teachers require both professional development opportunities linked to qualifications and purely skills-oriented programmes. This constitutes an important strategy for professionalising the ECE sector in South Africa. In addition, it will ensure parity in the longer term for Grade R teachers in relation to their Foundation Phase colleagues.

Grade R teachers who complete Bachelor's degrees are likely to move into Grade 1 to 3 posts, unless the school governing body can offer them equitable remuneration. Anna was

the only participant in my study who has received a Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) bursary to undertake formal studies in Foundation Phase teaching at a higher education institution. She acknowledged that these studies are likely to result in her resignation as a Grade R teacher since she intends to pursue a Foundation Phase post.[61] Anna's access to professional development enhanced her job satisfaction. Since she is teaching at a no-fee school, the School Governing Body is not able to equalise her remuneration. Her salary was the lowest of the participants in my study. Paige noted that although she wanted to enrol for a Bachelor's degree, she would remain in her Grade R post and was hopeful that her qualifications would be recognised by the Department of Education.

The Department of Education should reconsider the existing funding formula for the poorest schools, especially since no-fee schools in particular will not be able to retain Grade R teachers who complete degrees. The retention of Grade R teachers in Grade R posts is essential. The capacity and expertise of teachers undergoing and successfully completing professional development programmes should not be lost by these teachers seeking better remuneration in higher grades. A review of existing post provisioning is required to accommodate the appointment of qualified Grade R teachers on the same financial basis as other teachers.

Independent further study is largely unattainable for Grade R teachers. Jane, Paige and Patricia stated that the cost of further studies was a barrier to their professional development and career advancement. Jane is enrolled in a level 5 Higher Certificate programme at the University of South Africa. She noted that her progress was very slow because she could only afford to register for a limited number of modules each year. More scholarships and bursaries should be offered to Grade R teachers who wish to progress beyond level 5.

Some existing professional development opportunities are not relevant to Grade R. Paige noted that even though she had won a scholarship, the options available for further studies are not relevant to Grade R. In addition, she did not meet the admission requirements. Professional development opportunities should therefore be tailor-made for Grade R teachers.

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[61] This paradox is significant since Anna noted that it was not her first preference.

Qualified Grade R teachers are a valuable resource and their capacity should be utilised and shared. Takalani, Natasha, Jackie and Reinnette hold Higher Diplomas in Early Childhood Development and Isabel has completed a Bachelors Degree in Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase. These five teachers collectively constitute a considerable Grade R resource. They have initiated site twinning with a poor school and are training those teachers to improve their curriculum implementation. This suggests that aspects of their curriculum implementation falls within the category of Hargreaves and Shirley's (2009) 'fourth way'. They are reaching out to poorer schools, have strong instructional leadership and are innovating with regard to curriculum implementation.

The implications of my findings for professional development are that such programmes should deepen teachers' pedagogical knowledge, and strengthen and support their instructional practice. As noted in Chapter 2, ongoing critical reflection on personal teaching practice allows teachers to assess their own teaching effort and to think deeply about their instructional practice, the extent to which they are effectively meeting the diverse needs of their learners, and how to *adapt* their teaching to enhance learning. Grade R teachers should therefore be encouraged to reflect on their instructional practice. This is also one of the essential roles of instructional leadership.

6.4.3.1 Implications for the Content of Professional Development Programmes

Several participants expressed the view that Grade R is unique and that Grade R teachers require specialised professional development programmes. The participants also stressed that there is an urgent need for the National Department of Education to clarify the difference between Grade R and Grades 1 to 3.

Professional development programmes should support teachers to *adapt* the official curriculum according to their specific context as well as to accommodate their learners' needs. They should furthermore focus on the important role of Grade R teachers in relation to the early identification, intervention and appropriate referral of learners requiring learning support.

Grade R teachers often experience tension between traditional ECE pedagogy and the pressure to implement an official curriculum. Several teachers and principals stated that they believe that the introduction of the official curriculum in Grade R was inappropriate because it is too rigid and formal, and they believe that children should learn through play. However, their instructional practice did not reflect this belief. This may suggest that Grade

R teachers need assistance in implementing the official curriculum in developmentally appropriate ways. It may also be useful for professional development providers to expose Grade R teachers to viable alternatives to workbooks and worksheets that could support the philosophy of learning through play. However, the provision of a rich variety of hands-on, concrete learning and teaching resources would not only be expensive, it needs to be accompanied by training on how to use such aids to enhance learning and teaching.

The qualified teachers were more consistent about the beliefs they articulated and their classroom practices, which demonstrates that they are able to implement the official curriculum through play.

There is a need to clarify how Grade R teachers could implement (integrate) the three Foundation Phase learning programmes—literacy, numeracy and life skills—during activities that have historically comprised the daily programme so that they are developmentally appropriate. A few examples could include the following: (i) mathematics concepts acquired through block play; (ii) literacy learning during fantasy play, songs, rhymes and stories, and (iii) life skills through social interaction and cooperation in group activities. It is notable that none of these activities involves the use of worksheets.

It appears that professional development programmes do not focus sufficiently on Grade R teachers' instructional practice. My findings suggest that there is a predominance of numeracy and literacy activities in Grade R classrooms. Only site D focused strongly on life skills. In addition, Grade R teachers with limited training relied heavily on scripted materials. As a result, these teachers did not offer many hands-on, concrete, developmentally appropriate activities. My classroom observations confirmed a predominance of workbooks and worksheets, which were supplied by the Department of Basic Education. In particular, Grade R teachers made extensive use of scripted materials such as the "All-in-One" series.

The daily programme in a Grade R classroom consists of activities such as block construction, building puzzles, modelling clay, fantasy play, gardening, outdoor free play, teacher-directed movement and music rings, and listening to stories. These activities present teachers with an ongoing challenge: there is little tangible 'evidence' of learning. Patricia articulated this clearly and she stands out as the participant most concerned about the assessment requirements of the NCS. Patricia has not had any training on the NCS, and she specifically mentioned requiring training on assessment methods and strategies.

Jane kept detailed assessment records as proof of what she did in her classroom. Paige attributed her use of worksheets to the intangible nature of many daily activities. In addition, Paige argued that it served the purpose of "showing parents what they are paying for". Professional development programmes for Grade R teachers should help them to understand and practically implement a range of developmentally appropriate assessment strategies and methods in their classrooms.

6.4.4 Implications for Resources

The majority of the teachers who participated in this study were satisfied with their indoor resources and were aware of the importance of providing outdoor play opportunities. At three of the four sites, outdoor play equipment was lacking, and what was provided did not comply with municipal by-laws. In these cases the participants noted that outdoor play equipment is their main priority in terms of future resources.

The way in which Grade R classrooms are resourced reveals a school's understanding of the pedagogical importance of Grade R. The Department of Basic Education does supply some resources, such as the pizza box Grade R kits containing worksheets and scripted lesson plans.[62] However, the heavy emphasis on worksheets detracts from the effective use of indoor resources. Even where classrooms were well resourced, there was less and less time available during the daily programme to meaningfully engage in play-based activities. The qualified teachers used indoor free play[63] mainly when the children arrived and were waiting for the daily programme to begin, or while they waited for their parents to fetch them.

Alternatives to worksheets would require the provision of a large variety of indoor and outdoor play equipment. Besides being expensive to provide on a large scale, such concrete, hands-on resources would require the daily programme to be restructured to allow sufficient time for children to meaningfully engage in "learning through play".

