

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

According to Sikes (1996:36) “a fundamental purpose of education is to prepare young people for life in society, and since societies throughout the world are constantly changing and developing, education can also be expected to change.” Vakalisa (2000:13) adds that “educational reform, educational renewal and curriculum change or restructuring are familiar slogans in the field of education. In all countries where education is the competence of the state ministries of education undertake the task of reforming education.” South Africa has also had to face changes in various spheres of life, including the political and the educational fields. In the sphere of education and training “one of the most daunting challenges facing South Africa’s first democratically elected government,” according to Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay (2001:287), “was the transformation of apartheid education”. As Nakabugo and Sieborger (2001:52) further contend, “the transformation of the school curriculum in South Africa was an urgent priority of the education ministry of the government of national unity”.

In order to transform the education, the government of South Africa took certain measures. According to Nakabugo and Sieborger (2001:52) “the first step towards the transformation of the school curriculum in South Africa was taken not long after the 1994 election when interim syllabuses were created for immediate implementation in schools.” This first initiative of the newly elected South African government was, according to Jansen (1999:145) an attempt “to purge

the apartheid curriculum (school syllabuses) of racially offensive and outdated content.” This process, however, was not well received because the changes in the syllabi did not go far enough as they in large part merely meant joining the then existing syllabi of the various racially segregated education departments into single documents. A more radical type of transformation of the curriculum was therefore needed.

According to Jansen (1999:145) “the most ambitious curriculum policy since the installation of a government of national unity has been referred to as outcomes based education (OBE).” As Kramer (1999:1) says, “the adoption of an outcomes based education (OBE) approach was one of the most challenging aspects of this radical transformation of education and training.” This outcomes based education (OBE) approach was called Curriculum 2005 in South Africa. The intention was that by the end of year 2005 outcomes based education will have been implemented in all the school grades. It was introduced in grades 1,2,3, 4 and 5 in the years 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively, and in grades 7, 8 and 9 in the years 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively. The outcomes based curriculum was introduced with noble goals. As the Curriculum 2005 Review Committee Report (Chisholm 2000:9) says, “curriculum 2005 is probably the most significant curriculum reform in South African education of the last century. Deliberately intended to simultaneously overturn the legacy of apartheid education and catapult South Africa into the 21st century, it was an innovation both bold and revolutionary in the magnitude of its conception. As the first major curriculum statement of a democratic government, it signaled a dramatic break from the past. No longer would curriculum shape and be shaped by narrow visions, concerns and identities. No longer would it reproduce the limited interest of any one particular grouping at the expense of another. It

would bridge all, and encompass all. Education and training, content and skills, values and knowledge: all would find a place in Curriculum 2005.”

Educational change however, does not take place in a vacuum; it takes place at various levels, including the school level, and with regard to various facets that could include administration, the teacher and the methods of assessment or examination of pupil or learner performance. Teachers have to deal with the changed curriculum, changed assessments and the changed pedagogy. As Hargreaves (1995: ix) says, “ the teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement. The restructuring of schools, the composition of national and provincial curricula, the development of benchmark assessments; all these things are of little value if they do not take the teacher into account. Teachers don’t merely deliver the curriculum. They develop it, define it and reinterpret it too. It is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get.” This is an important factor about teachers that is further emphasised by Clark (1995:5) when he says that, “even when the teacher is not responsible for literally creating curriculum, the quality of education is affected by his or her interpretation of it. Through planning and decision making teachers inevitably change the curriculum from exactly what was intended by the authors to that which is actually experienced in the classroom. Teachers’ transformation of curriculum seems to be necessary responses to the complexity, unpredictability, and uniqueness of each classroom situation. The teacher, one way or another, determines what is taught.”

The teacher is the one who implements curriculum at what could be called the operational level, the classroom. The teacher therefore at least needs to understand the curriculum well in order to be able to interpret it in such a manner that the practice becomes congruent with what is intended in the curriculum documents. When a new curriculum is introduced teachers may have many questions regarding it. As the ones who will need to make the change of education successful in South African classrooms teachers are, according to Kramer (1999:1) “asking about OBE, what is it, where it came from and what is its track record of success or failure.” Furthermore, teachers have also asked questions like the one asked by Taunyane, the president of the Professional Educators Union (PEU, formerly TUATA) in his presidential address when he asked this question regarding the implementation of Curriculum 2005 (Taunyane 1997:6):- “What steps are going to be taken to train us (teachers) to deal with that new curriculum in such a way that we shall be prepared before the start of 1998 to deal with the issues that arise?”

The above comments indicate the issues that arise in the minds of teachers when faced with a radically different type of curriculum from what they know. They cannot simply call on their experience like when it is merely a change of syllabus. Curriculum 2005 calls on teachers to change not only the content they teach, but also their modes of assessment as well as their pedagogy. They have to use a new approach called outcomes based education. They also have to deal with outcomes and focus their teaching towards those outcomes. As Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay (2000:288) say, “given the generality of the seven ‘critical’ or generic outcomes - such as *Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decision using critical and creative thinking has been made* – the demands on teachers skills and professionalism are considerable”.

Policy has to be effected in a world that is real rather than ideal. Putting policy into practice takes place in the real world. This is also true with regard to education policy. As Enslin and Pendlebury (1998:262) say, “formal changes cannot guarantee better practice, and where the policy makers take little account of the context and agents of implementation, policy may impede rather than enable transformation.” This concurs with what the African National Congress (ANC,1995:5) has said: - “For a policy to have a chance of success, a sufficient number of people must be persuaded that it is right, necessary and implementable. Almost any education policy will come to grief in practice if it does not win the support of two essential constituencies: those who are expected to benefit from it and those who are expected to implement it.” In the case of education policy that has to do with the school curriculum those who are expected to implement it are the teachers.

The above comments not only bring about the issue of the teacher’s understanding and interpretation of the new policy and curriculum, but also the question of whether there are any support systems in place for the teacher who will and has already been thrown into the deep end of this changing system of education. Teachers, used to practicing the old ways of doing things, often find it difficult to learn new skills and behaviour as required to properly implement a new curriculum or policy. Also, there is often ambivalence as to whether the change will be favourable even before the change is practised. As Fullan (1991:129) says, “the problem is compounded because attempts are frequently awkward, not providing a fair test of the idea. Support during initial trials is critical for getting through the first stages, as is some sign of progress.”

The question therefore also arises as to what kind of support to provide, when to provide it, and how to provide this support. Unplanned change, and therefore unplanned support of the process of change, can lead to the failure of that change. In addition, realistic objectives should be set, meaning, according to Farrant (1997:56), that there should be a “clear identification of the limits within which innovation may operate and the extent of the supporting services that can be provided”.

In 1998 the Department of Education of the Limpopo Province of South Africa embarked on a programme called the Provincial School Support Programme (PSSP). This programme, according the Department of Education of the Northern Province (1998:1) was introduced “in an endeavour to accelerate the culture of learning, teaching and service campaign in general and to support individual schools in particular. The aim and object of the Provincial School Support Programme (PSSP) is to give administrative and professional support to schools throughout the province”.

The intention was to send teams of people to schools in order to help teachers in particular. These teams were called School Support Teams (SST's) and were constituted by district and circuit managers, subject advisors, excess staff from community colleges, staff from regional and provincial offices, and where possible, staff from colleges of education. Although the aims of the PSSP as stated by the provincial Department of Education seem noble, there has been a lot of resistance to the School Support Teams (SST's) visiting schools. Teachers suspect that it might be the bringing back of the old inspection system that was rejected by SADTU (South African Democratic Teacher's Union) way back in 1990 (SADTU calendar 1998:1).

Since 1998, and in particular in the years of 1999 onwards, workshops have been conducted for teachers with regard to Curriculum 2005 and OBE. These workshops are conducted for teachers of a particular grade for a maximum of two or three days. After the workshop the teachers are supposed to start implementing the new curriculum at their schools. The question that arises relate to whether these two or three days constitute sufficient support for teachers with regard to the implementation of OBE.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTION

In light of the above issues, the main research question is therefore as follows: -

* What are the understandings and experiences of serving teachers with regard to the purpose, scope and practices of professional support in Limpopo Province within the changing educational setting of South Africa?

In order to examine and properly expand on the main research question, **the following are the other research questions of the study: -**

- What are the understandings of teachers with regard to educational change in South Africa?
- What are the understandings of teachers with regard to professional support within a changing educational setting?
- How do teachers understandings and expectations of professional support relate to their actual experiences of professional support?

- What measures, if any, can be taken in order to improve the provision of professional support for teachers?

1.3. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim/purpose of the study is as follows: -

- To determine and/or elucidate the understandings and experiences of serving teachers with regard to the purpose, scope and practices of professional support in Limpopo Province within the changing educational setting of South Africa.

To reach the aim/purpose of the study **the objectives of the study are as follows: -**

- to critically explore the understandings and experiences of teachers with regard to educational change in South Africa;
- to explore the understandings of teachers with regard to professional support within a changing educational setting;
- to examine how teacher understandings of professional support relate to their actual experiences with regard to professional support;
- to discover and examine the measures that can be taken to improve the provision of professional support, if necessary.

1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The introduction of outcomes based education, a new system that is radically different from the old content based system, requires that the methods of teaching, learning and even assessment change. Therefore

the study focuses on the impact of these changes on teachers and the professional support that is needed in order to assist teachers in times of change.

1.5. METHODOLOGY/ PROCEDURE

1.5.1. Literature Study

In order to explore the understandings and experiences of teachers with regard to professional support for teachers as well as to determine the feasibility of improvements for the purpose of making a better provision of this support for teachers, both primary and secondary sources of information will be used. The libraries of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, Venda, the North and PU for CHE, amongst others, will be made use of. A dialog-search will also be done using the following keywords:- professional support, support services, teacher support, staff development, in service training, examinations, assessment, education policy, policy, outcomes based education (OBE), and Curriculum 2005.

1.5.2. Empirical research

1.5.2.1. Why qualitative research

The research method used here, as will be explained further in Chapter 3, is a qualitative one. I chose to use qualitative research because, as Grove (1993:65) says, I wanted “to describe experiences as they are lived.” In other words, I wanted to understand the subjects of my research from their own point of view. The intent of this research is, as Mertens (1998:169) mentions, “to understand and describe an

event from the point of view of the participant.” Thus I regard qualitative research, which approaches respondents with the intent of understanding their point of view, as the research that least distorts the respondent’s experiences.

1.5.2.2. Population and sample

The study population consists of primary school teachers in Thohoyandou District in Region 3 of Limpopo Province. Five teachers were selected. The five teachers are senior phase teachers who teach grade 7 classes. Purposive sampling was done because the aim of the search for information in a qualitative study is not to gather information from vast numbers of people but to examine information from informed and representative people in the study population. As Lawrence-Newman (1997: 419) says, in qualitative research, "adequacy refers to the amount of data collected, rather than to the number of subjects as in quantitative research."

1.5.2.3. Data collection

As stated above, purposive sampling was used. The data was collected through unstructured interviews with the five grade 7 senior phase teachers. The interviews were the open-ended, conversation type in which the questions asked would largely depend on what the interviewee says after the issue under discussion has been introduced by the researcher.

1.5.2.4. Data analysis

After collecting the data I looked for themes and patterns in the data. I also identified processes, causes and properties within the evidence. The inductive method was used. In qualitative research, data analysis

starts and continues throughout data collection, and this was the case here as well. After each data collection session I organised the data so as to make detailed notes. After each interview I would replay the tape recorded interview while listening carefully to the contents as well as to the questions asked and the participant's response, so as to become familiar with the data, after which I would transcribe the data word for word from the tape. I used comparison to build and refine categories, define conceptual similarities, find negative evidence, and discover patterns. To code the data I used the persistent words, phrases or themes that arose from the data collected from the different participants.

1.5.2.5. Significance of the research

South Africa has embarked on educational change as a result of the changes that have also occurred in the political outlook of the last decade. This educational change will impact on teachers and will have to be implemented in the classroom by teachers. The new millennium can also be expected to bring further education change. This study is therefore intended to become useful for both policy makers and teachers as teachers grapple with the new curriculum. This will also help to reveal the understandings and experiences of teachers with regard to professional support and suggest ways of linking the provision of professional support to what is needed at schools.

1.6. AREA DELIMITATION

While I realize the importance, applicability and usability of the research results to South Africa as a whole in particular, and to other Southern African countries and the world, it is imperative that the study area be delimited to a particular locality for the purpose of

proper investigation that does not become unwieldy and unworkable. For this reason the study was conducted within the bounds of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Specifically Thohoyandou District within Region 3 of Limpopo Province was targeted.

1.7. STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

The work is divided into the following chapters:

- Chapter One : **Introduction**
- Chapter Two : **Literature review.** The challenge of educational change for teachers.
- Chapter Three : **Methodology.** Qualitative research design.
- Chapter Four : **Presentation and analysis of data**
- Chapter Five : **Significance and implications of this study**

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE FOR TEACHERS

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter One introduced the problem of the study, the aim or purpose of the study as well as the research method. Chapter two critically reviews the literature with regard to the understandings and experiences of teachers with regard to professional support for teachers during periods of educational change. The chapter will therefore contextualise the change process, examine curriculum change in South Africa since 1994, and also examine professional support for teachers within the changing educational context.

2.2. THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS IN THE CHANGE PROCESS

2.2.1. The meaning of educational change.

According to King (1999:100) “all educational systems are seriously open to question. With every passing year they become less suited to contemporary needs. The world and people being educated or educating themselves are changing at headlong speed. One generation’s technology may well be its grandchildren’s archeology”. Sikes (1996:36) concurs with this when she says that “since societies throughout the world are constantly changing and developing, education can also be expected to change.” Sikes (1996:36) continues and says that “there is nothing new about educational change, indeed, change can be seen as the norm, the stable state, what is new though is the rate and frequency with which the changes are being

introduced.” Educational change is therefore something that cannot be wished away, because it is taking place in relation to the change that is taking place in the wider society. In addition, change in society at large, is happening at great speed.

The changes in the education system may have to do with curricula, with the way teachers teach, with the ways people learn, at what age, and with what prospects. Educational change also implies innovation, where something new or a new method of teaching and learning may be discovered and implemented. According to Robinson (1994:29), “educational change requires change in people’s beliefs, attitudes, and types of relationships, which are all tied in with how people – teachers and students, parents and administrators – feel about themselves and other people in the community” Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay (2000: 300) also add their comments in this way:- “All significant change entails the unlearning of what has long been held as right. This means that educational change is not something superficial. It is a change that requires a serious examination of the very foundations of the beliefs and attitudes of people.”

2.2.2. The purpose of educational change

According to Fullan (1991:15) “the purpose of educational change is to help schools accomplish their goals more effectively by replacing some structures, programs and/or practices with better ones”. In other words the change must influence the education system so that the education can influence, respond to, or otherwise contribute to reforming society. Educational change must therefore not be just for the sake of change but it must make a contribution to society.

This is echoed by Farrant (1997:45) who contends that “if ever education were to become so mummified that it did not change, then society itself would die. Each country must discover for itself its own system, one that suits its own particular needs and aspirations. Just as knowledge changes so does society, for it is a living dynamic organism that exerts pressure on its members to conform to its ideals and standards. At one time a particular goal may be emphasized, at another time a quite new goal may take over.” As already mentioned, Robinson (1994:29) indicates that “educational change requires change in people’s beliefs, attitudes, and types of relationships.” This means that educational change and societal reform are closely linked. This is because, as Hartshorne (1999:8) contends, “education does not and cannot operate in a vacuum, but in a particular political, economic, social, and constitutional surround or context.”

Educational change should therefore not only be there to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of schooling and enhance teaching quality, update curricula and re-organize the school setting, but should be much more global, reflecting major political, social and economic conflict and change at the international levels. Educational change should therefore also consider the environment in which it takes place, the players involved and those affected or impacted upon by the change.