6.4.5 Implications for Support

As noted in Chapter 2, instructional leadership is essential in the context of curriculum change. The findings of my study suggest that Grade R teachers receive limited

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[62] The justification for such scripted material is that the majority of Grade R teachers are underqualified and require support to implement the NCS in their classrooms.

[63] These indoor free play activities consist of a rich variety of pedagogically structured play-based activities: block play, fantasy play, book corner, discovery area and quiet play area.

instructional support. In all instances, where the participants received such support, they reported that the Foundation Phase head of department asserted a strong influence on the content of learning and teaching in their Grade R classrooms. Where the Grade R teacher challenged this, it led to conflict. Paige, Patricia, Anna and Jane received instructional leadership from their heads of department, who had limited knowledge of Grade R. They did not regard their HoDs as credible instructional leaders. Their practice should be monitored and assessed on a continuous basis by knowledgeable and skilled ECD experts who should provide teachers with developmental and constructive feedback. The South African ECE field needs to define and develop a clearer understanding of what "playful learning" implies, specifically in the context of school-based programmes.

6.4.5.1 Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes

Teachers must be convinced that they are accountable for the effective implementation of the official policy because they are working in state-funded classrooms. This seems to be a minor reason to comply. Instead, teachers should understand the benefits for their learners of implementing the NCS. There appears to be a misconception of the implication of "learning through play" for teachers' practice. Teachers appear to misinterpret "informal learning" as being spontaneous, unplanned and unstructured. According to the literature the teacher's ability to implement play as a core component of the ECD curriculum requires careful planning and organisation in order for children's learning to be purposeful (Ashiabi, 2007; Brownlee & Berthelsen 2006).

Grade R teachers need to share ideas with their colleagues and Foundation Phase teachers need to value the insights of their Grade R colleagues. Grade R teachers in particular, need to be encouraged to implement curriculum policy, rather than continuing to do as they please. In addition, they should be encouraged to understand class visits as an essential component of their professional development. They should experience the benefits of participating in communities of practice to learn from colleagues, plan collaboratively, and reflect on their practice, as well as receiving direct developmental feedback on their teaching. Teachers also need to understand the negative effects of professional isolation; specifically that it is much more difficult to improve instructional practice on one's own, as opposed to through meaningful engagement with peers.

The participants had a strong sense of what their job responsibilities are and they *resisted* any extra burdens. They particularly *resisted* paper work which they experienced as an

"administrative burden". Teachers' responses in this regard were mixed and somewhat opportunistic: in terms of official compliance, they did as little as they could get away with.

6.5 Implications of the Study for Policy and Practice

My study advances knowledge on Grade R teachers' responses to curriculum change. Since the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2010) is currently in the process of developing the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)[64], the findings of this study could be useful in anticipating how teachers may respond to CAPS. CAPS is expected to be implemented in the Foundation Phase from January 2011. Grade R teachers are expected to receive clarity on the content of teaching and assessment.

The lack of feedback from instructional leaders on the content and implementation of lesson planning suggests that principals, heads of departments and departmental officials need training themselves on how to provide meaningful support to Grade R teachers to enable them to positively implement curriculum change.

As noted in Section 5.9.2, teachers' responses to curriculum change appear to fall into three main categories, depending on their primary focus, namely the (i) learner, (ii) curriculum, or (iii) teacher. Among the participants in this study, even those who focused primarily on the curriculum, did not manifest policy fidelity because their *adoption* of the NCS was often reluctant.

6.5.1 Recommendations that emerged from the study

More attention should be paid by policymakers to how to change Grade R teachers' classroom practice. Their practice should be monitored and assessed on a continuous basis by knowledgeable and skilled ECD experts who should provide teachers with developmental and constructive feedback. The South African ECE field needs to define and develop a clearer understanding of what "playful learning" implies, specifically in the context of school-based programmes.

It seems essential for initial ECE teacher training to focus on the entire ECE spectrum— from birth to Grade 3. Such training should also include early stimulation, brain

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[64] The CAPS will replace the existing GET Assessment policies and National Protocol for Assessment: Reporting and Recording. The brief for the CAPS reference committee is: (a) To develop a single comprehensive Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for Grade R—12 (Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase, Senior Phase and FET Phase) and (b) Provide clear guidelines on what teachers ought to teach and assess on a grade-by-grade subject basis (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

development, and early identification and prevention of barriers to learning, as well as appropriate referral and learning support.

All Grade R teachers should be exposed to best practice in Grade R. Departmental officials should promote and share the best practice that they encounter. Site twinning, where feasible, should be promoted. Grade R teachers require mentoring and coaching from experienced, qualified peers who understand how to implement the NCS appropriately.

Grade R teachers should be exposed to strategies for implementing the NCS through a play-based approach. This would assist them to understand how to facilitate learning through play while simultaneously meeting the requirements of the official curriculum. Such a strategy may have an influence on Grade R teachers' beliefs as well as their classroom practice.

Grade R teachers need mentoring and coaching from respectful and compassionate colleagues. Instructional leaders, whether school principals, Foundation Phase heads of departments, or GDE officials, should receive training and clear guidance regarding appropriate pedagogy in the Grade R arena. It is essential for Grade R teachers to perceive those providing instructional leadership as being credible and possessing the requisite knowledge and skills to advise them in terms of their classroom practice.

Teacher accountability should be promoted so that Grade R teachers understand the importance of their accountability in terms of policy implementation. Policymakers should promote accountability as part of a broader view of what professionalising the ECE field encompasses. In terms of professional development, unintended consequences such as the inability to retain the capacity being developed, require urgent attention.

6.6 Further Research

There has been limited South African research to inform ECE policy. We still do not know what ECE methodologies would be appropriate for the unique needs of South African Grade R teachers. Further research is needed to shape policy and practice on how to implement play-based learning in South African school-based ECE programmes. When reconsidering the literature on early learning standards, all the benefits discussed in Chapter 2 refer to the macro benefits for the country's economy, without highlighting the immediate benefits for learners themselves. Teachers must find the curriculum change

meaningful and relevant to their daily teaching task. It must make sense to them. How an official curriculum could benefit learners cannot be solved here. That would require further detailed, thorough research.

Another area for future study relates to Grade R teachers' resistance of instructional supervision from their heads of departments and district departmental officials. Since the international literature highlights the importance of instructional support, the lack of this in South Africa may mitigate against successful curriculum change.

The findings related to how parents influenced teachers' job satisfaction suggest that the underqualified teachers enjoyed a higher level of appreciation from parents that their qualified counterparts. Parents' awareness of teachers' qualifications, their expectations of the Grade R programme and how they want their children to be taught could constitute areas for future study.

6.7 Summary and Conclusion

I concluded my study in 2010, the year in which South Africa hosted the first ever FIFA World Cup™ in Africa. The tournament was accompanied by a prominent focus on "One Goal: Education for All". As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, the introduction of universal access to a preschool (reception) year, to prepare children for school, is one of the priorities of the Education for All campaign. In South Africa the Grade R programme has gradually been phased-in alongside the application of the official curriculum. Despite repeated warnings that the focus should not be more heavily on numerical targets than on quality (OECD 2006), governments are mainly focused on access. Understanding how teachers are implementing the Grade R curriculum in their classrooms could therefore provide insight into how to enhance the quality of Grade R programmes. The Grade R teachers in my study viewed the NCS as developmentally inappropriate for their five-year-old learners. Although they manifested all four responses of my conceptual framework, they mainly *resisted, adopted* or *adapted* curriculum change. After six years of implementation, *ignoring* it completely is no longer a realistic option. Furthermore, they either reinterpreted their traditional practices as already being compliant with the NCS, or they implemented formal academic activities to develop school readiness skills. Instructional leadership should be developed in schools as well as in Departments of Education to support Grade R teachers in implementing the NCS appropriately. Once this competent leadership is in

place, Grade R teachers need to be convinced of how the NCS can be implemented in developmentally and culturally appropriate ways and how it could benefit their learners.

The examination of Grade R teachers' responses to the introduction of the official curriculum suggests that there is an urgent need to focus on teachers' understanding of what such a preparatory year-long programme should involve. Attempting to standardise what children should know and do before entering Grade 1 does not necessarily demand formal, rigid academic learning. Participants in this study asserted that the NCS is inappropriate because 5-year-olds are not yet ready for formal learning. Such a statement appears to indicate that they misunderstand the policy intentions. They did not appear to grasp that their teaching should still be purposeful and focused on meeting learning outcomes through well-designed and structured activities, or that it is possible to implement the official curriculum in appropriate ways (Goldstein, 2006; Ryan & Lobman, 2004). Grade R teachers need a sound conceptual understanding of what playful learning implies.

Despite reporting a decrease in job satisfaction as a consequence of the curriculum change, all the Grade R teachers in my study noted that their enjoyment of working with children had not diminished. To ensure that teachers respond positively to curriculum change, policy makers should convince them of the benefits for their learners.

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Appendix 1: Extract from the Gauteng Department of Education Circular 28/2005: Grade R Implementation in Gauteng

6 Responsibilities of the Practitioners

6.1 Educational Programme:

6.1.1 All practitioners of Grade R classes must follow an Outcomes based approach.

6.1.2 All practitioners of Grade R classes must plan and implement the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Government Gazette no 23406 May 2002)

6.1.3 The practitioner should understand and implement the following policies:

6.1.3.1 Language in Education Policy 14 July 1997

6.1.3.2 Education White Paper 6 Special Needs Education Building an inclusive education and training system

6.1.3.3 Assessment Policy in the General Education and Training Band, Grades R to 9 and ABET, August 1998 Circular 22 of 2002

6.1.3.4 National Policy on HIV/Aids, for learners and educators in Public schools, and students and educators in Further Education and training institutions Notice 1926 of 1999 Circular 33 of 2001

6.1.3.5 Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education, 31 May 2001.

6.1.3.6 Religion in Education Policy

6.1.4 Assessment practices in Grade R:

6.1.4.1 The practitioner should assess learner performance continuously, by applying different methods, tools and techniques (forms) of assessment.

6.1.4.2 The Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards of Grade R as stated in the RNCS will be used for assessment.

6.1.4.3 Learner portfolios will be compiled and will consist of learners' work throughout the year.

6.1.4.4 Learner profiles will be compiled for each learner to accompany the learner to Grade 1.

6.1.4.5 Progress reports will be compiled at the end of each quarter and sent to the parents for perusal and input.

6.1.4.6 Learners progress to Grade 1 after they have completed the Reception Year and are not retained in Grade R.

6.1.5 The following records must be kept

6.1.5.1 Phase planning

6.1.5.2 Work schedule planning

6.1.5.3 Lesson planning

6.1.5.4 Records of continuous assessment

6.1.5.5 Portfolios

6.1.5.6 Learner Profiles

Appendix 2: Letter Requesting Participation

3 Jabulani
Pieter Street
Celtisdal
Centurion
0157

Date: 6 August 2008

To: The Principal and Staff

Attention:

From: Mary Clasquin-Johnson
               (012) 420 5521 (w)
               (012) 656 7480 (h)
               084 450 8151

<u>Letter Requesting Participation</u>

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research study. My topic is "Responses of Grade R Teachers to Curriculum Change". The focus of my research is on how teachers are responding to the National Curriculum Statement (OBE). The research is being undertaken as part of my doctoral studies in Education Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time. The names of the school and staff members will be kept strictly confidential.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely

Mary Clasquin-Johnson (Student)

Dr. Christina Amsterdam (Supervisor)

Appendix 3: Letter of Informed Consent

Date: 7 November 2008

Study conducted by: Mary Clasquin-Johnson
(012) 420 5521 (w)
(012) 656 7480 (h)
084 450 8151

Letter of Informed Consent

Responses of Early Childhood Teachers to Curriculum Change

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in this study. Participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time. You are requested to participate in two interviews, providing information about your response to the National Curriculum Statement. The interviews will take 30-40 minutes. I also request permission to observe your classroom for two days, at your convenience.

The research will be conducted in English. I will provide a translator if you feel more comfortable communicating in another language. You will receive a copy of the interview transcript. Please let me know if there is anything that I have captured inaccurately.

If you have any questions about the research please contact me.

CONSENT:
I have read the information on this page and questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. I understand that my participation in the study will not lead to any material or financial gain.

---   ---
Name: Date:

Appendix 4: Interview Protocol: Grade R Teachers

Responses of Grade R Teachers to Curriculum Change

1. General:

1.1   How many learners are there in your class?
1.2   How many classes are there at the centre / school?
1.3   How many years have you been teaching?
1.4   How many years have you been teaching Grade R?
1.5   Which qualifications do you hold?
1.6   Describe your typical school day.
1.7   Are you aware of the NCS? If yes, how did you become aware of it?
1.8   How do you feel about the NCS?
1.9   How has the NCS influenced your teaching?
1.10   Have your views about teaching changed since the NCS was introduced?

2.   Teachers' understanding of the official curriculum

2.1   Are you following the National Curriculum Statement?
2.2   What are the differences between the NCS and the way you taught children before it was introduced?
2.3   How do you plan your lessons?
2.4   How do you decide what you are going to teach?
2.5   How do you assess your Grade R learners?
2.6   What should children learn in Grade R?
2.7   How should Grade R be taught?

3.   Teacher capacity

3.1   What do you or your centre / school need to ensure that you are able to follow the NCS?
3.2   What are some of the challenges you have at your centre / school?

4.   Training/Professional development opportunities

4.1   Have you received training on the National Curriculum Statement? If yes, how many training sessions did you attend?
4.2   Who presented the training?
4.3   Where was the training held?
4.4   When was the training held?
4.5   How many training sessions were offered?
4.6   How has the training influenced your teaching?
4.7   Do you feel that you need further training? If yes, what are your further training needs?
4.8   Did the training lead to a qualification? If yes, which qualification?

5.   Support

5.1   How often are you visited by departmental officials?

5.2   What happens during the visits?
5.3   Have the training presenters visited your classroom?
5.4   What are your needs to be able to support children's learning?
5.5   Do you have contact with other Grade R teachers? If yes, how often? Where does it take place? What happens during these sessions?
5.6   How do you relate to the foundation phase teachers at your school?

6.   Learning and Teaching Support Materials

6.1   Does the Department of Education supply your centre / school with LTSMs?
6.2   Do you use additional LTSMs? Tell me about …
6.3   What are your needs regarding LTSMs?

7.   Parent involvement

7.1   How do parents participate in the centre / school?
7.2   What do parents want their children to learn? How do you feel about this?

Appendix 5: Interview Protocol: Principals

Responses of Grade R Teachers to Curriculum Change

1. General

1.1   How many Grade R learners are there in your school?
1.2   How many Grade R classes are there at the school?
1.3   How long have the Grade R classes been in existence?
1.4   How are your Grade R classes funded?
1.5   Are your teachers following the NCS?
1.6   How do you feel about the NCS being implemented in Grade R?