Finally, as Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997:171) say, “effective change in educational practices requires more than positive hopes and aspirations, though these are very important in mobilising initial and continuing support for change. Long-term effective change of a progressive kind in education requires the operationalisation of ideas, and, more importantly, their institutionalisation in structures, cultures and practices. However, institutionalisation does not mean a

closing off of debate. One thing we need to recognise is that we never reach the ideal situation – it always remains an aspiration. Research and better ways of conceptualising the issues in policy are developing all the time. Further, the broader contexts of policy also continue to change.”

2.2.3. Teachers and educational change

According to Fullan (1997:117) “educational change depends on what teachers do and think. Classrooms and schools become effective when (1) quality people are recruited to teaching and (2) the workplace is organized to stimulate and reward accomplishment.” Robinson (1994:28) mentions that “genuine change occurs in a classroom only when the teacher changes.” Robinson (1994:29) continues and says that “teachers need to find meaning in change for change to have an effect.” As Barnes, Briton and Torbe (1990:8) contend, “teaching is a highly skilled activity which requires of the teacher an immediate response to events as they develop. He or she must attend not only to long-term goals but also to the urgent details of individual pupils participation in the lessons. The teacher must judge instantly whether the moment requires a suggestion, an invitation to explain, a discouraging glance, an anecdote, a joke, a reprimand, or the setting of a new task.” The above statements indicate the importance of teachers to educational change. Their role not only involves implementing the change that has been decided upon somewhere else, but also introducing the change. They are closely attached to educational practice and should therefore be regarded as essential when educational change is being thought of. In other words, educational change should not leave teachers out.

In a study of Scotland's National Curriculum in which their methodological concern was with difficulties in gaining access to teachers classroom thinking, Swann and Brown (1997:91) indicate that "curriculum initiatives show extraordinarily modest levels of pedagogical implementation, in part because curriculum innovators have failed to start where the teachers are." This is echoed by Steyn and Van Wyk (1999:41) in their study of the perceptions of black teachers and principals in South Africa about job satisfaction when they mention that "educational change is more likely to succeed if people recognise the need for proposed changes and if change is perceived as having the potential of making life easier, rather than adding to teachers workload. In this context, teachers' understanding of and attitudes to proposed changes should be taken into account". Furthermore in a study of the long-term sustainability of change in the work of advisory teachers in Lesotho, Martin, Russ and Bishop (2000:209) indicate that "changes in practitioner behaviour will only come about if they are preceded by changes in practitioner thinking." Martin, Russ and Bishop (2000:211) go on to conclude that "teachers need to understand and accept the rationale behind any change if they are to use the tools of change effectively." These comments indicate that what teachers think, what they understand to be change, and what they understand about the changes that they are to implement in the classroom is crucial to the success of educational change. Also, their experiences, past and present, as well as their expectations are important.

Teachers understanding of why they have to implement a certain change, that is, of the rationale behind a particular change, is important for the success of the change. As Fullan (1991:128) says, "teachers have to have understanding of the operational meaning of the change before they can make a judgement about it". Ambivalence

about whether the change will be favourable can cause problems at implementation. As Fullan (1991:127) further says, “change is a highly personal experience. Each and every one of the teachers who will be affected by change must have the opportunity to work through this experience in a way in which the rewards at least equal the cost.” In other words, change will always carry with it some discomfort, as the change will always take people away from what they are used to, to something different. However the teacher should perceive the change as also bringing worthwhile rewards for him or her. As Rogan (2000:121) says while talking about the implementation of curriculum 2005 in South Africa, “teachers will only make changes when they themselves are convinced that a change is both necessary and in the best interest of themselves and their learners. Coercion can be used, and it certainly has been tried in the past, but any changes brought about in this way are at best superficial and temporary.” In other words it is best to take teachers along when bringing in educational changes and making the changes worthwhile for the teachers in order for change to be successful.

Teachers should not be made to feel that the change has been imposed upon them. They should be part of the process, actively involved from the beginning. As Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay (2000:300) say, “for real change then, what teachers need is not impersonal policy directives implemented from above with the overtones of authority and control, but localised, contextualised, even personalised developmental support and assistance in the everyday business of teaching.” This is because, as Vakalisa (2000:19) says, “no curriculum is operationalised without the teacher.” As Vakalisa (2000:20) continues, while talking about curriculum changes in South Africa, “ this is why it is very important that the new curriculum should consider the available knowledge base and teaching skills

among the teachers who are to be charged with its implementation. It must not be prescriptive.” This is echoed by Steyn and van Wyk (1999:41) who say that “where change is imposed on schools, there is always the danger that policy makers will underestimate the complexity of social and educational realities.” Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997:172) also concur and say that “in education the smallest unit - the classroom - will ultimately determine the effectiveness of a policy. Applied to change in schools, this means we need to consider teachers interests.” It is therefore important to note that teachers should not be ignored when change is brought in. Teachers should be part of the change process from the beginning as they are the ones who will have to operationalise the change in the classroom situation. Their understandings of the change process are therefore important.

2.2.4. Educational policy change and the impact on teachers.

2.2.4.1. What is educational policy?

According to Hartshorne (1999:5), “education policy, like any other state policy, may be defined as a course of action adopted by government, through legislation, ordinances, and regulations, and pursued through administration and control, finance and inspection, with the general assumption that it should be beneficial to the country and its citizens... Behind the adoption of a particular policy lies the assumption that the government has the power and authority to carry it out. Policy is therefore closely linked to decision-making and to control of the structures and institutions where decisions are made and of the people by whom they are made and carried out.” Ball (1994:10) on the other hand contends that “policy is both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended”. Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997:24-25) contend

that “policy is much more than a specific policy document or text. Rather, policy is both process and product. Policy involves the production of the text, the text itself, ongoing modifications to the text and processes of implementation into practice.” Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997:2) also mention that “public policies in education exist in order to ensure that education occurs in the public interest.” The views quoted above indicate certain issues that are important about policy. The first is that although policy is contested it is intended to serve a particular purpose. Secondly, policy is enacted by an authority, often in the form of text. Third, policy needs to be implemented. Fourth, policy is made in order to deal with a certain issue of concern or a problem. It is important to note that Hartshorne writes from the perspective of a South African who views education policy as being part of the broader perspective of redress of past injustices, both in education and in the general lives of South Africans. Ball writes from the British perspective, with a particular look at the national curriculum introduced in Britain by the Thatcherite government, and looks at this policy in a post-structural manner which, according to Ball (1994:3) emphasised “the discourses and texts which came into play in the make-up of social institutions and cultural products.” Ball also draws from ethnography in order to generate critical perspectives upon the impact and effects of policy on local settings. Australia too, from where Taylor Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) write, has also had to grapple with educational policy change, and it is from this perspective that they write.

Policy does not exist in a vacuum. It draws from a particular context. As Wielemans and Berkhout (1998:34) say, “context is central to the policy process.” This is echoed by Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997:4) who say that “educational policies do not emerge in a vacuum

but reflect compromises between competing interests,” which can be economic or social. Furthermore, Taylor Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997:11) indicate that because “policies do not exist in a vacuum, an understanding of the context in which policies emerge is critical to an understanding of policies themselves.” Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992:15) also concur when they say that “in the generation and implementation of policy the nature of policy context (classrooms, departments, schools, local education authorities Department of Education & Service, National Curriculum Council, think tanks, working parties, etc) and the relations between them become crucial to our understanding of how texts operate, although we must also remain aware of the ways in which texts change contexts and the relations between contexts.” Thus education policy cannot be viewed without an understanding of the environment or the context in which the policy occurs. Education policy changes are a result of contestations within the environment or context in which the education system exists. As Hartshorne (1999:12) says, “ education is rarely, if ever, the practical realisation of an ideal form of instruction as envisaged by a particular group. Instead, most of the time, most of the forms that education takes are the political products of power struggles. They bear the marks of concessions to allies and compromise with opponents.” Hartshorne’s views are echoed by Anderson (1984:23) who contends that “policy-making cannot be adequately considered apart from the environment in which it takes place. Demand, for policy actions is generated in the environment and transmitted to the political system, at the same time the environment places limits and constraints upon what can be done by policy-makers.” Policy for educational change is also subject to influences from the environment. In the same light, education policy change also implies a change in the environment for teachers, and hence the necessity to examine the understandings and

experiences of teachers when the educational setting is in a process of change.

Policy must therefore specify or define who and what is going to be affected by the policy. The goals of the policy should therefore be clear. This should be done in order to avoid what Torres (1989:92) calls “a gap between what is implemented and what is the actual policy outcome.” However policy should not be rigid. Rigidity causes any deviation from the stated policy intent (which is inevitable in a complex human activity like educational change) to be regarded as a failure of the policy. Policy-making and implementation should rather be regarded as a process that will require adjustments as the process continues.

2.2.4.2. The role of teachers in policy

Various educationists have emphasised the central role of teachers in educational change. Robinson (1994:28-29) comments that “change is an integral part of society. Education, often considered the stabilizing force in society, is part of that change. Genuine change occurs in the classroom only when the teacher changes. If changes are initiated outside the teacher, say by administrators without the teacher’s consent, he or she may go through the motions of superficial change, but things will probably remain the same within the classroom walls. Teachers need to find meaning in change for change to have an effect.” Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997:6) in a study of Australian teachers, comment that teachers “recognise that changes in society demand new educational policies, but what concerns them is the confused way in which policy shifts are explained to teachers who have to implement them and the manner in which teachers have effectively been frozen out of policy making processes.” Harley Barasa, Bertram,

Mattson and Pillay (2000:299) talking about policy initiatives in developing countries also indicate that “policy which is out of touch with classroom realities might result in lowered morale and decreased effectiveness, and this might ultimately impede transformation.” This indicates that teachers should be included in the policy process. In other words the understandings of teachers with regard to policy and change are important for educational change to be successful. The question arises as to how this can be done, i.e. how teachers can be effectively carried along through the policy process and the change process so that their inputs can positively influence the new order.

According to Martin, Russ and Bishop (2000:209) “changes in practitioner behaviour will only come about if they are preceded by changes in practitioner thinking.” A similar comment is that of Rogan (2000:121) that says that “teachers will only make changes when they themselves are convinced that a change is both necessary and in the best interest of themselves and their learners.” Teachers being, according to Dalin (1993:21), “the key link between policy and implementation,” have to be taken seriously in the policy process. The teachers’ understanding and mastery of the new policy and the changes involved are crucial for effective policy implementation. Teachers and policy makers have to engage each other in a dialogical manner in order for policy to be enacted well in the classroom. This is because, according to Olson, James and Long (1999: 70-71) “teachers practices - themselves a reflection of teacher culture - are what bring curriculum ideas into operation. At the same time as curricula are changing, the challenges to teachers are increasing.” Teachers will have to face challenges such as changed subject matter and changed methods of teaching. Because policies and teacher values influence teacher practices, it is important to start the change process and to shape policy that will have to reach the classroom around teachers

and with teachers. What Olson, James and Long (1999:71-72) call “the enacted curriculum – what students experience – is immediately shaped by teacher practices which are in turn influenced by policies and by teacher values. The practices embody those values – they inscribe them. Policy intentions contribute to the context in which teachers shape practices. To call teaching an ‘enactment’ simply bespeaks of the complexity of giving effect to policies in real classrooms. Policies are intentions – perhaps to be seen as script and with stage directions – but teachers have to conduct lessons on the classroom stage.” Teachers have to interpret the policies in order to put effect to them at the ultimate operational stage, the classroom. Thus teacher understandings are a powerful tool in understanding how policies will be enacted in the classroom, i.e. in understanding how teachers will put policies into practice in the classroom, and therefore how learners will experience the policy change. While Olson, James and Long (1999:69-81) made their study in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries such as the UK, Germany and France, while studying innovations in Science, Mathematics and Technology Education (SMTE), their comments can be applicable in other contexts beyond the OECD countries as in all parts of the modern world, schools have teachers who practice education in the classroom and who may or may not have taken part in the policy process as it unfolds, although they are expected to give effect to the policy.

Educational change processes must enter into dialogue with teachers, give teachers a voice, get to know their experiences, for as Olson, James and Long (1999:74) say, “reform processes which did not enter into dialogue with teachers were the less successful in consequence.” The voices of teachers are important because they will make policy makers aware of what is important to teachers and what they view as

the intricacies which attend to change in classroom settings. They will also remind policy makers that change which the policy makers may view as bringing opportunity to enhance the quality of education may be viewed by teachers as being threatening and risky. Not that educational policy should only consider teacher understandings and experiences, but that what teachers do, what they experience, and what they think, are part of the wide context in which policy exists. As Clark (1995:3) says, “teachers are the human point of contact with students. All other influences on the quality of education are mediated by who the teacher is and what the teacher does. Teachers have the potential for enhancing the quality of education by bringing life to the curriculum and inspiring students to universal and self-directed learning. And teachers can also degrade the quality of education through error, laziness, cruelty, or incompetence. For better or for worse teachers determine the quality of education.” Furthermore, as Clark (1995:4-5) continues, “as curriculum planners teachers call the tune to which they and their students dance and sing. Sometimes a teacher is responsible for creating his or her own curriculum. Then the quality of education’s content depends most directly on the teacher. In these situations, the teacher (or perhaps a small group of teachers) judges the worthiness of what shall be learned, and also creates the materials, activities, and approaches most likely to achieve these learning goals. The positive side of this situation is that the teacher who creates curriculum will have studied the contents thoroughly, know the relationship among parts of the curriculum and have feelings of ownership and enthusiasm about it. The negative side is that many teachers do not have the subject matter expertise, planning expertise or the time to write worthwhile, accurate, practical and attractive curricula”.

Even when the teacher is not responsible for literally creating curriculum, the quality of education is affected by how he or she interprets it. Through planning and decision making teachers inevitably change the curriculum from exactly what the authors of the curriculum intended to that which is actually experienced in the classroom. These transformations of the curriculum into action involve the content, pace, and emphasis of instruction. When teachers adapt the curriculum as published to fit the special circumstances and unique classroom situation they face, they also change the quality of education. Sometimes these changes bring improvements, at other times they degrade the quality of education. But teacher transformations of curriculum can be viewed as necessary responses to the complexity, unpredictability, and uniqueness of each classroom situation. The teacher, as the one in charge of the classroom, determines what is taught, in one way or another.

Whether the teacher is the creator of the curriculum or whether the curriculum is imposed upon the teacher, what takes place in the classroom will be subject to who the teacher is, what his/her experiences have been, what he/she understands about the curriculum and policy changes, and what his/her attitude is towards the curriculum. Teachers therefore influence the quality of education, depending on who they are, what role they have played in the creation of a curriculum or in curriculum policy changes, and how they enact the curriculum in the classroom.

2.3. EDUCATIONAL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA SINCE 1994

2.3.1. Pressures for educational change

According to Fullan (1991:17) “there are three ways in which pressures for educational policy change may arise:-

- through natural disasters, such as earthquakes floods, famines and the like;
- through external forces such as imported technology and values, and
- through internal contradictions, such as when indigenous changes in technology lead to new social patterns and needs, or when one or more groups in a society perceive a discrepancy between educational values and outcomes affecting themselves or others in whom they have an interest.”

Tulasiewicz (1996:27), writing about the educational reforms that introduced a national curriculum in Britain in the 1980’s, says that “reforms have been perceived as instituted in response to public demand rather than as the result of assessment of the task involved by a professional examination.” This means that politics can play a deciding role in bringing educational change. The change can take place sometimes without proper examination of other issues involved rather than what the politicians regard as necessary. As Hartshorne (1999:6) says, “education in the modern state is not neutral. The state is not an impartial provider of education. The particular political, social and economic context in which education exists is used by the state to achieve progress which it considers to be advantageous or expedient.” As Hartshorne (1999:6) further contends, “the state is in a

powerful position in the field of education, and the control it exerts usually extends to such issues as access to schools and other educational institutions, and control of the curriculum – what is taught (prescribed syllabuses, and examination requirements), how it is taught, and by whom.” These comments indicate that politics can play a very crucial role in education, including educational change.