2.   Role as Instructional Leader

2.1   How often do you visit the Grade R class/es?
2.2   How do the teachers decide what they are going to teach?
2.3   How do teachers assess their Grade R learners?
2.4   What should children learn in Grade R?
2.5   How should Grade R be taught?

3.   Support

3.1   What do your teacher or your school need to ensure that they are able to follow the NCS?
3.2   What are some of the challenges that you have at your school?

4.   Training/Professional Development Opportunities

4.1   Have your Grade R teachers received training on the National Curriculum Statement? If yes, how many sessions did they attend?
4.2   How has the training influenced their teaching?
4.3   Do you feel that they need further training? If yes, what are their further training needs?

5.   Learning Support Materials

5.1   Does the Department of Education supply your school with LSMs?
5.2   What are your school's needs regarding LSMs?

Appendix 6: Classroom Observation Schedule

I plan to conduct at least two day-long observations, per teacher. In the reception year, the duration of a day-long observation will typically be five hours long (08h00-13h00). This will provide insight into how each teacher is responding to curriculum change. I believe that this will produce authentic data since it is unlikely that teachers could sustain window dressing for the duration of a school day. The second observation will confirm or refute data collected during the first observation. This will also allow me to gain a deeper understanding of each teacher's response to curriculum change.

The following checklist, adapted from Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:312), will guide my classroom observations.

Focus of observation	Question/s guiding observation	Purpose
Space: The physical setting of the classroom and outdoor area	Where is the observation (indoors/outdoors) taking place? Where do the various activities of the daily programme occur?	The context in which curriculum change occurs is significant Outdoor play is important during the Grade R daily programme, at least two hours should be devoted to outdoor play.
Actors: The Grade R teacher	Is the teacher implementing the official curriculum? Which theme is she/he using?	This will be asked during the first interview. Observation will provide further insight into each teacher's response: (i) ignoring, (ii) resisting, (iii) adopting, or (iv) adapting curriculum change as described in my conceptual framework.
Activities: The sets of related acts that are taking place	Which learning programmes are covered? Which learning areas are covered? How are learning areas integrated in the lessons/ activities? What is the sequence of activities? If activities are written, are they developmentally appropriate?	The teacher's written plans will be compared to her/his implemented activities, which are observable. The purpose of observations will also be to gain insight into the teacher's understanding of the official curriculum. The design of activities is stipulated in official curriculum policy documents and the Department of Education's guidelines to the Foundation Phase learning programmes.

Objects: The artefacts and physical things e.g. apparatus/ learning support materials used by the teacher	What learning support materials are used by the teacher for each activity? Are worksheets used? What is the content of the worksheets? How many worksheets does the teacher use per day?	Learning support materials are very important in the reception year. Teaching should be based on hands-on, concrete apparatus. Three-dimensional objects are especially important.
Acts: The specific actions of the teacher	Is there a clear introduction, presentation and conclusion of the lessons/activities? What happens during transition from one activity/lesson to the next?	The teacher's actions will provide further insight into her/his understanding of the official curriculum. The teacher should be following the official curriculum, and should be doing this through the "learning through play" approach, as suggested in the Foundation Phase guidelines (DoE, 2004).

Appendix 7: Ethics Clearance Certificate
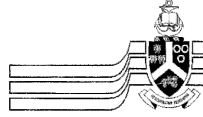
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**CLEARANCE NUMBER :**	EM08/09/04
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD: Education Policy Studies Responses of Early Childhood teachers to Curriculum change	
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mary Clasquin-Johnson	
DEPARTMENT	Department of Early Childhood Education	
DATE CONSIDERED	01 July 2010	
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPROVED	

Please note:

For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years

For PhD applications, ethical clearnace is valid for 3 years.

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE   Prof L Ebersohn

DATE   01 July 2010

CC   Dr CEN Amsterdam

                                                 Dr NC Phatudi

                                                 Ms Jeannie Beukes

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

Appendix 8: National Curriculum Statement—Outcomes and Assessment Standards for Grade R

Literacy Learning Programme: Home Language—English
Home Language LO1: Listening
1. Listens attentively to questions, instructions and announcements, and responds appropriately. 2. Demonstrates appropriate listening behaviour by listening without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker and taking turns to speak. 3. Listens with enjoyment to oral text (simple songs, rhymes, short poems and stories), and shows understanding - Acts out parts of the story, song or rhyme - Joins in choruses at the appropriate time - Draws a picture of the story, song or rhyme - Notes details and gives the main idea of an oral text - Puts pictures in the right sequence 4. Develops phonic awareness: - Recognises that words are made up of sounds - Distinguishes between sounds, especially at the beginning and end of words - Segments oral sentences into individual words (using words of one syllable at first) - Segments spoken multi-syllabic words into syllables (e.g. ba-na-na) using clapping or drumbeats - Recognises some rhyming words in common rhymes and songs such as 'We're going to the zoo, zoo, zoo; you can come too, too, too'.
Home Language LO2: Speaking
1. Talks about family and friends 2. Expresses own feelings and the feelings of real or imaginary people. 3. Sings and recites simple songs and rhymes 4. Uses language imaginatively for fun and fantasy (e.g. to make up rhyming words). 5. Asks questions when the learner does not understand or needs more information, and responds clearly to questions asked of the learner. 6. Passes on messages 7. Recounts own personal experiences 8. Tells own stories and retells stories of others in own words 9. Participates confidently and fluently in a group. 10. Shows sensitivity when speaking to others 11. Role-plays different kinds and manners of speech (e.g. telephone conversations).
Home Language LO3: Reading and Viewing

1. Uses visual cues to make meaning:
- Looks carefully at pictures and photographs to recognise common objects and experiences
- Identifies a picture or figure from the background
- Makes sense of picture stories
- Matches pictures and words
- Uses illustrations to understand simple captions in story books
2. Role-plays reading:
- Holds a book in the right way up, turn pages appropriately, looks at words and pictures and understands the relationship between them, and uses pictures to construct ideas
- Distinguishes pictures from print (e.g. by pointing at words rather than pictures when reading)
3. Make meaning of written text:
- Understands the purpose of print—that it carries meaning (e.g. that a written word can signify own name)
- 'Reads' in a group with the teacher
- Makes links to own experience when reading with the teacher, viewing television or pictures
- Describes and gives opinions of characters in stories or television programmes
4. Starts recognising and making meaning of letters and words:
- Recognises that written words refer to spoken words
- Recognises and reads high frequency words such as own name and print in the environment such as 'STOP'
- 'Reads' picture books with simple captions or sentences
5. Begins to develop phonic awareness:
- Recognises initial consonant and short vowel sounds
- Recognises and names some common letters of the alphabet such as the letter the learner's name begins with
- Recognises some rhyming words in common rhymes and songs such as 'We're going to the zoo, zoo, zoo; you can come too, too, too'.

Home Language LO4: Writing

1. Experiments with writing
- Creates and uses drawings to convey a message, and as a starting point for writing
- Forms letters in different ways (e.g. by using own body to show the shapes, writing in sand)
- Understands that writing and drawing are different
- 'Writes' and asks others to give the meaning of what has been written
- Talks about own drawing and 'writing'
- Role-plays 'writing' for a purpose (e.g. telephone message, shopping list)
- Uses known letters and numerals (or approximations) to represent written language, especially letters from own name and age
-'Reads' own emerging writing when asked to do so
- Shows in own writing attempts, beginning awareness of directionality (e.g. starting from left to right, top to bottom)
- Copies print from the environment (e.g. labels on household items, advertisements)
- Making attempts at familiar forms of writing, using known letters (e.g. lists, messages or letters)
- Manipulates writing tools like crayons and pencils

Home Language LO5: Thinking and Reasoning

1. Uses language to develop concepts - Demonstrates developing knowledge of concepts such as quantity, size, shape, direction, colour, speed, time, age, sequence 2. Uses language to think and reason: - Identifies and describes similarities and differences; - Matches things that go together, and compares things that are different; - Classifies things (e.g. puts all toys in box, books on shelves, crayons in tins.) - Identifies parts from the whole (e.g. parts of the body) 3. Uses language to investigate and explore - Asks questions and searches for explanations - Gives explanations and offer solutions - Offers explanations and solutions - Solves and completes puzzles 4. Processes information - Picks out selected information from a description
Home Language LO6: Language Structure and Use
1. Relates sounds to letters and words: - Recognises that words are made up of sounds - Recognises the sounds at the beginning of some words. 2. Work with words: - Group words (e.g. words which rhyme) - Identifies a word, a letter and a space in print 3. Work with sentences: - Communicates ideas using descriptions and action words. 4. Works with texts - Talk about texts (e.g. stories) using terms like 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end'. 5. Uses meta-languages (e.g. sound, word, letter, rhyme, beginning, middle, end).
Literacy Learning Programme
Additional Language—English
Additional Language LO1: Listening
1. Understands short, simple, dramatised stories: - Joins in choruses at appropriate points (e.g. 'he huffs and he puffs and he blows the house down'. - Draws a picture of a story - Connects the story to own life, with discussion in the home language 2. Understands simple oral instructions by responding physically 3. Show respect for classmates by giving them a chance to speak, and listening to them.
Additional Language LO2: Speaking
1. Uses and responds appropriately to simple greetings and farewells, and thanks people. 2. Memorises and performs songs and action rhymes with the right intonation, rhythm and pronunciation. 3. Uses polite forms such as "please", "thank you", and "sorry".
Additional Language LO3: Reading and Viewing
1. Recognizing some high-frequency words in the media (brand names) and the environment ("STOP","GO") 2. Reads picture books. 3. Names the sound own name begins with (first step in phonemic awareness). 4. Learns rhymes and songs that develop phonemic awareness (e.g. "We're going to the zoo, zoo, zoo; you can come too, too, too.")
Additional Language LO4: Writing

1. Draws pictures on which the teacher writes labels. 2. Understands that writing and drawing are different. 3. Understands the purpose of writing—that it carries meaning. 4. Copies simple words already known orally. 5. Makes attempts at writing, such as trying to write own name.
Additional Language LO5: Thinking and Reasoning
1. Understands concepts and some vocabulary relating to: - Identify (e.g. "My name is …"); - Number (e.g. one, two,…); - Size (e.g. big, small,…); - Colour (e.g. red, yellow,…). 2. Identifies similarities (e.g. by responding to an instruction such as "Put all the yellow ones together.").
Additional Language LO6: Language Structure and Use
1. Show some understanding of question forms in oral context (e.g. "What?", "Who?", "How many/much/old etc…?, "Which…?", "Can…?"). 2. Shows some understanding of the simple present progressive tenses in oral text (e.g. "She likes school." "He is reading."). 3. Shows some understanding of imperatives in oral texts (e.g. "Come here." "Don't sit down."). 4. Shows some understanding of modal verbs in oral texts (e.g. "I can jump/run/skip."). 5. Shows some understanding of negative forms in oral texts (e.g. "I don't like meat." "I can't swim."). 6. Shows some understanding of plurals of nouns (e.g. book, books), including some irregular forms (e.g. tooth, teeth) in oral texts. 7. Shows some understanding of personal pronouns in oral texts (e.g. I, he, she, you, we, they). 8. Shows some understanding of prepositions in oral texts (e.g. in, at, on, to). 9. Shows some understanding of adjectives (e.g. big, small) and adverbs (e.g. slowly, quickly) in oral texts. 10. Understands between 200 and 500 common words in oral texts in context.
Numeracy Learning Programme
Mathematics LO1: Numbers, Operations and Relationships
1. Counts at least 10 everyday objects reliably 2. Says and uses number names in familiar contexts 3. Knows the number names and symbols for 1 to 10 4. Orders and compares collections of objects using the words "more", "less" or "equal" 5. Solves and explains solutions to practical problems that involve equal sharing and grouping with whole numbers of at least 10 and with solutions that include remainders. 6. Solves verbally-stated additions and subtraction problems with single-digit numbers and with solutions to at least 10. 7. Using the following techniques: - Building up and breaking down numbers to at least 10; - Doubling and halving to at least 10 - Using concrete apparatus (e.g. counters 8. Explains own solutions to problems.
Mathematics LO2: Patterns, Functions and Algebra
1. Copies and extends simple patterns using physical objects and drawings (e.g. using colours and shapes). 2. Creates own patterns.
Mathematics LO3: Space and Shape (Geometry)

1. Recognises, identifies and names three-dimensional objects in the classroom and in pictures, including: - Boxes (prisms), - Balls (spheres) 2. Describes, sorts and compares physical three-dimensional objects according to: - Size, - Objects that role - Objects that slide. 3. Builds three-dimensional objects using concrete materials (e.g. building blocks). 4. Recognises symmetry in self and own environment (with focus on front and back) 5. Describes one three-dimensional objects in relation to another (e.g. "in front of" or "behind"). 6. Follows directions (alone and/or as a member of a group or team) to move or place self within the classroom (e.g. "at the front" or "at the back").
Mathematics LO4: Measurement
1. Describes the time of day in terms of day or night 2. Orders recurring events I own daily life. 3. Sequences events within one day. 4. Works concretely comparing and ordering objects using appropriate vocabulary to describe: - Mass (light, heavy, heavier) - Capacity (empty, full, less than, more than) - Length (longer, shorter, wider, tall, short)
Mathematics LO5: Data Handling
1. Collects physical objects (alone and/or as a member of a group or team) in the environment according to stated features (e.g. collects 10 dead flowers). 2. Sorts physical objects according to one attribute (property) (e.g. red shapes). 3. Draws a picture as a record of collected objects. 4. Answers questions (e.g. "Which has the most…?) based on own picture or own sorted objects.
Life Skills Learning Programme
Life Orientation LO1: Health Promotion
1. Explains the importance of drinking only clear water and eating fresh food 2. Describes steps that can be taken to ensure personal hygiene. 3. Demonstrates precautions against the spread of communicable diseases. 4. Explains safety in the home and at school. 5. Explains the right of children to say "no" to sexual abuse, and describes ways in which to do so.
Life Orientation LO2: Social Development
1. Identifies basic rights and responsibilities in the classroom. 2. Recognises the South African flag. 3. Knows members of own family, peers and caregivers. 4. Listens to and retells a story with a moral value from own culture. 5. Identifies and names symbols linked to own religion.
Life Orientation LO3: Personal Development
1. Says own name and address 2. Describes what own body can do 3. Expresses emotions without harming self, others or property 4. Adjusts to classroom routine and follows instructions
Life Orientation LO4: Physical Development and Movement
1. Plays running, chasing and dodging games using space safety 2. Explores different ways to locomote, rotate, elevate and balance 3. Performs expressive movements using different parts of the body. 4. Participates in free play activities.
Arts and Culture LO1: Creating, Interpreting and Presenting

1. Dance
- Through play, co-ordinates simple gross and fine motor movements, including crossing the mid-line.
- Draws on play, fantasy and imagination to explore a wide variety of movements, rhythms and changes in tempo.
- Participates in simple dances based on formations and patterns.
2. Drama
- Uses voice and movement spontaneously when playing creative drama games
- Participates in make-believe situations based on imagination, fantasy and life experiences.
3. Music
- Sings and moves creatively to children's rhymes available in own environment.
- Responds in movement to variety of rhythms and changes in tempo in sounds, songs and stories.
4. Visual Arts
Freely creates images of own world in various media
Uses play and fantasy in two-dimensional and three-dimensional work.
Explores and experiments with a wide variety of art materials, techniques (including waste materials), and colour in a spontaneous and creative way.
Uses and co-ordinates motor skills in practical work and play (e.g. appropriate handling of scissors, glue applicators, paintbrush and drawing instruments).