In South Africa, while the influence of technology and the perceived discrepancy between values and outcomes on educational changes is true, the political changes of the early 1990’s played a major role in causing the most recent educational change in South Africa. As mentioned in the Overview to the Revised National Curriculum Statement, Dept of Education (2001:8) “curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa started immediately after the election in 1994 when the National Education and Training Forum began a process of syllabus revision and subject rationalization. The purpose of this process was mainly to lay the foundations for a single national core syllabus. In addition to the rationalization and consolidation of existing syllabi, the National Education and Training Forum curriculum developers removed overtly racist and other insensitive language from existing syllabi.”

The National Education and Training Forum was however not a curriculum development process but a syllabus revision process. The first major curriculum statement of a democratic South Africa, according to the Overview to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Dept of Education 2001:8), was Curriculum 2005, which was “deliberately intended to simultaneously overturn the legacy of apartheid education and catapult South Africa into the 21st century, it was an innovation both bold and revolutionary in its magnitude and conception. It signaled a dramatic break from the past. No longer

would curriculum shape and be shaped by narrow visions, concerns and identities. No longer would it reproduce limited interests of any one particular grouping at the expense of another. It would bridge all, and encompass all. It introduced new skills, knowledge, values and attitudes for all South Africans and stands as the most significant educational reform in South African education of the last century.” The Green Paper on Science and Technology (Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology 1996:15) also mentions that “ the successful management of dramatic political changes within the country and the equally far reaching changes in the global order” depend on whether South Africa’s education is properly geared towards these changes. It was therefore not only the issues related to technological and scientific changes that influenced the changes in South African education, but also social and political considerations. As Vakalisa (2000:14) says, “in South Africa educational reform is occurring within the context of transformation in the political system. We are therefore experiencing change in almost every sphere of life, including education.”

South Africa had been under apartheid for more than four decades when the new democratic order came into existence in 1994. People had expectations that apart from the repeal of laws that restricted their social life, they would also see progress in their economic circumstances. There were expectations of improvements in people’s standards of living. As Pretorius (1998:v) says, “South Africa has experienced unparalleled changes since the transformation to a democratic form of government in 1994. When a country experiences a change of government, policy changes are inevitable. In South Africa, this change was even more dramatic than replacing the ruling party. There was a change of order from a non-democratic to a democratic order. Incisive change at every level of society, including

education, was to be expected.” As Hartshorne (1999:106) also says, “after the euphoria of the success of the 1994 election, the inauguration of President Mandela, and the appointment of the first Cabinet of the Government of National Unity, the latter had to turn its attention to the sobering realities of addressing the expectations of those who had placed it in power.” The concern of the majority of South Africans, as Hartshorne (1999:11) further says “was not to improve or reform the apartheid education system, but to achieve a transformation of that system so that it served the interests of all South Africans in a democratic and equitable manner.”

2.3.2. The introduction of outcomes based education in South Africa

In an attempt to gear South Africa to the changed political climate of the 1990's, culminating in the change of government in 1994, a new type of education which is outcomes based and called Curriculum 2005 in South Africa was introduced. This new curriculum was introduced because, according to the booklet on Curriculum 2005 by the Department of Education (1997:2), “education is the key to changing many of the old commonly held beliefs” Thus in introducing Curriculum 2005, the Department of Education sought not only to change the education system but also to change society at large.

Teachers and learners, in accordance with outcomes based education, should focus on the results expected at the end of the learning process. Hence the name outcomes based education (OBE). The main outcomes that every teacher needs to plan around are called critical cross-field outcomes, which are according to the Curriculum 2005 booklet (Department of Education 1997:9), “essential to learning and

include skills and values such as being able to think, to solve problems, to collect, organise and analyse information, to work in a group, as well as independently, to participate effectively and to make responsible decisions.” Curriculum 2005 is built around these critical outcomes and therefore in order to be able to properly tackle Curriculum 2005 in class the teacher needs to understand these outcomes and know how to design and conduct lessons that will allow learners to reach these outcomes. Teaching will, according to the Curriculum 2005 booklet (Department of Education 1997:9) “become learner centred, with emphasis on group work and developing the ability of people to think critically and research and analyse things for themselves.” Thus Curriculum 2005 seeks to replace old methods of teaching with new ones.

Curriculum 2005 was introduced in grades 1,2,3,4 and 5 in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively and in grades 7,8 and 9 in 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively. Its implementation was originally expected to be completed in the year 2005, hence the name Curriculum 2005. By the end of that year all learners in schools from Grade 1 to grade 12 were expected to be learning through outcomes based education.

2.3.3. Implications of curriculum 2005 for teachers

Curriculum 2005 is a radical departure from the past. It was, according to Morrow (2001:87), “launched in South Africa as the alternative to apartheid education.” It also seeks to introduce new methods of teaching, learning and assessment. As Brady (1996:13) says, “it places enormous demands on teachers to further individualise instruction, plan remediation and enrichment, administer diagnostic assessment and keep extensive records.” The teacher-learner

relationship will change because of new methods of teaching and assessment.

According to Farrant (1997:56) essentials for successful innovations include “adequate / sufficient preparation of teachers to ensure that teachers who will be involved and the facilities at their disposal will be capable of meeting these demands placed upon them.” Furthermore, according to Farrant (1997:56) there should be “realistic objectives – clear identification of the limits within which an innovation may operate and the extent of the supporting services that can be provided.” Huberman and Miles (1984:123) also mention that “large-scale, change bearing innovations lived or died by the amount and quality of assistance that their users received.” Brady (1996:13) adds another voice by saying that “outcomes-based education will founder if there is not appropriate high quality staff development and the provision of support.” South Africa needs the enthusiasm and commitment of teachers for the change of the education system to work. The amount and quality of support teachers get are essential for successful educational change. In other words the enthusiasm and commitment of teachers with regard to educational change can be raised if they receive adequate and relevant support.

As argued in Meyer (1993:17), “educational change is more likely to succeed if people recognise the need for proposed changes and if change is perceived as having the potential of making life easier, rather than adding to teachers workload.” Where change is imposed on schools and educators, there is a possibility that policy makers may underestimate the complexity of social and educational realities. In this context, as Meyer (1993:18) says, “teachers’ understandings of and attitudes to proposed change(s) should be taken into account.”

Therefore getting teachers on board would enable the policy makers to understand the contexts in which teachers teach. Thohoyandou District, where this research was conducted is a district within Region 3, the Northern Region of Limpopo Province. The district is a largely rural area, although it includes the town of Thohoyandou. There are 156 schools in the district 102 of which are primary schools. Of these schools only 7 primary schools and 5 secondary schools are within the town of Thohoyandou. The rest are in rural areas. Many of the schools do not have telephone lines, and the roads to the schools are largely dust roads that become slippery during the rainy season and thus rendering communication with the schools almost impossible. Many of the schools lack equipment, including desks and chairs for the learners. Some of the schools are overcrowded due to lack of classrooms. Some schools have not had principals and deputy principals for several years, as appointments for principals in some schools were done only in 2002, and not all deputy principals have been appointed. Many schools therefore not only suffer from lack classrooms, desks and equipment, but also from lack of proper management structures. It is under these conditions that some teachers have to work. I say some teachers because it is not all schools that do not have principals, although many as yet do not have deputy principals. Although one could safely say all schools in Thohoyandou district will have one or more of the conditions described as applicable to it, the extent of lacking differs, with only a few of the schools, particularly those in the town being less afflicted and those in the large rural areas mostly afflicted. In order to understand exactly how these conditions affect the work of teachers it is important for policy makers to get teachers on board so that teachers can clarify their contexts themselves.

2.4. PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

2.4.1 The meaning of professional support for teachers

According to Weissglass (1994:225-226) "support means different things to different people: respect, encouragement, good instructional materials, time to reflect and plan, opportunity to learn, changes in policy, time to share information, opportunity to be listened to about one's problems, goals and dreams." Egan (1994:4) on the other hand says that "teachers teach English, History and Science to students who are growing physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally and struggling with normative developmental tasks and crises. Teachers are, therefore, in a position to help their students, in direct and indirect ways, explore, understand, and deal with problems of growing up." Managers and supervisors should help workers to cope with problems related to work performance, career development, interpersonal relationships in the workplace, and a variety of personal problems that affect their ability to do their jobs. Teachers at school are workers too, and not only do they have to cope with dealing with the problems of learners, but they also need to deal with changes in their lives, changes in communities in which they come from, changes in curricula, and also changes in methods of teaching and learning.

According to Gray (1995:51) "change brings with it fears, anxieties and uncertainties. However, it also brings with it opportunities and challenges to improve and make teaching and learning more enriching and worthwhile". Teachers in a changing educational setting might fear whether their skills will be regarded as being obsolete, whether they will be able to learn the new skill required in the changing system, whether their knowledge is still relevant and whether they will be able to cope with the pace of change itself. Professional support

therefore has a role to play in order to make teachers not only to see the change as something not to be scared of, but as a challenge and opportunity to improve and make teaching and learning more enriching and worthwhile.

As Egan (1994:27) contends, " support without challenge is often superficial, and challenge without support can be demeaning and self defeating." A challenging situation that one ends up not being able to tackle at all and does not have any support systems to fall back to for assistance in order to move forward will ultimately be viewed as a barrier or blockage and therefore elicit fear, anxiety and frustration.

2.4.2. The demands of change on teachers

According to Bush and Chew (1999:41) "education is valued all over the world for it's potential to enhance economic capability. Educated and skilled people have the ability to perform tasks well and to develop new and more efficient modes of production." This helps to improve standards of living and therefore living conditions of people, which can enhance social well being within the communities. The person who is directly involved with the learner is the teacher. So, for change in education to be fully effective teachers should not be ignored. As Swann and Brown (1997:91) maintain, "the implementation of any curriculum initiative at classroom level depends largely on teachers' existing ideas about their day-to-day teaching and the extent to which they regard the new policy as desirable and practical. Past records for curriculum initiatives show extraordinarily modest levels of pedagogical implementation, in part because curriculum innovators have failed to start where teachers are". This indicates that curriculum initiatives have an impact on teachers' thinking and actions, as do other initiatives related to education. Meyer (1993:17-18) agrees by

saying that “educational change is more likely to succeed if people recognise the need for proposed changes and if change is perceived as having the potential of making life easier, rather than adding to teacher’s work load. In this context, teachers’ understandings of and attitudes to proposed changes should be taken into account.”

The arguments of Swann and Brown (1997:91) and Meyer (1993:17-18) are in line with those of Claxton (1989:17) who, while writing about the situation in England, argues that "teachers are being treated more and more like workers and less and less like professionals, so that their sense of power and freedom to evaluate and select among these opportunities is diminished. Most of the legislative changes over the last twenty years, for example, have had the effect of increasingly making teachers the implementers of a job description that has been concocted elsewhere. The recently created conditions of service, and the enforcement of compulsory redeployment in some parts of the country, let alone the national curriculum, illustrate the trend. Harley Barasa, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay (2000:301) also agree, saying that “policy on teacher roles and curriculum will stand and fall on the basis of support offered to teachers in the implementation of the policy, as well as the extent to which the support deals with teacher beliefs and assumptions, and not only the outward signs of changed practice” Teachers should therefore be viewed as more than implementers of policies. In the provision of professional support it is important to understand what the job of teaching is like, and the most qualified people to understand this would be teachers themselves. Teachers’ beliefs, understandings, and experiences are therefore crucial when change is introduced, and when support for the teacher is contemplated.

Teaching is a demanding job that is subject to changes. Being a teacher means equipping young people for adult lives, and therefore the teacher has to track the changing demands that adults face. Political and intellectual changes affect education, and these changes, even in technology, are becoming even more rapid and intense. New skills and knowledge of assessment, management, counseling, and teaching are coming up fast. Within each teacher's subject there may be different approaches possible, all with their merits, yet not fully consistent with each other. Teachers also cannot be totally certain of how each lesson is going to progress, yet they have to act as if they can. They have to keep order in class, which by itself is not an easy task. Also, teachers have to persuade pupils that what they are doing is worthwhile, even when they themselves may doubt some of the things. They also want wider experience, yet it is not easy for them to move from school to school; in fact many would rather stay at one school where they have built strong relationships with colleagues. The career aspirations of teachers are sometimes in conflict with the demands of the education system in which they are. This, according to Claxton (1989:1) leads to a situation that leaves "the vast majority of teachers, particularly at secondary school, feeling overloaded, pushed around, fed up and unappreciated." As Claxton (1989:30) further contends, "teachers want to be effective in helping children to learn and develop, and they want to be able to feel pleasure in doing so, and pleased with themselves for having done a good job. They do want their job to be noticed and acknowledged every so often. They know the job is challenging and from time to time frustrating. But they want the ratio of satisfaction to frustration to balance out in their favor. They want most of the time to feel confident about what they are tackling, even if they make a few mistakes, and basically optimistic about their own future and the future of education. They want to be relaxed and business like in the classroom and above all for the pupils to be

willingly engaged in the process of learning. They would like to be able to be caring within limits and without the fear that they might get overwhelmed or be taken for a ride".

Claxton (1989:25-26) goes on to say that teachers "want to feel that they are making a reasonable living, though they wouldn't be teachers if they want to be rich. They want to be consulted and their views listened to in meetings even if the decision doesn't go their way. They want an atmosphere of goodwill amongst colleagues and to have harmonious working relationships even with people with whom they disagree. They want to be able to discuss, collaborate, and to feel part of a team. In both classroom and staff room they want to be authentic and energetic: to be able to display their enthusiasm and true beliefs without being disparaged. They want scope for their own professional development and personal growth. They want to be responsible so that they are given jobs to do by their seniors that are appropriate to their status and skills- and trusted to get on with them. But they also want to feel that they can ask for support or advice if they need it without feeling that they are being judged badly for doing so".

Teachers do feel good about their jobs, but there are also a lot of times when they feel frustrated. Teachers, at least many of them, work very hard. Their working day, according to Claxton (1989:28), "is a succession of lessons for which they have either prepared something interesting, dug out last year's notes, decided to just do the next bit in 'the book' or unprepared. Whatever their state of readiness and interest, each lesson is a constant stream of decision-making and of matters of judgement, both large and small, about situations that are unprecedented, and for which there is insufficient time and usually not enough available information to be sure of getting it right".

Because of the lack of time, teachers often have to make the best means of using the available time profitably. Stopgap decisions become a necessity. They have to prioritise and then do what they regard as critical first, sometimes leaving out what may not be regarded as critical only to find that it was essential for some part of their work. As Claxton (1989:54) further argues, "it is hard to know which is more frustrating: having to do what you don't want, don't agree with and haven't been consulted about; or not being able, through lack of time, energy and support, actually to do what you want."

While teachers like their profession, they often feel frustrated and dissatisfied about the work they do. They also feel unappreciated for the effort and sacrifice they put into their job. However since it is their duty to do the job of teaching, they end up acting as if they are satisfied, as they may fear the consequences of voicing their dissatisfaction and frustration. More importantly for this research, according to Claxton (1989:34), "it is still much more common than not for teachers to do their teaching behind closed doors, unobserved by another adult, and to feel somewhat threatened on the odd occasion when they are being watched. Perhaps as a result of their experiences during teaching practice and their probationary year, observation has come to connote judgement rather than support. This tends to leave their perception of their own teaching - both how they do it and how well they are doing - in a rather uncomfortable vacuum."

According to Fullan (1991:118-126) teachers find themselves in an unenviable position because of the following problems:-

- ❖ "Teacher training does not equip teachers for the realities of the classroom, nor could it be expected to do so in light of the

abruptness of the transition from teacher training institution to the class.