Arts and Culture LO2: Reflecting
1. Dance
- Talks about own dancing using action words
2. Drama
- Thinks about and shows how people and animals move.
- Uses concrete objects to represent other objects in dramatic play.
3. Music
- Imitates a variety of natural sounds in own environment.
Distinguishes between a talking voice and a singing voice.
4. Visual Arts
- Talks about, shares and tells stories about own artwork with others.

Arts and Culture LO3: Participating and Collaborating
1. Dance
- Responds to movement instructions that cover space without bumping or hurting others when moving forward and backwards.
2. Drama
- Participates in drama games—takes turns, waits for signals, responds to cues, and share space.
- Begins to develop empathy by assuming a variety of familiar roles.
3. Music
Brings songs from home and share them with others.
4. Visual Arts
- Demonstrates active involvement in individual and group art-making activities and the ability to share art-making equipment.

Arts and Culture LO4: Expressing and Communicating
1. Dance
Express ideas and stories creatively through movement activities that are guided but open-ended.
2. Drama
Conveys feelings and ideas through facial expression and gesture.
Creates sound effects to accompany stories told by the teacher.
3. Music
Listens and moves creatively to music, stories, songs and sounds.
4. Visual Arts
Responds to what the learner sees, perceives and experiences in own natural and constructed environment.

Technology 1: Technological Processes and Skills
1. Investigates: - Physically manipulates products to explore their shape, size, colour and the materials they are made of. 2. Designs: - Chooses from the given range, materials or substances that can be used to make simple products. 3. Makes: - Makes simple products from the range of materials provided. 4. Evaluates: - Expresses own feelings about the products made.
Natural Sciences 1:Scientific Investigations
1. Plans: - Contributes towards planning an investigative activity. - Asks and answers questions about investigation, using "show and tell" or stories to say what action is planned. 2. Does: - Participates in planned activity. - Follows simple instructions with assistance - Explains what is being done or played (e.g. games according to rules) 3. Reviews: - Thinks and talks about what has been done. - Uses simple words, pictures or other items with assistance to explain what has been done.
Social Sciences:
History 1: Historical Enquiry - Answer simple questions about stories of the past. - Retells stories about the past and draws pictures illustrating these stories. History 2: Historical Knowledge and Understanding - Discusses personal experiences in the past and present (chronology and time) - Discuss his own age in years. (chronology and time) History 3: Historical Interpretation - Responds to stories about the past (e.g. listens to a story about the past and makes comments) (source interpretation)
Geography 2: Geographical Knowledge and Understanding Discusses personal experiences of familiar places (people and places)
Economic & Management Sciences 1: The Economic Cycle:
1. Identifies own personal role in the home as a consumer. 2. Recognises that advertisements influence personal needs and wants. 3. Explores and begins to understand the notions of bartering and money uses. 4. Recognises that household consists of people who must live and work together within the framework of rules (concepts of "fair" and "unfair" rules)
Economic & Management Sciences 2: Sustainable Growth and Development
1. Differentiates between play and useful tasks at home. 2. Relates stories of responsibilities at home. 3. Recognises the need to do things well and to be committed. 4. Participates in creative activities that will stimulate entrepreneurial thinking (e.g. drawing, cutting, singing, playing, talking)

Appendix 9: Programme of the joint Umalusi/Centre for Education Policy Development/University of the Witwatersrand Grade R Seminar, Held on 16 April 2010 at the WITS Education Campus

A joint UMALUSI, CEPD & WITS Seminar

Will Grade R really improve the quality of SA education?"

Friday 16 April 2010, Staff Lounge, Boyce Block, WITS Education Campus

Programme

14h30-15h00 Arrival and registration (Tea & Coffee served)

15h00-15h10 Opening & Welcome Address CEPD (Chair: Biki Lepota, UMALUSI)

15h10-15h30 Panel Speakers 1 & 2 Vivien Linington & Lorayne Excell (WITS)

15h30-15h50 Panel Speaker 3 Linda Biersteker (ELRU)

15h50-16h10 Panel Speaker 4 Sheila Drew (SAIDE)

16h10-16h30 Respondent Marie-Louise Samuels (DoE)

16h30-17:00 Discussion Session: Open to the Floor

17h00 Closing & Thanks Ruksana Osman (WITS)

OVERVIEW OF LEARNING PATHWAYS FOR LEARNERS REGARDING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT QUALIFICATIONS

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

CURRENT NQF LEVEL	FORMAL SCHOOLING AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMIC PATHWAY	ECD VOCATIONAL PATHWAY	ECD OCCUPATIONAL PATHWAY
1	General Education Certificate (GEC) (ID 63289)	GETC: ABET: ECD (LP ID 73254 against Qual ID 71751) – includes Elective specialisation in ECD at Levels 1 and 2	Basic Certificate: Early Childhood Development (SAQA ID 23114) Level 1 ECD Unit Standards (SAQA ID 244261 & 244263)
2	National Senior Certificate (NSC) ID 49647	National Certificate: Vocational, Level 2 (ID 50440)– Specialisation in Early Childhood Development as an optional subject	Level 2 ECD Unit Standards (SAQA ID 244255, 244258 & 244262)
3		National Certificate: Vocational, Level 3 (ID 50442) – Specialisation in Early Childhood Development as an optional subject	
4		National Certificate: Vocational, Level 4 (ID 50441) – Specialisation in Early Childhood Development as an optional subject	FETC: Early Childhood Development (SAQA ID 58761)
5	National Professional Diploma: Education (NPDE) – used for upskilling and reskilling for formal educator route		Higher Certificate: Early Childhood Development, Level 5 (SAQA ID 64649) National Diploma: ECD, Level 5 (SAQA ID 64650)
6	Bachelor of Education – Specialising in Early Childhood Development: Foundation Phase ACE: Foundation Phase and Early Childhood Development		
7	Bachelor of Education Honours: Specialising in Foundation Phase		
8	Master of Education – Specialising in ECD PhD – Specialising in ECD		