- ❖ The cellular organisation of schools means that teachers struggle with their problems and anxieties privately, spending most of their time physically apart from their colleagues.
- ❖ Partly because of the physical isolation and partly because of norms of not sharing, observing and discussing each other's work, teachers do not develop a common technical culture. The teacher's craft is marked by the absence of concrete models for emulation, unclear lines of influence, multiple and controversial criteria, ambiguity about assessment timing and instability in the product.
- ❖ When teachers do get help, the most effective source tends to be fellow teachers, and secondly administrators and specialists. Such help is not frequent and is used on a highly selective basis. Also, other teachers describe the 'tricks of the trade' they picked up - not broader conceptions that underline classroom practice.
- ❖ Effectiveness of teaching is gauged by informal, general observation of study. Teachers rely heavily on their informal observation.
- ❖ The psychological state of teachers and teaching is uncertainty:- teachers are not sure whether they have made any difference at all".

The above issues as stated by Fullan (1991:118-126) and by Claxton (1989:28,34 and 54) are crucial to educational change as they influence how teachers experience educational change and react to it. Teachers, being at the centre of the educational cauldron, have to deal with different and often conflicting demands from various stakeholders. They have to work with learners, who may cause the teachers problems with regard to discipline, difficulty of comprehending certain concepts and the learners' own psychological problems. They always have to satisfy the parents of the learners, who want their children not only to bring back new knowledge and skills

from school, but also to be molded into better persons. The teachers have to deal with the authorities, who make their own demands on the teachers. Authorities also bring syllabi and subject matter to teachers which teachers may find unworkable. Authorities may also make further demands on teachers like how many exercises and tests to give to learners, without regard to the constraints under which the teachers work. Teachers also have to deal with their peers, who may cause problems of lack of co-operation. There are also problems brought upon the teacher not by anyone from outside, but because of the self i.e. the problem of expectations that might not be fulfilled. As Claxton (1989:12) says, "one of the major pitfalls that people face if they are willingly embarking on change (in their teaching for example), is their own unrealistic or inaccurate expectations".

2.4.3. The challenges that teachers in South Africa face.

In South Africa, Curriculum 2005, the new outcomes based education, has started to be implemented in schools although it will still take some years for it to filter through the whole schooling system. Schools have also become more integrated. According to Akhurst (1997:52) "as previously racially segregated schools in South Africa become more integrated teachers have been confronted with challenges for which they have been ill-prepared". Akhurst does not use the word problem to explain the situation teachers find themselves in, but calls them challenges.

Akhurst (1997:7-9) divides these challenges as challenges relating to class management and teaching practice, and those relating to structural issues. The challenges related to classroom management and teaching practice revolve around five issues: -"Firstly in a more integrated system, learners in a class group may come from very varied

experiential backgrounds. The learners' varied backgrounds mean that lessons which teachers found successful in the past in a more homogeneous group are no longer necessarily suited to learners (e.g. interest and motivational factors, prior educational experience, different learning styles)."

Secondly, the fact that some learners in a class will be learning in their home language, and that others will be learning in their second language leads to larger disparities in a class group in learners' abilities to read, listen, respond orally and write. Teachers may become frustrated because they need to explain more, repeat instructions, and spend much more time planning exercises and on language work than previously.

Thirdly language issues as well as attitudinal stances of either party may complicate teacher-learner relationships. This may lead to a higher incidence of anger expressed and teachers may well find themselves accused of racism. On the other hand, teachers may find that they treat learners differently and may be accused of being unfair, too lenient on some but too strict on others. Teachers may also have to cope with blatant racist incidents between learners. Since they feel afraid or are uncertain of how to respond, some teachers may tend not to confront these issues, turning a blind eye. This may lead to disciplinary difficulties.

Fourthly teachers comment on a decline in the "culture of learning". Homework is often not done, preparation and learning for tests seem to be neglected, there is increased absenteeism, learners arrive late for school and want to leave early and there is less participation in extra-mural activities. These factors lead to teachers feeling anger, and this may affect their own motivation.

Finally, teachers often feel a lack of support from parents for their efforts. Parent apathy, or open challenge of teachers, has led to many teachers feeling that their efforts are thwarted by learners' experiences within their families.

Akhurst (1997:8-9) continues and argues about what she calls challenges related to structural issues:

"At the heart of structural issues lies the legacy of the demise of the previous authoritarian and hierarchical system of education with no structures in place to facilitate the democratising of education. Teachers feel that they have been given little information, often hearing of developments through the press, and have not been consulted sufficiently by departments of education. There was little in the way of guidance given during the process of change and schools themselves had to take the lead, a role to which they were unaccustomed in the previously regimented system. Furthermore, many teachers have had to develop new skills of curriculum design and organisation with no departmental support.

Secondly, the content of sections of many of the syllabi and of many textbooks is problematic, yet there has been little help forthcoming in terms of changing these or in producing new materials. Some of this has been due to efforts to introduce a whole new curriculum (Curriculum 2005). However this will take years to introduce, and in the meantime, teachers still must continue to teach. Some schools have been severely affected by large scale early retirement of more senior personnel affecting the resource base available. A further problem has been that in certain schools there are tensions and divisions between the management team and the rest of the staff, making teamwork very difficult. There are marked differences between

schools in terms of teachers experience of their own agency in being able to change course content, and of access to and development of more suitable material".

2.4.4. The need for support

The above issues, as raised by Arkhust (1997:7-9) have affected teachers. They are challenges relating to classroom integration, teacher-learner relationships, learner and teacher motivation, lack of consultation, the new curriculum and redeployment. These are issues that the teacher today has to face. Looking at these issues in view of the issues that have already been raised by other authors (c.f. Fullan (1991), Claxton (1989) Swan and Brown (1997), and Egan (1994) one realizes that it is necessary to more intensely examine the issue of professional support for teachers.

As mentioned by Gray (1995:51) "change brings with it fears, anxieties, and uncertainty. However it also brings with it opportunities and challenges to improve and make teaching and learning more enriching and worthwhile." It should be the purpose of professional support to make the problems to become "challenges", as Arkhurst (1997:5) calls them, which only need effort in order to overcome, rather than problems that may not have a solution. As Gray (1995:51) further contends "if new curricula are to be developed, careful thought needs to be given as to how these can be effectively implemented. Any change brings with it major stress and anxiety for teachers, particularly if they are operating with the thinnest of knowledge and experience bases. Thus intended educational changes need to be substantially supported if they are to result in effective change in classroom practice. Support needs to extend beyond the mere provision of good written materials".

The introduction of outcomes based education in South Africa has not only affected the content of what is taught but also the methodology of teaching. Also, one of the first major goals of the new government to be implemented was the redistribution of resources, something that is closely linked to the reduction of public expenditure. As Chisholm (1999:120) says, "since the largest item of expenditure on the [education] budget is teachers' salaries and higher salaries are locked up within the better qualified teachers in the system, national policy sought between 1995 and 1997 to redeploy resources (teachers) from areas of over supply (white and black urban) to areas of under supply (poor, black and rural). Teachers not wishing to re-deploy themselves were invited to leave the profession through a golden handshake, referred to as a voluntary severance package. When the Soweto girls school began redeploying teachers at the start of 1996, one of the first to do so, feelings ran high, ranging from resignation, hope that it would end soon, anxiety, insecurity and anger." In the Limpopo Province, redeployment has also been a contentious issue. The intensity of emotions during sittings called to resolve disputes when some teachers feel they have been named unfairly for redeployment prompted the District Manager of Thohoyandou District to have security officers search anyone entering the rooms where dispute hearings were being held for dangerous weapons and to have permanent postings of security officers for the duration of the dispute hearings in 1999.

These feelings that teachers feel because of the changes that occur around them and the situation in which they find themselves in South Africa are echoed by Van Zyl and Pietersen (1999:74), who say "it would appear that teachers can be included in the group of South Africans suffering from high levels of stress. South African education in the 1990's is changing fundamentally because of political changes

in the country, and teachers have to adapt to the new reality. They probably experience even more stress because of the changes in the basic occupational structure of teaching." Teachers are also exposed to various stressors within the work situation. These include the threat of redundancy (and therefore possible redeployment), inadequate working conditions, role conflict and ambiguity, pupil problems, time pressures, work pressure, little participation in decision making and distribution tasks, stereotypes, as well as salaries they perceive as being inadequate. All these point to the fact that anxiety, frustration and even fear will be part of the feelings many teachers carry with them, hence the need to provide support for teachers, not ignoring of course the comment by Egan (1994:17) that " it is certainly naïve to assume that everyone with a problem wants to be helped", but realising that for the good of the country some kind of support system needs to be there so that teachers can readily access such if and when they find that they need assistance and support.

2.4.5. The goals of teacher support

Teacher support should be there to assist the teachers to be better at their work i.e. to make them cope better with their work and the environment in which they find themselves. Teacher support should not only focus on teachers at school but should realise too that the teacher is also a member of his/her community, of his/her family, and he/she is also an individual. Support for the teacher should therefore consider the teacher in his/her totality i.e. with his/ her environment, and not just him/her as a worker at school. As Harley, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay (2000:300) say "for real change then, what teachers need is not impersonal policy directives implemented from above with overtones of authority and control, but localised, contextualised, even personalised, developmental support and assistance in the everyday

business of teaching. And what this requires is policy that is sensitive to contextual diversity being implemented at local community level by those most in touch with local conditions”

Support is not just something that needs to be organized from outside. The teacher himself/ herself should take responsibility as well. The individual teacher should personally ensure that he /she is in good shape. According to Claxton (1989:138) when teachers "get stressed or disheartened, as they will, they need to get back in shape. They need to be patient and judicious. They need to be prepared for the fact that, whatever they do, some people won't like it, and open to the possibility that unexpected allies and sources of support will appear. They also need to organise support, either within the school or elsewhere which will provide a continuing source of validation for their commitment to their base values, and of encouragement and remoralisation when they feel like giving up. They need to set up conditions, that strengthen, or encourage the expression of their positive qualities whilst simultaneously minimizing the power of the 'negative' ones". Thus the person who wants to stay open and enthusiastic in a difficult time should personally have an attitude that supports him/her. The teacher should not only wait for support to be brought, but should set up conditions that are conducive to supporting him/ her and are receptive to support.

In these changing times where what is true today may not necessarily be true tomorrow teachers need to be supported. Even in education, the absolute truth about a particular subject today may be an error of judgement of the previous generation tomorrow. A teaching method that is held as very effective today may find that a better one is developed tomorrow. This means that teachers have to work in this state of constant flux, where nobody can claim to have all the

knowledge about anything. Society at large is also changing. "Insecurity and even confusion are," according to Steyn and Van Wyk (1999:42) "inevitable during a time of rapid social change. New educational directives and school decisions should therefore be properly planned, backed up by support systems, and work shopped in large educational forums. Better methods should be devised of keeping teachers informed of departmental policy. District directors could, for example, inform them [teachers] about the workings of the new system and where they fit in."

Teachers want to be part of the process of change. Change should not be imposed on schools as policy makers may underestimate the complexity of the social and educational realities that schools, and therefore teachers face. Change is more likely to succeed if people recognise the need for the proposed changes and if change is perceived as having the potential of making life easier, rather than adding to teachers workload. As Claxton (1989:7) says, "a demoralised teaching force that feels disenfranchised from the process of educational change will be resistant to the changes that are thrown at them by outsiders. When teachers feel put upon and pushed around, hectored, lectured and badgered, their confidence and enthusiasm are undermined and their willingness and ability to contribute to the development of young people as well as each other, suffers." Thus it is good support not to impose change but involve the teachers in the change process so that they can feel that they also own the change process. In other words teachers, like the administrators, the politicians, and the academics, should have room to throw in their views into the academic debate. According to Claxton (1989:7) the involvement of teachers into the academic debate gives "the debate the greater depth and breadth that it so urgently needs."

According to Taylor (1993:66), "when an individual comes into an organisation, he brings with him certain basic knowledge, skills, abilities and other attributes which are of value to the organisation. However the organisation has specific needs in this regard, and no individual coming into a company is ever perfect for the organisation's requirements. Therefore the organisation has to put certain knowledge, skills etc. into the individual. This must be done, of course, within the constraints of the individual's potential, and take into account, to as great an extent as possible, his own aspirations." Teachers as well come into the teaching profession with certain training, which has given them certain skills and knowledge for the purpose of performing their duties at school well. However change in the educational sphere, like in the environment in which schools find themselves, is so rapid that without continuous improvement and updating of their skills and knowledge, the teachers would soon find themselves obsolete. According to Steyn and van Wyk (1999:42) "there is, therefore, a great need for teachers to be trained to meet the challenges of a new political dispensation and a restructured education system. Moreover, this training must suit the needs of the teachers and the community they are serving. Thus participation, human and organisational capacity building, and psychological empowerment should be part of teacher development programmes."

The community also has a duty to support teachers. Channels and means should be provided in order to support teachers and interact with them. Teachers should not feel that they do not enjoy the respect of the community, nor should they feel neglected by the community. This can have a detrimental effect on relations between schools and the community, which in turn, may impact on the quality of education. As Steyn and Van Wyk (1999:42) say, "a relationship of trust and interdependency should be encouraged between the community and

the school, so that the community may take ownership of and help to resolve school problems. In so doing, community members will also develop an appreciation for the complexity of the teacher's work and the problems often encountered in schools." On the other hand it should be noted that in order for the community to get involved in the affairs of the school, it is important for the school to create opportunities, invitations, and strategies for involvement.

2.5 SOME ISSUES RELATING TO PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FROM ABROAD

2.5.1. Introduction: a view from the United States of America

According to Stein, Smith and Silver (1999:238) "more than at any time in recent history, teachers professional development is being viewed as the key ingredient in improving US schools. The perceived importance of professional development is directly related to the ambitious nature of the reform goals and standards that have been put into place over the past decade. Meeting these goals and standards will require a great deal of learning on the part of practicing teachers, the vast majority of whom were taught and learned to teach under a different paradigm of instruction and learning." Just as teachers will need to relearn their practice, so will professional developers need to relearn their craft, which traditionally has been mainly to provide courses, workshops and seminars. As Stein, Smith and Silver (1999:238) continue, "for most teachers in the United States, support for instructional improvement takes two broad forms: mandated district-sponsored staff development, and elective participation in courses, workshops and summer institutes, often provided by university-based teacher educators". These forms of professional support were designed for the purposes of supporting a

paradigm of teaching and learning in which students roles consisted of practicing and memorizing straight forward facts and skills, and teachers roles consisted of the demonstration of procedures, assigning tasks, and grading students, and not to support the thorough re-examination, ongoing experimentation, and critical reflection that are required for the purposes of developing beliefs, knowledge, and habits that form the foundation of the complex forms of teaching that current reforms in the USA recommend. In addition both district staff development courses and university sponsored workshops and courses do not involve the teachers themselves in the planning stage. People other than those for whom they are intended plan them. While the intention of both is to add new skills to existing repertoires of teachers, the design and characteristics of these forms of professional development make it highly unlikely that teachers practices will be transformed by these experiences.

As a consequence, according to Stein, Smith and Silver (1999:238-239) “a new paradigm for teacher assistance is emerging in the USA, based on an honest assessment of the depth of relearning required of teachers and an honest assessment of what has not worked in the past. The new paradigm encompasses the following features: teacher assistance embedded in or directly related to the work of teaching; teacher assistance grounded in the content of teaching and learning; development of professional practice; collaboration with experts outside the teaching community.” The above therefore indicates that teachers are recognised as needing support which, according to the new paradigm should focus on the day to day efforts of teachers to teach, thus focusing on the teacher’s practice. The support should also encourage collaboration with people who are not exactly in the teaching profession, while at the same time encouraging teachers to avoid isolation and form collegial communities. Finally the support

teachers receive should recognize that teachers do not work in a vacuum but in particular environments or contexts. As Stein, Smith and Silver (1999:240) say, “teachers perform their work within multiple contexts, including schools, districts, communities, and states; the values and established procedures of each have an impact on classroom practice. Professional developers must carefully analyze the constraints and alternatives offered by each of these various contexts, ranging from the unwritten cultural norms to explicit regulation and policies. To accomplish this goal, professional developers need to join with administrators and other policy makers to establish alignments among these contexts. Such alignments will bring coherence to teachers’ professional development experiences and will ensure that these experiences are supported by organisational values and operating procedures.”

To further explore the issues involved in the provision of professional support, the next few pages of this chapter will briefly examine two case studies conducted in Papua New Guinea and India. The cases assist in establishing the direction which professional support provision can take in South Africa, of course always taking into cognizance that one cannot just take what is happening in one country and use it as it is in another. The cases, from Papua New Guinea and India, also provide a view from multiethnic linguistically diverse developing countries which, like South Africa, have been recently grappling with attempts to improve their education systems.

2.5.2. PAPUA NEW GUINEA

2.5.2.1. Introduction

Papua New Guinea, an island country situated in the South Western Pacific Ocean just north of Australia has recently embarked on education reform. A key to the reform has been the continuing professional development of teachers in order to raise standards in community (primary) schools through appropriate pre-service and in-service professional development of community schoolteachers. However this has had to be planned realistically in an era of tight budgeting, within the context of the Economic Reform Program of Papua New Guinea. For this a Community Teachers College Project (CTC project) was started in Papua New Guinea with the help of the Australian government and the Queensland University of Technology. It ran for six years (1990 to 1995) but the emphasis was on sustainability so that the effects of the project could be felt when the project was no longer running. In order for this sustainability to be ensured, such concerns as project ownership and control, the relevance of activities, ongoing access to resources, and the readiness to change of individuals and institutions, were considered. Sustainable social development can be problematic not only because of the above concerns but also because, as Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:13) say, “any intervention for change requires that an existing relatively stable situation be thrown out of balance, but the change cannot be sustained if the professional situation is kept in constant turmoil.”

2.5.2.2. Background to the Papua New Guinea Community Teachers' College Lecturers' Professional Development Project (CTC Project)

According to Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:39) “the project approach was based on the shared understanding of stakeholders that CTC lecturers should reflect on their situation in order to develop higher social, political and educational awareness. This approach represented a cultural change, which was central to achieving lasting impacts, and so had to take into account important teacher education issues, ideals and realities in Papua New Guinea at the time. The perspective made for broadening of educational outlook, but also a disposition, which would guard against ‘intellectual colonisation’ from outsiders. In the end, the project was designed to lead to enhanced confidence, competence and integrity of lecturers, and in turn to improved practice and institutional strengthening. Consistent with this goal, the project encouraged lecturers to interact knowledgeably and assertively, with the goal of establishing a collaborative culture.”

The project focused on the lecturers as responsible professionals. The approach of the project was that lecturers and in turn, teachers should be encouraged to function at the level of reflective practice, and with heightened social, political and educational awareness. A key feature of the project was, according to Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:40), “the formation of an approach to sustainability that linked course offerings to post-course activities.”

2.5.2.3 Project goal

The Papua New Guinea Project was, “according to Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:40-41), established with a single goal in mind,

namely: - to improve the educational standards of Community Teachers Colleges (CTC's) through the professional development of their teaching staff. In practical terms this goal was to be achieved by raising the base qualification of all national lecturers in CTC's to first degree status over a six year period, and by providing a programme of campus and regional training workshops in Papua New Guinea."

The project was guided by operating principles and questions, which called for participation and shared responsibility of stakeholders. According to Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:41), "the principles underpinning the ethos and modus operandi of the project involved joint planning, appropriate curriculum, negotiation, collegiality, co-ordination and supportive (intra and inter-college) networking." These principles were crucial factors in the design and operation of the project.

A set of key questions was also formulated for the purpose of accessing college lecturers' views on the purpose, priorities and intent of their roles and to clarify issues. According to Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:41) the questions included: -

- ❖ What kind of schooling and society have the lecturers come to value?
- ❖ What experiences need to be provided to review critically the lecturers' level of awareness of their own political socialisation (in the sense of their own approach to program development and delivery)?
- ❖ What orientations, knowledge and skills do lecturers need to develop that will facilitate their work as teacher educators, as they confront teacher education imperatives and address issues of

educational relevance and modernisation in contemporary Papua New Guinean society?

The approach that was consequently adopted took the perspectives of the college lecturers into account, thus causing them to reflect critically on what they knew and needed to know. This provided the basis for the development of critical self-awareness and responsible self-direction and action. The goal was an understanding of and a responsibility for jointly produced appropriate knowledge, rather than knowledge as a predetermined commodity to be transmitted from those who know (the project teaching team) to those who know nothing (the participants, i.e. the teachers and college lecturers). As Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:42) say, “in this way opportunities were provided for the views and experiences of the parties concerned to be brought forward in a problematic way, for deliberation and potential transformation, rather than one which simply posed one view of the world of teaching, and invalidated another.”

2.5.2.4. Professional growth

Professional growth interrelated the needs of individuals with those of the institutions in which they worked. This enabled the lecturers to confront the relationship between their own development and that required of the institution. This linked the lecturers identity, their actions, and their goals. The lecturer’s growth was facilitated by discussions amongst themselves organising discussion groups, collecting data on which to make decisions and writing reports on actions they have taken, the consequences of these actions and management of their difficulties. Goals that had to do with lecturers, as professionals, included further professional knowledge and strategies to manage their affairs. Goals related to the institution

included the development of curriculum materials, approaches to learning, and new course structures. Some goals belong to both groups: - e.g. the development of teaching strategies and tasks for students to complete belong to both groups.

Thus according to Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:52) “the individual becomes linked to his or her goals through action. Such actions are at the heart of professional development because the proper concern of educational research is with formulating theories that are grounded in the realities of educational practice. In such processes individuals come to understand their contexts, the ways in which those contexts constrain their practice, their possibilities for transforming those contexts and the possible futures that can occur. Essential to this process is the addressing of problems, which individuals feel are both significant and integral to the context. Through actions of the self, and with others, new discourses occur. In the project it was intended that these new discourses would be vehicles by which college lecturers would be able to move from the constraining environment to other possibilities.”

2.5.2.5. Personal development

Managing the project from a personal development perspective involved, according to Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:56) not only the exercise of authority or application of certain managerial skills or techniques, “but also the exercise of political and social skills such as negotiation, bargaining, coalition building and networking. Managing personal development within as a social action framework meant that while there were clearly articulated, rational, stated goals for the project, it was also necessary to come to terms with a full range of meanings, interests and concerns of all those who are involved and

affected by the project, including spouses, partners and extended kinship networks, tribal and clan loyalties as well as CTC colleagues and professional referent groups and individuals in Papua New Guinea.”

The project therefore helped to boost the self-confidence of the participants. They developed confidence in themselves and their subject knowledge. However there were personal and professional concerns from participants regarding perceived pressures to generate and implement change while at the same time maintaining stability, order and a secure future.

2.5.2.6. Implementation for sustainability

The CTC Project focused on sustainable, self-renewing professional development of CTC lecturers in Papua New Guinea. In accordance with these goals, as Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:61) say, “it was important that the stakeholders were involved in all aspects of planning, implementation and evaluation and had a sense of joint ownership of the project. It was also important that the stakeholders recognised the need for interdependence and complementarities as a basis to staff development and institutional strengthening. This provided the ethos and modus operandi for shared responsibility of the vision, planning, processes outcomes and the continuing development of individuals and institutions.”

Similarly, the project’s structure and operations allowed for enough flexibility to be open to change. There were unexpected events related to the diverse, continually developing interests of the range of stakeholders and the changing social, economic, political and

educational contexts in which developments were taking place in Papua New Guinea.

2.5.2.7 Key issues raised by the CTC Project

The Community Teachers College Project of Papua New Guinea although focused on college lecturers raises a few points relevant for professional support for teachers:-

1. The first issue raised and that runs throughout the whole project is the aspect of sustainability, i.e. whatever is done in order to support teachers should not be a case of one-off action, but should be something that can be sustained over a period of time so that its effects can be felt. As Giles (1998:413) says, "the provision of ongoing support" is important. This can help to avoid a situation where teachers complain that they have only received a workshop of two or three days and nothing more.
2. Focusing professional support on teachers can help to improve schools.
3. There is a necessity for the involvement of all stakeholders in the process. This includes the teachers, the government and the community
4. The process of provision of professional support should not be a top-down thing but a joint venture between the providers of the support (e.g. university lecturers or government officials) and the teachers for whom the support is meant. There should be joint planning and negotiation. The teacher himself or herself should also take responsibility for the organising and provision of support.

The teacher should not only wait for support to be brought to him/her, but should set up conditions that are conducive to supporting him/her and are receptive to support.

5. Opportunities should be provided for the parties concerned to be brought forward in a problematic way, and as Burke, Elliot, Lucas and Stewart (1997:42) say, “for deliberation and potential transformation rather than one which simply posed one view of the world of teaching, and invalidated another.”
6. There should be collegiality, co-ordination and supportive networking amongst the teachers at various institutions.
7. The environment and the backgrounds of the teachers should not be ignored.

2.5.3. INDIA

2.5.3.1. Introduction

According to Dyer (1996:27) “India’s highly influential Education Commission (1964-1966) held the quality, competence and character of teachers to be the most significant factor influencing the quality of education and its contribution to national development.” India like South Africa is a developing country. It has urban areas that are highly developed, with certain industries being well established, and like South Africa, also has a greatly less developed rural section in its population. Like in South Africa, teacher salaries in India take up a large portion of the education budget. As Dyer (1996:22) says “teacher salaries in India account for nearly 95% of state level allocations of education, a proportion that, in the strained economic circumstances, has almost completely edged out expenditure on other items.” For

India, as for South Africa, this has raised questions particularly for policy makers; related to the value of teachers to educational quality, cost effectiveness and the return on the investment on teachers. In response to this issue, India introduced policy innovations to education in its “1986 National Policy on Education” (Dyer 1996:27). Operation Blackboard in Gujarat State is an example of the impact of the policy on teachers.

2.5.3.2. The implementation of Operation Blackboard

Gujarat state in India is unevenly developed, with two highly developed cities, called Ahmedabad and Surat, and at the same time containing a broad tribal belt with tiny hamlet settlements. These disparities are characteristic of the wider Indian scenario.

According to Dyer (1996:28) “the National Policy on Education of 1986 aimed for qualitative improvement in elementary education, the increased retention of children in schools, and a move towards a child-centered approach to education” in India. The major policy programme for elementary education in India that emerged from this policy was the 250 million pounds worth (about R2,5 billion) Operation Blackboard.

Operation Blackboard laid down the minimum criteria of a primary school: two rooms, two teachers, (one of them preferably female), and a set of minimum essential teaching learning aids (TLA): a science kit, maths kit, tool kit, 45 charts, maps, children’s books, balls, and a blackboard. All existing schools were to be upgraded to this level and no schools were in future to be sanctioned unless they fulfilled the new criteria. While this scheme was centrally sponsored by the federal government of India, and therefore also centrally devised, it was to be

implemented by the states in accordance with parameters laid down and agreed between both levels of government.

According to Dyer (1996:32) “provision of an extra teacher to ensure that all primary schools had a minimum of two, was an integral feature of Operation Blackbread. The policy of which it was a part aimed to promote a radical change in teaching practice: a move away from the long-established textbook tradition towards a child-centered approach, a very different mode of pupil-teacher interaction.” However, little attention was given as to how the gap between teachers’ current practice and the desired behaviour was to be narrowed. It therefore did not include any teacher-training component, despite acknowledging the centrality of the teacher in this programme. Only after some pointed question in Parliament as to how teachers were to be made aware of the policy was some attention given to training in the form of what was called “Programme of Mass Orientation of School Teachers (PMOST)”. This programme ran between 1986 and 1989 in a cascade format, in a series of 10 day camps of 50 teachers each. As Dyer (1996:33) says “the cascade began with ‘nucleus’ staff at the centre who trained ‘key’ people from the state level; these in turn trained ‘resource’ people at district and taluka (circuit) levels. Resource people went on to train teachers at the block level. The trained teacher returned to school and was responsible for training the other teacher(s) there.”

Teaching learning aids were to a large extent not delivered in time, so teachers were being trained in a scheme that for the first two years existed only as a policy suggestion. Also, training did not cover the underlying policy message of a change in teaching approach, and with that, the reasons why the new teaching learning aids (TLA), had been provided (where delivery was done). In addition, as Dyer (1996:33)

content did not seem relevant to their problems, and often teachers could not remember how to manipulate the items. Since ‘trained’ teachers had not understood the training well and could not see its relevance to their situation they had not passed it on to the second teacher. PMOST therefore did not succeed in making teachers understand the new policy, nor did it succeed in helping teachers to learn new, better and varied techniques of teaching.

2.5.3.3. The adoption and rejection of teaching learning aids (TLA’s)

According to Dyer (1996:34) “incremental rather than rapid change has been identified as a positive variable in connection with teacher adoption of an innovation. To be adopted by teachers, operation Blackboard would need to build on some degree of teacher acceptance of a need for teaching learning aids.” Since material was delivered mostly two to three years after teachers have had their PMOST training, they were often surprised when a consignment that included three large boxes, 45 charts and ten waste bins arrived at their schools. The administration did not inform teachers that they were to receive these kits. Since by this time memories of the training were hazy, the teaching aids were largely unused, except for the charts. The boxes often remained unopened, while some teachers were still waiting for directions from the authorities as to what they should do with the boxes. Many of those who opened the boxes felt that the teaching learning aids were irrelevant to their learners, and therefore did not use them. In addition, according to Dyer (1996:35) “in the camps, teacher trainers tried to persist with the unsuitable PMOST- Operation Blackboard material, since they did not feel they had autonomy to adapt it to local circumstances. They held it to be their duty to impart

training according to a prescribed format, the question of relevance being left to those who write the curriculum.” Furthermore, those teachers who did not participate in the organized programme were at a greater disadvantage, firstly because peer teaching had largely not occurred (as the teacher who attended camp left still unclear about the new policy) and secondly because the Operation Blackboard kit did not include an instruction manual.

2.5.3.4 The wider implications of Operation Blackboard for policy implementation.

According to Dyer (1996:36) “India’s centralised, top-down approach to educational innovation implicitly assumes that the elementary teaching force is a homogeneous body; and that the same centrally advised package of equipment will be suitable for all teachers and all schools in rural areas. The inherent concept of a school is a well-ordered environment in which teachers would like to make teaching interesting for children, set in a ‘modern’ world where there is a place for books, where people read and write.” Operation Blackboard failed to take into consideration the socio-economic environment in which the teacher found himself or where the school was located. As a national policy innovation Operation Blackboard neither motivated nor supported teachers. “This,” according to Dyer (1996:37) “reflects the centralised, bureaucratic administration of education, which maintains a large establishment but fails to attend to those central to its functioning. Everything that teachers have to do is laid down by a higher authority, which does not consult teachers on any issues however teachers might be affected, and makes no concessions to local circumstances. The system does not treat the teacher as a professional educator with his or her own initiative, but as a government employee who teaches.”

Operation Blackboard also did not allow teachers to move far from a teacher-centred style of teaching towards the child-centred approach that was recommended in the new National Policy of Education. In addition, the Operation Blackboard kit contained only a single set of items, and therefore they could only be used by the teacher and not given to individual children. Finally as Dyer (1996:38) maintains “adoption of an innovation is also conditioned by teachers’ perceptions of policy. Ups and downs of government allow policy to be seen only as a political programme, rather than as a blueprint for the direction of change. Many teachers felt they were fighting a battle with a government that formulates policies which bear little relation to their situation.”

Delhi based policy makers did not take context into consideration when they made their decisions from a distance and simply assumed that all primary schools in India, regardless of their context, require certain items if their quality is to improve. In doing so they turned a blind eye to the capacity of teachers to utilise whatever material or teaching learning aids that were provided. Operation Blackboard was conceived by the centre i.e. by Delhi based policy makers and implemented without any pilot scheme.