Appendix 10: ECE Teachers' Qualifications Map

WEEKLIKSE BEPLANNING

TEMA: Hulpberoepe   **ONDERWYSERES**:   **GROEP: Gr.R**

OUERPLAKKAAT: **DATUM**: 11-15 Mei 2009

Dag	1ste Gerigte aktiwiteit	Vryspel binne (Hoofaktiwiteit Kuns, Bak en brou, Tegnologie, Blokspel, Opv.speletjie, Persepsie	Vryspel binne By-aktiwiteite	Vryspel binne Opvoedkundige speelgoed. Fantasie, blokke, boeke	2de Gerigte aktiwiteit	Vryspel buite Sien rooster op stoor deur	3de Gerigte aktiwiteit	Assessering
Ma	Opening Die weer Tema: Die polisie en die aanklag kantoor	Collage 'n polisiemotor met 10111 as randdpatroon	Maakpolisieman (toiletrol) Ryg met Noedels Maak polisieman/ -vrou legkaart	Groot houtblokke Lego Klein bou blokkies	Gesyferdheid Telaktiwiteite 1-5 Werkboek 1 bl. 54		Storie: Die Boemelaar Versie; Een lang maer mannetjie	LU T1,2 LU T2 nr4 LU Wisk1.1 HT LU 1 Ass 1 Tegnieke: Collage Klei
Di	Opening Weer Tema: Ek ontdek meer oor die polisie se werk	Vou 'n polisiehelikopter	Polisiehond van klei Dooskonstruksie - Polisie radio Teken en plak: dief in die tronk	Pennetjieborde Rekkieborde Lace up	Wetenskap: Olieverf dryf op water		Storie: Die ongeluk voor Fezile se huis Vaslegging van versie	LU Wet1 (1-3) LU T 1.2 Tegnieke: Modelering Teken Storie= verteling

	Opening / Tema					Musiek	Storie	LU
Wo	Opening Weer Tema: Ontdek meer oor die verkeers polisie	Rotasieprogram:	Grootmotories: Reinnette	Persepsie: Isabel	Gesyferdheid: Jackie	Musiek: Marina	Storie Rifilwe en Linda en die verkeers= man	LU T 1,2 LU 2 nr. 1 Wisk Tegnieke: Storie= vertelling
Do	Opening Weer Tema: Ek ontdek meer oor padveiligheid	Bak en brou: Pastaslaai	Verf 'n robot (roomysstokkies) Vormkonstantheid: Vuurhoutjies Borrelblaas 'n A3 vel met rooi, oranje en geel (vir Vrydag)	Groot boublokke en diere Krale ryg Klein blokkies	Wetenskap: Spieëlbeeld van 'n tekening		Storie: Die nare ongeluk	LU2,3 Sos Wet Tegnieke: Verf Bak en brou
Vr	Opening Die weer Tema: Ek ontdek meer oor die brandweer	Brandweerwa uitknip en plak by, leer en brandende gebou.	Teken met houtskool Stopstraat ryg Werkboek 1 bl.56 Kersdrup telefoon met noodnommer (10177)	Soundsnap Pennetjiebord (ryg) Rekkieborde	Wetenskap: Wat kan brand?		Storie: The Rooftop Rescue	LU T 1,2 Tegnieke: Verf Teken Werkboek

English Translation

THEME: Occupations that serve the community   **TEACHER**:   **GROUP**: Grade R
PARENT POSTER: **DATE**: 11-15 MAY 2009

Day	1st Structured activity	Indoor Free Play (Main Activity) Art, Baking, Technology, Block Play, Educational game, Perceptual activity	Indoor Free Play Sub-activities	Indoor Free Play Educational games, Fantasy, block play, books	2nd Structured Activity	Outdoor Free Play See roster on store-room's door	3rd Structured Activity	Assessment
Mon	Opening The weather Theme: The police and the complaints office	Collage of a police car with 10111 border pattern	Make a policeman (toilet roll holder) Weaving with noodles Make policeman/-woman puzzle	Large wooden blocks Lego Build with small blocks	Numeracy Counting activity 1-5 Workbook 1 p.54		Story: The vagrant Poem: One tall, thin man	LO Lang 1,2 LO Lang 2 no4 LO Maths1.1 HL LO 1 Ass 1 Strategies: Collage Clay
Tues	Opening Weather Theme: I learn more about how the police work	Fold a police helicopter	Police dog modeled from clay Box construction - Police radio Draw and Paste: prisoner in jail	Peg board Lace up	Science activity: Oil paint floats on water		Story: The accident outside Fezile's house Reinforcing / practicing Poem	LO Geog 1 (1-3) LO Lang 1.2 Strategies: Modeling Drawing Storytelling

Wed	Opening Weather Theme: Discover more about the traffic police	Rotation Programme:	Gross motor activities: Reinnette	Perceptual Activity: Isabel	Numeracy: Jackie	Music: Music teacher	Story Rifilwe and Linda and the traffic officer	LO Lang 1,2 LO 2 no. 1 Maths Strategies: Storytelling
Thur	Opening Weather Theme: I discover more about road safety	Baking ' Food preparation Activity: Pasta salad	Paint a robot with sucker sticks Vormkonstantheid : Match sticks bubble blowing A3 paper with red, orange and yellow (for Friday)	Large building blocks en animals Beading Small blocks	Science activity: Mirror image of a drawing		Story: The serious accident	LO 2,3 Science Strategies: Painting Baking Activity
Fri	Opening The weather Theme: I discover more about the fire brigade	Fire engine Cutting and pasting fire engine, ladder and burning building	Draw with charcoal Weave a Stop sign Workbook 1 p.56 Candle wax telephone with the emergency number (10177)	Draw with charcoal Peg board Weaving	Science: What could burn?		Story: The Rooftop Rescue	LO Lang 1,2 Strategies: Painting Drawing Workbooks

Appendix 13: Sample Grade R Worksheets

Going to Grade 1

Colour the following:

1. the object <u>under</u> the chair
2. the objects <u>in front of</u> the door
3. the girl <u>outside</u> the house
4. the flower <u>in the middle</u>
5. the object <u>in</u> the pot

6. the child <u>on</u> the chair
7. the object <u>behind</u> the tree
8. the girl <u>inside</u> the house
9. the animal <u>next to</u> the cow
10. the bird flying <u>out</u> of the nest

Math#LO3: Space and shape (Geometry)
AS: Describes one 3-D object in relation to another (e.g. 'in front of' or 'behind').

Teacher instruction:
Begin by revising the value of numbers 1 to 5. Learners count to five.
Ask how many fingers are on each hand and count them. Learners can count the hats each figure is wearing.
They then write the number and word in the box below each figure. They can use the labels at the bottom of the worksheet to help them.
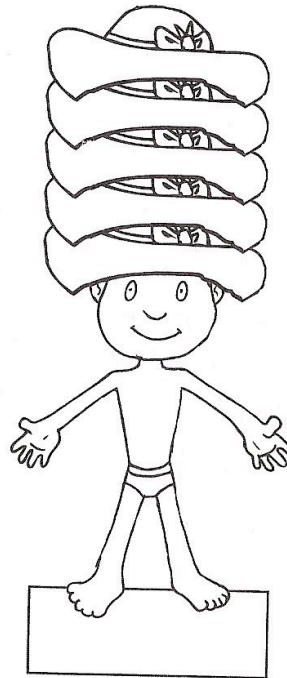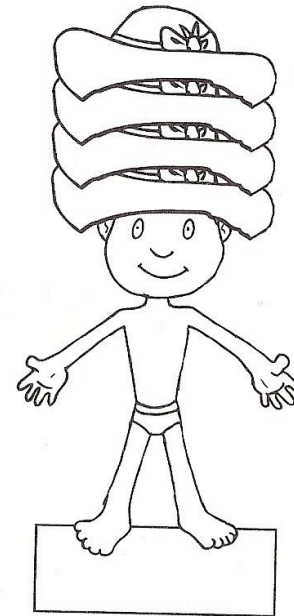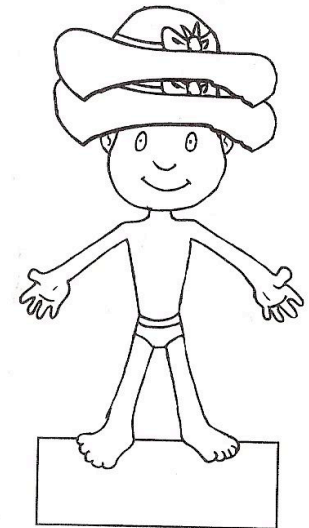*This is a visual discrimination and counting activity.*