The training that was given by the Programme for Mass Orientation of School Teachers (PMOST) was not enough and did not answer to the needs of teachers as it was in general of a level above what teachers could respond to. As Dyer (1996:38) contends, “the prognosis for any innovation which requires a change in teaching practice is not very hopeful unless it contains a large element of motivation and support for teachers.” It is therefore also important for policy makers to realise that in conceiving any purposive change they should realistically

assess the capacity that teachers have for responding to the proposed change, both with regard to teachers professional competence as well as the location in which they work.

As Dyer (1996:38) says, “the major policy implications of the case study of Operation Blackboard are two-fold. One is that policy makers need to recognise the existence of a wide variety of very different educational contexts. Even a single district of one state (or province) cannot be merely treated as a homogeneous unit. A second factor, interlinked with the first, is that if the situation is to change, a logistical first step would be to ensure that teachers voices are heard in the making of policy, that they are involved in decision-making about matters that affect them, not totally excluded as they are at present.” Mechanisms should therefore be put in place for the purpose of involving teachers in policy dialogue. Such mechanisms should even start at district level, if not at school level.

2.6. SUMMARY AND FURTHER PROGRAMME

Chapter two contextualised the change process. It also indicated how educational change impacts on teachers. The chapter also discussed professional support for teachers and gave views from different countries. The chapter completed the literature review by giving ideas based on two cases from Papua New Guinea and India. The next chapter, chapter three, provides a thorough exposition of how information was obtained in the area of study for the purpose of understanding the provision of professional support for teachers in South Africa, with special emphasis on the Limpopo Province.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are crucial to educational change. While physical resources, e.g. books and buildings are also important to education, it is the teacher who has the task of making education meaningful to the learner. This is a huge task that can be overwhelming to an individual. It is therefore my view that teachers need support in order to carry out their duties well, and that this support should be provided in a purposeful and planned manner. As stated in Chapter I, I therefore attempt to answer the following research question: “What are the understandings and experiences of serving teachers with regard to the purpose, scope practices and professional support in Limpopo Province within the changing educational setting of South Africa?” The purpose of the research is therefore to examine and /or explore the understandings expectations and experiences of serving teachers with regard to the purpose, scope and practices of professional support in Limpopo Province within the changing educational setting of South Africa.

This Chapter provides the design of the study. It therefore presents and explains the research method that has been used and why this research method has been used. The Chapter also presents the theoretical underpinnings for the study. It also explains the sampling method that has been used as well as the data collection methods that have been used in this study. The researcher bias and assumptions

are also indicated in this chapter. Finally, the chapter indicates the limitations of the study.

3.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

3.2.1 Introduction

According to Seaman (1987:165) “research design refers to the way in which the researcher plans and structures the research process. The design provides flexible guideposts that keep the research headed in the right direction. There is no such thing as one correct design – designs vary from one study to another. Each researcher chooses the design that is most useful for her or his research purposes – whether to observe in order to know, to know in order to predict, or to predict in order to control or prescribe.” The study being conducted here is a qualitative research, and further details of the design will be explained as the Chapter progresses.

3.2.2 Qualitative research contrasted with quantitative research.

As stated above, the study is a qualitative research. It uses a non-positivist interpretative approach. Unlike positivists who, according to Lawrence Newman (1997:63-68), “prefer precise quantitative data and often use experiments, surveys and statistics, the interpretative approach is the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of the people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain these social worlds.” This means that the data in quantitative research will normally be in the form of

numbers, while in qualitative research the data will be in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs rather than numbers. Qualitative data are empirical data that involve documenting real events, recording what people say, observing specific behaviors, studying written documents, or examining visual images. These are all concrete aspects of the real world. As Seaman (1987:169) says “a qualitative research design is one in which the researcher plans to observe, discover, describe, compare and analyse the characteristic attributes, themes, and underlying dimensions of a particular. The researcher may study a process, a subject, a group, a community or a culture. A quantitative design, on the other hand, is one concerned with measurement – measuring the magnitude, size or extent of a phenomenon. The quantitative design counts, measures and analyses statistically.”

A qualitative researcher, unlike a quantitative researcher, does not intend to test hypotheses that the researcher begins with. Instead a qualitative researcher captures and discovers meaning when she/he has become immersed in the data. Therefore, while, according to Lawrence Newman (1997:330) “quantitative research uses reconstructed logic, which is highly organized and restated in an idealised formal and systematic form, qualitative research uses more of a logic in practice. It relies on the informal wisdom that has developed from the experiences of researchers. Logic in practice is relatively messy, with more ambiguity and is tied to specific cases and oriented toward the completion of a task.” Measures in quantitative research are created systematically before the data is collected and are standardised, while qualitative research measures are created in a more informal manner and are often specific to the particular setting or the researcher may require his/her own measures. Hence while

quantitative research assumes replication of procedures, replication is not assumed in qualitative research.

While quantitative researchers follow a linear path with a fixed sequence of steps, according to Lawrence – Newman (1997:331) “qualitative research is more non-linear and cyclical. Rather than moving in a straight line, cyclical research makes successive passes through steps, sometimes moving backward and sideways before moving on. It is more of a spiral, moving slowly upward but not directly. With each cycle or repetition, a researcher collects new data and gains new insights.” The non-linear cyclical approach of qualitative research is effective for the creation of a feeling for the whole, and for pulling together divergent information as well as for switching perspectives.

3.2.3 Other characteristics of qualitative research

1. Context is critical for qualitative research. As Lawrence – Neuman (1997:331) contends, “attention to social context means that a qualitative researcher notes what comes before or what surrounds the focus of the study. It also implies that the same events or behaviors can have different meanings in different cultures or historical eras.” Thus to qualitative researchers the meaning of a social action or statement cannot be divorced from and is dependent on the context in which it appears. Thus to qualitative researchers parts of social life are placed into a larger whole, and the whole serves to give meaning to each part, and therefore each part, without the whole does not have much meaning. As McMillan and Schumacher (1993:15) also contend, “the context in the study is important in qualitative research, since it is believed that human actions in qualitative research are strongly influenced by the

settings in which they occur. Human behaviour and responses can be better understood when the framework or the perspective within which the respondents interpret their thoughts, feelings, meanings and actions is known. The context or the framework is appropriate when collecting and analysing data". As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:27) also contend, "qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. The data is collected on the premises and supplemented by the understanding that is gained by being on location. Qualitative researchers go to the particular setting under study because they are concerned with context. They feel that action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs. The settings have to be understood in the context of the history of the institutions of which they are a part. When data with which they are concerned is produced by subjects, as in the case of official records, they want to know where, how and under what circumstances it came into being. Of what historical circumstances and movements are they a part? To divorce the act, word, or gesture from its context is, for the qualitative researcher to lose sight of significance."

2. A qualitative researcher may use a case study approach in which the researcher gathers information on one or a few cases, going into greater depth and getting more details on the one case or the few cases being explained. Thus the researcher is immersed and therefore becomes intimately familiar with the people's lives and culture.
3. The qualitative researcher has to maintain integrity, as there are many opportunities for the researcher's personal influence to affect qualitative research. Thus, according to Lawrence - Newman

(1997:333), “the most important way that a qualitative researcher creates trust in readers is the way he or she presents evidence. A qualitative researcher does not present all his or her detailed notes in a report; rather he or she spins a web of interlocking details, providing sufficient texture and detail so that the readers feel that they are there. A qualitative researcher’s firsthand knowledge of events, people and situations cuts two ways. It raises questions of bias, but also provides a sense of immediacy, direct contact, and intimate knowledge.”

4. Unlike quantitative researchers who gather data after they have theorized, developed hypotheses, and created measures of variables, qualitative researchers begin with a research question and almost nothing else. Qualitative research is more inductive and theory is built from data or grounded in the data, hence grounded theory. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:29) say, “qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. They do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study; rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together. Theory developed this way emerges from the bottom up [rather than from the top down], from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are interconnected. It is called grounded theory”. Furthermore, as Bogdan and Biklen (1982:29) further contend, “as a qualitative researcher planning to develop some kind of theory about what you have been studying, the direction you will travel comes after you have been collecting the data after you have spent time with your subjects. You are not putting together a puzzle, whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture which takes shape as you collect and examine the parts. The process of data analysis is like a funnel: things are open at the

beginning (or top), and more directed and specific at the bottom. The qualitative researcher plans to use part of the study to learn what the important questions are. He or she does not assume that enough is known to recognise important concerns before understanding the research.” Theory therefore develops during data collection. Therefore, according to Lawrence - Newman (1997:334), “qualitative researchers remain open to the unexpected, are willing to change the direction or focus of a research project, and may abandon their original research question in the middle of a project. A qualitative researcher builds theory by making comparisons. When data collection and theorizing are interspersed, theoretical questions arise that suggest future observations, so new data are tailored to answer theoretical questions that came from thinking about previous data.”

5. Process or sequence is important to qualitative researchers. Qualitative researchers look at the passage of time and observe what happens first, second and third, and so on. Qualitative researchers can therefore observe an issue evolving, a conflict emerging or a social relationship developing. As Lawrence - Newman (1997:335) says, “the researcher can detect process and control relations.” In historical research the passage of time may involve decades, while in field research the passage of time is shorter.
6. According to Lawrence-Newman (1997:335), “the word interpretation means the assignment of significance or coherent meaning.” Qualitative researchers interpret data by giving them meaning, translating them or making them understandable. This is because, as Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2000:183) say, “qualitative research is done chiefly in words.” Qualitative research rarely

includes tables with numbers, as numerical information is supplementary to the textual evidence that forms the basis of qualitative research. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:28) concur, “qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected is in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The written results of the research contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate presentation. In their search for understanding, qualitative researchers do not reduce the pages upon pages of narration and other data to numerical symbols. They try to analyze it with all its richness as closely as possible to the form in which it was recorded or transcribed. Qualitative articles and reports have been described by some as ‘anecdotal’. This is because they often contain quotations and try to describe what a particular situation or view of the world is like in a narrative form. The written word is very important in the qualitative approach, both in recording data and disseminating the findings.”

7. Qualitative researchers are also concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products. They want to know how people negotiate meaning as well as how certain labels come to be applied. Furthermore qualitative researchers want to understand how certain notions come to be taken as part of what we know as “common sense.” [Bogdan and Biklen 1982:28]
8. Qualitative research does not seek to make generalisations. Instead it looks at the experiences of people, and allows the reader to relate to other people’s experiences. As Anderson Hers and Nihlen (1994:110) say, “qualitative research does not seek to generalize one study to all other similar studies, instead it seeks to explain behaviour in one setting, which, if it reminds the reader of his or her setting has been successful.”

9. Finally, and very important for this research, meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982:29-30), “researchers who use this approach are interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives. In other words, qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called participant perspectives. They focus on questions like: What assumptions do people make about their lives? What do they take for granted? By learning the perspectives of the participants, qualitative research illuminates the inner dynamics of situations – dynamics that are often invisible to the outside. Qualitative researchers in education can continually be found asking questions of the people they are learning from to discover what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences, and how they themselves structure the world in which they live.”

3.3 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS: JUSTIFICATION (RATIONALE) FOR THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY CHOSEN

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982:30), “good researchers are aware of their theoretical base and use it to help collect and analyse data. Theory helps data cohere and enables research to go beyond an aimless unsystematic piling up of accounts.” A researcher should have a theoretical basis from which to direct his/her research. According to Barnum (1990:1) “a theory is a statement that purports to account for or characterize some phenomenon.” The word theory is used here in the way that the word paradigm will be used. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:30) further say, “ a paradigm is a loose collection of logically held-together assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research. When we refer to a ‘theoretical orientation’ or ‘theoretical perspective’ we are talking about a way of looking at the

world, the assumptions people have about what is important, and what makes the world work. Whether stated or not, all research is guided by some theoretical orientation." On the other hand, Mertens (1998:6) maintains that "a paradigm is a way of looking at the world. It is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action." Mertens (1998) therefore agrees with Bogdan and Biklen (1982) that a paradigm is a way of looking at the world and indicates the assumptions that guide thoughts and actions, and therefore indicate a theoretical orientation.

According to Mertens (1998:6) there are three questions that help define a paradigm.

1. The ontological question asks, What is the nature of reality?
2. The epistemological question asks, What is the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the would be known?
3. The methodological question asks, How can the knower go about obtaining the desired knowledge and understandings?

The phenomenological approach influenced this research. This study is therefore based on an interpretive, constructivist paradigm. Unlike positivists who hold that there is one reality knowable within probability, the interpretive / constructivist paradigm, according to Mertens (1998:9), holds that "reality is socially constructed. Therefore multiple mental constructions can be apprehended, some of which may be in conflict with each other, and perceptions of reality may change throughout the process of the study The researcher's goal is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge." To the epistemological question of the nature of knowledge, and therefore the relationship between the knower and the would-be known, unlike the positivists who regard objectivity as important and therefore believe that the researcher should observe in

a dispassionate, objective manner the interpretative / constructivist researchers according to Mertens (1998:13) believe that “the inquirer and the inquired-into are interlocked in an interactive process; each influences the other. The interpretive / constructivist therefore opts for a more personal, interactive mode of data collection. The values that influence the investigator are made explicit. The concept of objectivity is replaced by confirmability. The assumption is made that data, interpretations, and outcomes are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the researcher and are not figments of the imagination. Data can be tracked to its sources, and the logic used to assemble interpretations can be made explicit in the narrative.” Finally, to the question of methodology i.e. the approach to systematic inquiry or how the knower can go about obtaining the desired knowledge and understandings, unlike the positivists who primarily use quantitative, interventionist, decontextualised methods, the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, according to Mertens (1998:14) emphasises “qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and document review. These are applied in correspondence with the assumption about social construction of reality in that research can be conducted only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents. This interactive approach is sometimes described as hermeneutical and dialectical in that efforts are made to obtain multiple perspectives that yield better interpretations of meanings (hermeneutics) that are compared and contrasted through a dialectical interchange involving the juxtaposition of conflicting ideas, forcing reconsideration of previous positions. The methodological implication of having multiple realities is that the research questions cannot be definitely established before the study begins, rather they will evolve and may change as the study progresses. In addition, the perceptions of a variety of types of persons must be sought. Finally, the interpretive/constructivist research must provide information about

the backgrounds of the participants and the contexts in which they are being studied.”

As mentioned already, this study is a phenomenological interpretive/constructivist one. I chose to follow the phenomenological route because I believe that there are multiple realities out in the field where research is done. I also wanted to understand professional support for teachers from the point of view of those who are receiving it, the teachers. I wanted to understand the subjects from their own point of view. As Burns and Grove (1993:65) say, “the purpose of phenomenological research is to describe experiences as they are lived in phenomenological terms, to capture the lived experience of study participants.” Thus, according to Mertens (1998:169) “phenomenological research emphasizes the individual’s subjective experience. It seeks the individual’s perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience. The intent is to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participant”. Furthermore, as McMillan and Schumacher (1993:14) say, “qualitative research is based on a naturalistic phenomenological philosophy, assuming that multiple realities are socially constructed by the individual and society.” I view approaching people with the intent of understanding their point of view as the one way that least distorts the subject’s experiences. In doing so, I am not denying that there may be a reality out there that may be capable of standing on its own that is beyond control by humans, but I regard this reality as something capable of being viewed and experienced differently by different individuals. The goal in the phenomenological method as Morse and Field (1996:20) say, “is to provide an accurate description of the phenomenon being studied. The goal of phenomenology is to describe accurately the experience of the phenomenon under study,” and not to develop generalizations. Thus, according to Borg and Gall (1989:389), “the

researcher must develop the perspectives of the groups being studied, that is, the researcher must adopt the insider's viewpoint." In order to do this, the researcher must interact with participants, and make the values of the research explicit.