Bala mengatse

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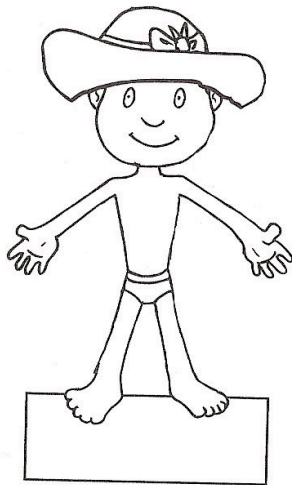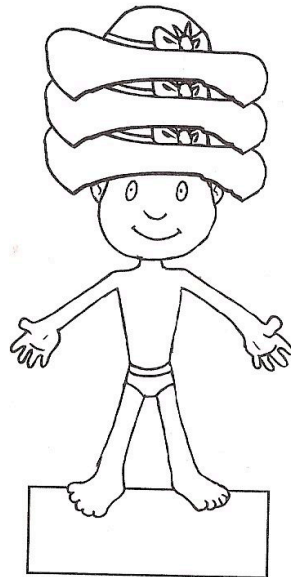
| 1 - tee | 2 - pedi | 3 - tharo | 4 - nne | 5 - hlano |

Appendix 14: Participants in This Study Placed on the Conceptual Framework Matrix

| Resist	Adapt
Paige initially resisted the requirements for detailed lesson planning. Although Paige's planning gave the impression that she was implementing the NCS, she was resisting the curriculum change "I don't even look at it".	Paige adapted the official curriculum by using worksheets on a daily basis because "parents want to see what they're paying for". Paige stated that she was combining a play-based and formal approach. According to Paige, she was using the NCS as a "guide".
Patricia noted that she resisted parents' demands that their children be taught to read and write.	Patricia adapted the NCS by focusing mainly on literacy and numeracy. She extracted the underlying skills from the learning outcomes of the official curriculum.
Jane argued that she resisted instructions from her HoD because there was no coherence between the school's demands and the DoE's demands. Jane resisted the lack of articulation between Grade R and Grade 1.	Anna mainly focused on the literacy and numeracy learning programmes. She extensively used worksheets.
The qualified teachers (Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie) resisted the implementation of the NCS. Instead they argued that their existing practices were already compliant. "We have always been doing OBE. Things have just been given new names."	Jane used worksheets that accompanied scripted materials to create her own worksheets and adapted those worksheets into games. Her classroom activities were designed to facilitate the development of communication skills through fantasy play, to promote oral language acquisition and to accommodate additional language learners
	Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel, Jackie adapted the curriculum change by planning as a team to reduce the workload. They focused primarily on the learners' emotional readiness for school and physical development through play.
Ignore	**Adopt**
Paige said that she ignored any recommendation from training if she perceived it as something that would increase her workload.	Paige, Patricia, Anna and Jane adopted the use of scripted materials, the three Foundation Phase Learning Programmes in their primary school setting, the NCS assessment requirements, assessment procedures and reports, the focus on school readiness skills to prepare their learners for Grade 1 and the prescriptions for indoor and outdoor play requirements, although they were unable to meet some outdoor requirements due to lack of funding
Patricia initially ignored the planning requirements of the NCS and her planning did not reflect the design features of NCS.	
Anna ignored the requirement to reflect on her lesson presentations. She ignored any suggestions from departmental officials if she viewed them as unrealistic and impractical for her large class.	Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie adopted the advice they received from training offered by the Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie (South African Teachers' Union) and from seminars organised by the Vereeniging vir Voorskoolse Onderwys en Sorg (Association for the Education and Care of Young Children, or AECYC). They also adopted the three Foundation Phase Learning Programmes, the planning requirements of the NCS, the GDE's recommendations regarding classroom layout and the NCS assessment procedures.
Jane ignored team planning with her foundation phase colleagues because she viewed them as being ignorant of Grade R.	
Takalani, Natasha, Reinnette, Isabel and Jackie ignored the advice from GDE officials because "we are way beyond what they are offering".	

Appendix 15: SKVAs Linked to Paige and Patricia's Lesson Plans

Skills	Knowledge	Values and Attitudes
1. Association 2. Drawing 3. Sequencing 4. Communication 5. Classification 6. Pasting 7. Recording in the appropriate place 8. Construction 9. Patterns 10. Solving problems 11. Cutting 12. Running 13. Chasing 14. Dodging 15. Locomote body 16. Rotate body 17. Evaluate body 18. Balance body 19. Singing 20. Dancing 21. Listening and speaking 22. Recalling 23. Story telling 24. Copy and writing 25. Asking questions 26. Counting	1. Language 2. Calculations 3. Knowledge of own birthday 4. Time 5. Importance of hygiene 6. Class routine 7. Seasons and weather 8. Following instructions 9. Learns songs and rhymes 10. Uses background knowledge 11. Understands that writing and drawing are different	1. Confidence 2. Take turns 3. Respect for others 4. Punctuality 5. Consideration for others 6. Patience 7. Perseverance 8. My body is my responsibility 9. Ability to share 10. Kindness 11. Independence

Appendix 16: Certificate of Editing
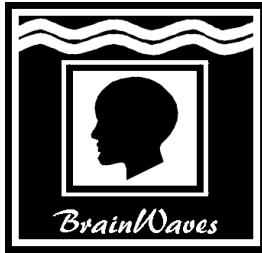
BrainWaves
Research & Training cc.

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17 August 2010

To whom it may concern

This hereby certifies that I have edited the PhD thesis by Mary Clasquin-Johnson,

submitted to the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Disclaimers

1. I focused on language issues, including grammar, tenses, subject-verb agreement and consistency with regard to UK spelling. I eliminated redundancy and indicated where repetition occurred.

2. I improved the word order where necessary to improve the logical flow of the story line. I also made suggestions for the improvement of the structure and numbering of sections and consistency with regard to heading styles. Final decisions rest with the student as to which suggestions to implement.

3. I was not asked to edit the Bibliography, nor check the cross referencing between the text and the Bibliography.

J.W. Fresen (PhD)
Language editor

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Curriculum Vitae

Mary Gertrude Clasquin-Johnson holds a Diploma in Preprimary Education and a Higher Diploma in Junior Primary Education from Cape Town College of Education (incorporated into the Cape Peninsula University of Technology), a B. Ed. Honours with specialisation in Early Childhood Development and a Masters in Education, with specialisation in Psychology of Education, both from the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Mary has 17 years' experience in the field of early childhood education. She has worked as a reception year (Grade R) teacher, an early childhood education specialist for the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) and was an Early Childhood Development lecturer in the Department of Teacher Education at UNISA and the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. Mary is presently the Early Childhood Development unit manager at the South African National Tutor Services (SANTS).