I also believe that context matters. The context in which the individual functions, and therefore also the culture of the subject or subjects, is central to understanding the data collected. As Borg and Gall (1989:389) say, "all data must be considered in the context of the environment in which it was gathered." I therefore believe that the individual should be studied within the context in which he/she functions, thus also giving an ethnographic stance towards this research. My intention is to expand rather than to confine understanding. In the words of Bogdan and Biklen (1982:38), "qualitative researchers seek to study the concept as it is understood in the context of all who use it. Similarly, when going to study an organisation one does not attempt to resolve the ambiguity that occurs when varied definitions arise of what the word goal means, or when people have different goals. The subject of the study focuses instead on how various participants see and experience goals. It is multiple realities rather than a single reality which concern the qualitative researcher." These multiple realities, as McMillan and Schumacher (1993:14) say, "are socially constructed by the individual and by society."

In short, the research method used is a qualitative, hermeneutical dialectical one, in which context is important and is described. I also believe that the nature of knowledge (epistemology) must be such that there is an interactive link between myself as the researcher and the participants, that values must be made explicit, and that findings must come from the experiences of the participants, rather than

coming from my imagination as the researcher. Ontologically, i.e. in relation to the nature of reality, I believe that there are multiple realities, that are individually and socially constructed, and not just one reality to be examined by some objective method.

For two years (between January 1986 and March 1988) I worked as a teacher. Between March 1988 and August 1998 (ten years) I worked as a teacher trainer at a college of education. Since August 1998 (4 years) I have worked as a curriculum advisor, a job that entails working with practicing teachers on a daily basis. As a teacher I worked at schools in the largely rural Thohoyandou District. The schools at which I worked did not have enough classrooms, and some lessons were taught under mango trees. When it rained it meant that some lessons could not go on properly as the learners could not go to their 'classroom', the mango tree. When I arrived at the school it was just assumed that I know how to teach as I was just allocated a class and I was expected to get on with the work. At teacher training college, as a lecturer I taught teachers who were to go to teach at schools like the one I taught at, and often at schools that were worse off than those at which I had been employed at. As a curriculum advisor I conduct workshops for teachers and visit teachers at their schools, and they complain of overcrowding, lack of classrooms, lack of study material, issues with which I have had to grapple with during my days as a school teacher. The fact that I have worked as a teacher, that I know what conditions they went through in training, and that I now work in order to develop teachers skills, knowledge and understanding of recent educational innovations and changes means that I understand the teachers. This also allows me to develop empathy, and therefore try to understand the teacher as if I were the teacher.

As a person who has worked as a teacher, a teacher trainer, and a curriculum advisor, I cannot escape being affected by my own experiences and observations on a daily basis while carrying out my duties, but I put those aside so that they should not tarnish my data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This meant that I had to be non-judgmental in order for me to understand facts as well as the emotional undertones. In other words, being non-judgmental also allows one to read between the lines, i.e. to understand non-verbal communication during interviews. This also means that I had to keep an open mind. As Creswell (1998:52) says “phenomenology’s approach is to suspend all judgements about what is real - the natural attitude – until they are founded on a more certain basis.”

3.4. SAMPLE SELECTION

According to Mertens [1998:253) “sampling refers to the method used to select a given number of people (or things) from a population.”

Whenever it is possible, researchers would prefer to make a study of the whole population in which they are interested. However this is not always possible and therefore researchers end up choosing a sample. As Borg and Gall (1989:211) say, one of the "main goals in educational research is to obtain valid knowledge about some aspects of education and to apply that knowledge to a defined population. We almost never collect data from all individuals who make up our population, however. Instead, we select a sample of subjects from that population for study." This concurs with what Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:80) say:- "When it is possible researchers would prefer to study the entire population in which they are interested. Usually, however, this is difficult to do. Most populations of interest are large, diverse and scattered over a large geographic area. Finding, let alone contacting, all members can be

time-consuming and expensive. For that reason of necessity, researchers often select a sample to study." The larger group i.e. the group to which the results of the research are intended to apply is the population, while the smaller group that is actually studied is the sample.

I was also not able to study every teacher in South Africa, even in Limpopo Province. I therefore mainly focused on teachers in Thohoyandou District, Northern Region (Region 3), Limpopo Province. Purposive sampling was used in the sense that I gathered information from particular teachers within the district that formed the focus of the study. As Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:88) say, a purposive sampling method can be chosen because "previous information led the researcher to believe that the sample selected would be representative of the population. There is a second form of purposive sampling in which it is not expected that the persons chosen are themselves representative of the population." The purpose of the sampling was not to gather any particular number of subjects, but to gain as much information as possible. In this research therefore it is not the number of cases or informants that is of paramount importance, but it is the representative nature of the comments or rather the quality of information that could be gathered from subjects that is important. Merriam [1998:208) concurs and says that "in qualitative research, a single case or a small non random sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many." The aim of this research, in line with Walker and Cheong (1996:2000), "was not to draw generalisations. The aim was to gain insight" about professional support provision and the impact of this on teachers, hence the type of sampling described above. This is also supported by Lawrence-Newman (1997:419) who says that in qualitative research, "adequacy

refers to the amount of data collected, rather than to the number of subjects as in quantitative research”. Furthermore, as Bogdan and Biklen (1982:2-3) say, in qualitative research “because of the detail sought, most studies have small samples”.

According to Merriam (1998:61) “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned”. This is why the sample size in qualitative research does not have to be large, but that the information gathered from the chosen participants in the study should shed light on the research question. As Morse and Field (1996:65) say, “two principles guide qualitative sampling: appropriateness and adequacy. Appropriateness is derived from the identification and utilization of the participants who can best inform the research according to the theoretical requirements of the study. Because of the small sample size, the awkwardness in handling bulky qualitative data and cost of data collection in qualitative work, data collection must be effective and efficient. Drawing a participant randomly means that it is most likely that the participants selected may know nothing or very little of the topic – thus random sampling is not only useless to the aims of qualitative research, but may be a source of invalidity. Theoretical sampling dictates that the researcher knows who best to invite to participate, based on the theoretical needs of the study and the knowledge of the participant. The second principle is adequacy. This means that there is enough data to develop a full and rich description of the phenomenon – preferably that the stage of saturation has been reached – that is, that no new data will emerge by conducting further interviews”.

Initially I had chosen two teachers who I intended to hold in depth, open ended interviews with. However as time went on I met other teachers who I also regarded as having the knowledge that could assist me in my studies. In my day to day work, I work with teachers. So it was possible for me to make observations of teachers at workshops and decide on particular teachers that displayed an understanding of issues as they participated at these workshops. I would then approach them, often not during the workshop but some days later and request for permission to conduct interviews with them. I would tell the potential participant why and what I hope to accomplish with my research, as well as the purpose of my research. If the potential participant accepts to become a participant, I would tell the person that I would require him to sign a consent form before the interview in which I shall have briefly described the research I am conducting, how many times I might interview the person and the use of recording instruments. The letter would also guarantee anonymity to the interviewee and reassure the interviewee that he/she can quit at any stage during the interview. In the end I ended up having interviewed five teachers, I only stopped interviewing these teachers and selecting further participants as I realized that no new information was forthcoming with further interviewing.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION

As mentioned earlier, I work as a curriculum advisor at Thohoyandou District, Northern Region (Region 3), Limpopo Province. The work I do involves interacting with teachers almost on a daily basis. This inquiry therefore originated as a result of my interactions with the teachers.

During my interactions with teachers it was possible to recognise from their comments that they felt that the kind of support that is being provided to them with regard to the educational changes taking place

in South Africa did not satisfy them. They would complain that the conditions under which they are not conducive to implementing the changes as required, that there is overcrowding at their schools, and that they lack material. They expected us as 'officials' from the Department of Education to have solutions for these problems. During workshops they would complain that the documents that they were being given e.g. policy documents are not simple for them to understand, and would say that the conditions described, e.g. grouping learners when the class has for example, one hundred learners, is not possible. I therefore decided that the issues the teachers were raising needed further and deeper examination.

The actual formal interviews with teachers took place between March and October 2001. Sometimes the interviewing would take place at my home, sometimes at the interviewee's home, and sometimes at the interviewee's school, depending on the preference of the interviewee.

Qualitative research can use a variety of methods of data collection. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) say, "qualitative research is multimethod in focus involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interviews, observational, historical, interactions, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives." This is similar to the comments by King, Keohane and Verba (1994:5) when they contend that qualitative data collection involves "a wide range of methods, including observation, participant observation, intensive interviews, history recorded from secondary

sources, ethnography, content analysis and any other method of collecting reliable evidence.” A researcher can use one or a number of the methods mentioned above. I chose to use intensive, unstructured, open ended interviews. I came to settle on using this method of data collection as I realised it can assist me well to collect the data required to elucidate the research question and purpose of the study. As Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (1994:115) say, “interviews are a good tool to use when one wishes to know how a person feels about events that have happened or are happening. They are also important in gaining a perspective on how others understand and interpret their reality.” As the purpose of my study involved teacher understandings and experiences, I chose the interview as the best method with which to collect data for this research.

The interview method involves questioning or discussing issues with people. I chose to use the unstructured interview which, according to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2000:153), “has been variously described as naturalistic, autobiographical, in-depth, narrative or non-directive. Whatever the label used, the informal interview is modeled on the conversation and like the conversation is a social event” with two or more participants. I did not use a particular interview schedule to interview the subjects, but rather used natural conversation to elicit responses and gather information that is of value to the research question. As Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:63) say, using the unstructured interview creates “an atmosphere where the individual feels able to relate subjective and often highly personal materials to the researcher.”

As mentioned already, the unstructured interview used here was of the open-ended type. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:136) say, “in the very open ended type of interview the researcher encourages the subjects to

talk in the area of interest, and then probes more deeply, picking up on the topics and issues that the respondent initiates. The subject plays a stronger role in defining the content of the interview.” Therefore Bogdan and Biklen (1982:136) further contend that “good interviews are ones in which the subjects are at ease and talk freely about their points of view,” hence I chose the very open-ended conversation type of interview. I used conversations as they, according to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:163), “not only constitute an important source of data but might also be regarded as a method of research in their own right.” Conversations also allow for the elements of everyday social interaction to be incorporated into the unstructured interview. Hence in this study the subjects were not passive recipients of questions from the researcher, but they also could fully participate in the discussions. I would allow interviewees to speak as they wish, but would always carefully steer the conversation towards the main issue. Since the interviews were very open ended and the conversation type, I did not use a particular interview schedule, but steered the conversations around the research question or problem of the study.

The interviews, as already indicated took place at various venues, depending on the preference and convenience to the interviewee. The venues could be the home of the interviewee, my home or the interviewee’s school. The venues had to be places that would guarantee minimal, if any, disturbance during the whole period of the interview. The interview took about thirty minutes to an hour. What is important to note is that each interviewee had to sign the consent form mentioned in the last section (and attached in Addendum A) before the first interview took place. This was crucial and no interviewee was interviewed before this was signed. Both the interviewee and I signed two copies of the consent form. The interviewee would keep one signed copy and I would keep the other

signed copy. The interviewee was required to read the consent form and also ask any questions he/she may have with regard to the contents of the consent form and any other issue relating to his/her participation in the interview before signing the consent form. This was done in order to ensure that the interviewee understands the serious intent of my research, and also to indicate to the interviewee that I appreciate his/her willingness to grant me permission to interview him/her. One interview, with participant no.1 however did not follow this convention. It took place in my car while the participant was a passenger in my car. It started off as a very casual conversation, which ended up as a discussion of issues pertinent to my research question. The conversation lasted about ten to fifteen minutes, while I was driving from Thohoyandou town to Tshitereke, a place about twenty kilometres from Thohoyandou. I immediately informed the participant, who was just my passenger then, that I would like to use our conversation for a Phd in Education research I was conducting, and that I would like to interview him further at a time, date and place convenient to him. It turned out that he became a very enthusiastic interviewee as he indicated that the issues we discussed and the research question I was working to answer was about an issue he felt very strongly about. He signed the consent form before the next interview. On arrival home, I immediately wrote down whatever transpired during the conversation. I decided to do this because I feel that it is easier to remember something just after it has occurred than long after it has occurred as it might lead to confusion with issues that arose or information that was gained later. I also, on a later date took the written document to him to read, so that he could indicate what I might have left out or edit out what I might not have written as he had spoken.

Apart from the above conversation, the other interviews with the five participants were recorded in a tape recorder. As I ended the interview I would ask the interviewee whether he would like to add something to what he or she had said. When the conversation or interview ended I immediately labeled the tape so as to avoid confusion with other tapes.

As indicated already, five teachers took part in the open ended conversation style interviews. Their profiles are as follows:-

Table 3.1. Profiles of teachers who participated in the interviews

Teacher	Gender	Qualifications	Experience	Grades taught
1	Male	PTD	7 years	5,7
2	Male	BA, SPTD	16 years	5,7
3	Male	BA, B.Ed, PTC	25 years	4, 6, 7
4	Female	B. Paed, B.Ed M.Ed	20 years	6,7
5	Female	BA, UED	8 years	7

Except for respondent number 3, all the other respondents teach in schools that are in the rural parts of Thohoyandou District. Their schools are like most other schools within Thohoyandou District, located in areas that have dust roads that are difficult to access during rainy days as they become muddy and slippery and do not have telephones, thus making it difficult to communicate with them. The school where respondent 1 (one) teaches, although rural like the others, also has electricity, making it possible for the school to purchase a photocopying machine. The school where respondent 3 (three) teachers is within the town of Thohoyandou. Interesting enough one could say the school borders both rural and town. Behind the school is a fully rural village, although the school itself is located next to the shopping area of the town. The school therefore serves learners

from the rural village, and from the residential areas within the town. The buildings of the school, like those of the rest of the schools in the study, are not exceptionally good. The school also has a good reputation as an excellent primary school under the circumstances, and therefore attracts learners from areas several kilometres away, and is therefore overcrowded. A low cost housing project built a two roomed low-cost house in the school yard to market their low-cost houses, and the teachers are using this as a staff room as the other rooms are taken up by learners. The school has electricity, and therefore also has a photocopying machine and a computer, that they use for administrative purpose.

It is important to note that in this research, the participants in my sample were not chosen or selected to participate in the study because of particular demographic characteristics, but because I regarded them as having relevant information to assist in elucidating the research question. The profiles given above therefore do not have any substantive bearing on the research data e.g. the fact that a participant is male or female did not influence the choice of participant. However the profiles are given so that the reader can know the participants who informed me in my research

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Morse and Field (1996:103) “two components of the research process complement each other to ensure that the finished product is excellent qualitative research. The first is the collection of adequate and appropriate data, and the second is creativity in data analysis.” The previous section explains how the data was collected. This section explains how the collected data was analysed.

According to Robson (1994:305) data “analysis is necessary because, generally speaking, data in their raw form do not speak for themselves. The messages stay hidden and need careful teasing out.” Data have therefore to be analysed in order for the messages hidden in them to be teased out. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982:145), “data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding for them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others.” Data analysis is therefore a way of moving from the pages and pages of collected data to more user friendly information presented in the form of a book, or as in this case, a thesis. The analytic task serves the purpose of interpreting and making sense out of the materials that the researcher has collected so as to allow the researcher to move from the rambling pages of description to those of products, i.e. books, papers, presentations, or theses.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:295) also speak of data in a similar manner to that of Robson (1994) and Bogdan and Biklen (1982) as stated in the paragraph above. According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:295) qualitative data analysis refers “to the ways in which the researcher moves from a description of what is the case to an explanation of why what is the case is the case. Analysis involves discovering and deriving patterns in the data, looking for general orientations in the data and, in short, trying to sort out what the data are about, and why and what kinds of things might be said about them.” Thus, in short, qualitative data analysis is done for the

purpose of making sense of the data that has been or is being gathered.

In qualitative research the researcher not only collects the data, but also interprets the data. In other words, the researcher collects the data, but also becomes the instrument of the analysis of the data. Therefore, as Robson (1994:374) says, “the central requirement in qualitative data analysis is clear thinking on the part of the analyst. First and foremost analysis is a test of the ability to think – to process information in a meaningful and useful manner.” As Borg and Gall (1989:380) say, “the main measurement tool for collecting data is the researcher himself.” The researcher is also central in data analysis.

It is important to recognise that in qualitative research, data analysis is not altogether a separate process from data collection. As Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:296) say “since the researcher herself is the funnel through which the data are received, some form of analysis will take place simultaneously with data collection. The qualitative researcher comes to the formal stage of data analysis having passed through much informal data analysis.” Thus qualitative data analysis takes place throughout the period in which data is collected. As Mertens (1998:348) says, “data analysis in qualitative studies is an ongoing process. It does not occur only at the end of the study. Findings are generated and systematically built as successive pieces of data are gathered.” Since this research is also a qualitative study, I also followed the methods of qualitative data analysis. Initially while I was in the field, doing the open-ended interviews or holding conversations with the subjects that had been purposefully sampled, I reflected on the impressions, relationships and patterns that emerged as the conversations went on. This informal kind of data analysis provided me with hunches, ideas, and general lines of questioning to follow up,

thus enriching the open ended interview and the quality of data collected. I made notes that recorded the analytic process, thus providing accountability.

Secondly, after each data collection session I sat down to organize and develop the variety of data collected in the field in order to make detailed notes. This helped me to relate the logic and correspondence of data to initial impressions in the field. The initial impressions referred to here are the reactions of teachers at workshops and during official visits to their schools, which I described earlier in Section 3.5, Data Collection, which prompted me to decide to conduct this research. Periodically throughout the study I would carefully and thoroughly study all the data that had already been collected up to that stage, in order to find similarities, differences, correspondence, categories, themes, concepts and ideas, and analyze the logic of previous analytic outcomes, categories and weakness or gaps in the data. Finally, as recommended by Mertens (1998:350) “to gain a fresh perspective on the nature of the data and the problems,” I waited for a month “before conducting the final analysis of the data.” The data analysis was only stopped when regularities emerged. That is, when there was no new information that emerged with further analysis of data.

After each interview I would replay the tape-recorded interview while listening carefully to the contents as well as to the questions asked and to the participant’s response. I did this because, as Morse and Field (1996:107) say, “the first major task in analysing interview data is to become extremely familiar with the data.” The data would then be transcribed word for word from the tape, i.e. the interview data was not paraphrased from the tape to the written word. The exception was in the case where the participant used the name of someone e.g. Mr. ...

instead of just ‘the authorities’ or e.g. ‘the district manager’, then the name would be omitted and only the relationship written down. The transcription was then checked against the tape for accuracy. Researcher comments were then put directly into the transcript using a different colour pen. The process of data analysis involved reading the data at once and then dividing the data into smaller, more meaningful units, e.g. the quality of existing professional support for teachers. The data segments were then organized into a system that was predominantly derived from the data i.e. an inductive method of data analysis was used during the data analysis process. As the data collection and analysis process went on, new research questions emerged or original research questions were modified, thus allowing for additional categories and themes to emerge from the data. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:147) say, “shortly after you enter the field, you assess which questions you brought with you are relevant and which ones should be reformulated to direct your work.” This has also been the case with this research as some original research questions fell along the way as new data revealed certain relationships, and new questions were formulated.

Thus the data analysis used here is based on ideas of grounded theory. According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:297), the grounded theory “approach argues for detailed grounding of theory in the systematic and intensive analysis of empirical data in a microscopic detailed fashion. The researcher collects and compares data, codes the data and begins to organize ideas, which emerge from the data. Working from this position, the analysis of qualitative data must recognise the complexity of the data, engage in microscopic familiarity with the data and be able to take into consideration the experience which the researcher brings to the data. Working through these aspects identifies a series of processes in the analysis of qualitative

data. Once these stages have been completed then the researcher may make use of existing, or develop new, concepts and theories in a way which sensitizes issues rather than imposing an order on to the data. It is in this way that the researcher moves from a description of what is the case to an explanation on why what is the case is the case.” I also used the grounded theory approach. In using grounded theory a great deal of analysis was done during data collection. Further questions were developed as more data was being collected. I kept the questions at a substantive level for the purpose of guiding data collection, but speculated in personal comments and memos about the relationship between substantive theory and formal theory. In the final formal analysis that was done after the completion of the data collection, further speculation was done. I therefore also attempted a link between the substantive findings and the formal theoretical issues, i.e. I reflected on what bearing the findings of the research have on people.

The main analytic process that I used in the data analysis is comparison. I used comparison to build and refine categories, define conceptual similarities, find negative evidence, and discover patterns. The categories that I used in the analysis were flexible so that they could be modified as further data analysis occurred. As Morse and Field (1996:105) say, in qualitative research “data analysis usually assumes two mechanical forms: (1) interparticipant analysis or comparison of transcripts from several participants, and (2) the analysis of categories, sorted by commonalties, consisting of segments of transcripts or notes compiled from transcripts of several participants.”

To code the data I recognised that there were persistent words, phrases or themes that arose from data collected from the different

participants. I identified these words, passages or paragraphs. I labeled the major theme within each paragraph by writing the category in the margin and then sorting the data by cutting each labeled paragraph and posting or copying the relevant passage into larger sheets of paper for manual sorting. Highlighting the relevant phrases also assisted me in sorting these portions of text into common piles within a category. As Morse and Field (1996:111) says, “the colour coding is a fast method of identifying all data allowing pieces coded for analysis to be traced to the original source. Cutting the transcript enables the data to be quickly sorted without the necessity of rewriting the appropriate passage on to another card. However, as one segment may fit into two or more categories, the need for several copies of data is obvious. As the file folders fill, the contents are again sorted into smaller categories.”

In summary, firstly I conducted “intra-participant analysis (Morse and Field, 1996:173). I immersed myself in the data as a whole. I achieved this through listening to the tapes and through extensive reading and re-reading of the transcripts. I reflected on this data in their entirety. I considered the meaning of each sentence in the light of the complete manuscript. I highlighted or colour coded the statements that appeared revealing. In this way I performed a disciplined and systematic search for descriptive expressions which I regarded as being at the centre of the participating teacher’s experience. I often had to rephrase these “experiences, themes or constituents,” (Morse & Field, 1996:173), confirmed their relevance and then described them in a few sentences. Next, I conducted inter-participant analysis and sought for commonalties between participants, gathering statements that are conceptually similar” (Morse and Field 1996:173). The interparticipant themes that emerged indicated the essence of the phenomena, or the meta-theme as Morse and Field, (1996:173) call

them. Some of the themes were common to all the participants, while others were not and were therefore unique to the particular participant. These unique themes were not discarded as they provided variation and enriched the data with the range of experiences and understandings that the various participants had with regard to professional support for teachers during times of educational change. Lastly, I sought for interrelationships between the themes and the descriptions. I therefore used quotes from the interviews as concrete illustrations to provide a realistic and accurate portrayal of the phenomena for the reader. As I wrote and rewrote, my insights increased as I reflected on what I had read and written. This facilitated interpretation. To ensure validity or credibility as will be explained later in this chapter, I gave the analysis back to participants for verification and, as Morse and Field (1996:174) say “any areas of disagreement, of inadequate description or omissions ‘were’ further interpreted and corrected”.

3.7 PILOT STUDY

According to Brause (2000:107), “experienced researchers pilot the components of a study. In this process they gain proficiency in handling all the parts while having the opportunity to create a process that is smoother, easier and less disruptive for participants. Pilot studies typically are compressed, mini studies, with smaller groups and a shorter time period, but comprehensive in experimenting with all the elements of the process.

There are many advantages to doing a pilot. You get:

- A rehearsal to see how you will perform;
- Confirmation that the process will work;
- Assurance that the materials you collect are the ones you need;

- An opportunity to experiment with the procedures for analyzing data; and
- An opportunity to revise your procedures as needed.”

In this study I at first attempted to use an interview schedule, but after talking to three informants at three different schools realised that using a formal schedule, even though unstructured, restricted the flow of the conversations and did not allow for the kind of open discussions that were necessary for the research question. I then decided to use the conversation, an open-ended type of interview, for this allowed the interviewee to be substantially in charge during the interview. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:136) say, “when the interviewer controls the content too rigidly,” then the subject cannot tell his or her own story personally, in his or her own words. I therefore decided to use the very open ended type of interview, the conversation type, where, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1982:136), “the researcher encourages the subjects to talk in the area of interest, and then probes more deeply, picking up the topics and issues that the respondent initiates. The subject plays a stronger role in defining the content of the interview and the direction of the study in this type of interview.”

However, conducting a pilot study does not necessarily mean that there will be no problems at all in the study. As Brause (2000:107) says, despite the advantages of a pilot study “there is no guarantee that everything will work perfectly during your major study. However, by piloting you do have a stronger chance that you will at least eliminate the major obstacles in your study, and that this will provide you with confidence to make the needed adjustments when conducting your major study.”

3.8. ESTABLISHING TRUSTWORTHINESS

3.8.1. Validity

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:400), validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness of the inferences researchers make based on the data they collect". Cresswell and Miller (2000:124) go further and say that "validity refers to how accurately the account represents participants realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them." Morse and Field (1996:200) refer to validity in qualitative research as "the extent to which the research findings represent reality." Validity, as viewed from the perspectives of the authors quoted above, therefore does not necessarily refer to the data collected, but to the inferences drawn from that data. As Kirk and Miller (1986:21) say, validity can be summarised as "a question of whether the researcher sees what he or she thinks he or she sees" Validity can be internal or external, i.e. there is internal validity and external validity.

3.8.1.1. Internal validity or credibility

Some authors like Mertens (1998:81) and Robson (1994:403) also use the term credibility to refer to internal validity. As Mertens (1998:183) says, "credibility is the criterion in qualitative research that parallels validity in postpositivist research." According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:551) in postpositivist research internal validity is "the degree to which observed differences on the dependent variable are directly related to the independent variable. It therefore means, in postpositivist research, that internal validity would refer to the attribution within the experimental situation that the observed changes in the dependant variable were caused by the independent

variable.” In qualitative research however, internal validity or credibility as Mertens (1998:181) calls it, would ask “if there is a correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints.”

To ensure internal validity or credibility and thus ensure that I have actually portrayed the viewpoints of the respondents in the manner in which the respondents perceive their viewpoints, I conducted member checks. As Mertens (1998:182) says “this is the most important criterion in establishing credibility. The researcher must verify with the respondent groups the constructions that are developing as a result of data collected and analysed.” Lincoln and Guba (1985:314) also agree, describing member checking “as the most crucial technique for establishing credibility.” At the end of each interview I would summarize what has been said and ask the respondent if what I was saying accurately reflects what the respondent was saying. As Creswell and Miller (2000:127) say, member checks consist of “taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account.” With the lens focused on the participants I was able to systematically check the data and the narrative account. I had my participants view the raw data i.e. the transcriptions, and asked them to comment on their accuracy. I also showed the participants the themes and categories and also asked the participants to comment on whether they are a proper reflection of what is in the data. I therefore incorporated the comments of the participants into the final narrative. In this way the participants have added credibility to my qualitative study by having a chance to react both to the data and to the final narrative.

I also engaged in peer debriefing. As Cresswell and Miller (2000:129) say “a peer review or debriefing is the review of the data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research or the phenomenon being explored. A peer reviewer provides support, plays devil’s advocate, challenges the researchers assumptions, pushes the researchers to the next step methodologically, and asks hard questions about methods and interpretations.” I engaged in discussions with peers about the data, the analysis of the data and the interpretations. I allowed the peers to critically question not only the analysis, but also the interpretations. As a means of triangulation, I collected data from five teachers from different schools, both males and females.

3.8.1.2. External validity or transferability

According to Mertens (1998:183) “transferability is the qualitative parallel to external validity.” This is echoed by Robson (1994:404) who says that transferability “is the construct corresponding to external validity or generalizability in quantitative research.” External validity therefore, as Mertens (1998:183) further says, means “the degree to which you can generalize the results to other situations.” In qualitative research, however, the researcher is not interested in making generalizations himself or herself. The onus for this, according to Robson (1994:405) “shifts to the person (the reader) interested in making such a generalization or transfer to make that decision to determine whether or not the case(s) described can be transferred to other settings.” In other words, in qualitative research, as Mertens 1998:183) says, “the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the similarity between the study site and the receiving context. The researcher’s responsibility is to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make such a judgement.” For this reason, I made a thick, rich description i.e. I extensively and carefully described

the time, place, context and culture of the research. I fully explained when the data was collected, at what area, from whom and under what conditions the data was collected. I also described the participants and the themes in rich detail. I did this in order to make the context of the research to be vivid to the reader. According to Denzin (1989:830) “thick descriptions are deep dense, detailed accounts Thin descriptions, by contrast, lack detail and simply report facts.” Furthermore, as Cresswell and Miller (2000:128) say, “the purpose of a thick description is that it creates verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study.” The readers who read the narrative account are therefore ‘transported’ into a setting or situation. I provided as much detail as I could in my narrative. I have described in detail the experiences of the teachers, I have also, as stated already, described the setting for the research in detail, and I have also provided a detailed rendering of teacher understandings with regard to professional support for teachers. By providing a thick, rich description I have enabled the reader to make decisions with regard to the applicability of the findings to other settings or similar contexts.

3.8.2. Reliability or dependability

According to Mertens (1998:184) “dependability is the qualitative parallel to reliability.” This is echoed by Robson (1994:405) who says that “dependability is analogous to reliability. Just as reliability is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for validity, so a study that is valid must be reliable, then dependability is a necessary, though not sufficient condition for credibility. Hence a study that is shown to be credible is also dependable.” I used the triangulation that I described above in connection with validity to also specifically ensure

dependability. I have also described in detail the data collection and analysis methods, and thus provided a trail that could be followed on how the entire research was conducted and the final narrative arrived at. By constantly revisiting and reviewing the data collection and analysis methods that I used, I have ensured that the interpretations flow from the data.

3.8.3. Objectivity or confirmability

According to Robson (1994:406) confirmability “is the corresponding concept to objectivity.” This is echoed by Mertens (1998:184) who maintains that confirmability is “the qualitative parallel to objectivity. Objectivity means that the influence of the researcher’s judgement is minimized. Confirmability means that the data and their interpretations are not figments of the researcher’s imagination.” The data of a qualitative research should be traceable to its source, and, as described above for reliability/dependability, the logic that has been used to interpret the data should be made explicit. This did not mean that I had to name my informants or participants, but that I had to provide evidence of the sources of data and the process of synthesizing the data to reach conclusions. I therefore allowed my peers to review my interview transcripts so as to determine whether my interpretations are supported by the data.

3.9. RESEARCHER BIAS AND ASSUMPTIONS

According to Lawrence-Newman (1997:334). “a qualitative researcher takes advantage of personal insight, feelings, and perspective as a human being to understand the social life under study, but is aware of his or her values or assumptions. He or she takes measures to guard against the influence of prior beliefs or assumptions when doing

research. Rather than hiding behind 'objective' techniques, the qualitative researcher is forthright and makes his or her values explicit in a report. Qualitative researchers therefore tell readers how they gathered data and how they see evidence. In going into research I assumed that there is professional support being provided for teachers. However I also assumed that this support may not be sufficient or may not be serving the purpose for which it is intended. I also assumed that more could be done to assist teachers and therefore the research intended to search for answers to these assumptions. These assumptions should however not be construed to be hypotheses, as qualitative research does not start with hypotheses. These assumptions are merely what triggered the need for the research. As Lawrence – Newman (1997:334) further contend, "recognizing the human factor does not mean that a qualitative researcher arbitrarily interjects personal opinions or selects evidence to support personal prejudices. Instead a researcher's presence is always an explicit issue." In other words, as Bogdan and Biklen (1982:27) say, "mechanically recorded materials are reviewed in their entirety by the researcher with the researcher being the key instrument of analysis."

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982:42) "qualitative researchers have wrestled over the years with charges that it is too easy for the prejudices and attitudes of the researcher to bias the data. Particularly when the data must 'go through' the researcher's mind before it is put on paper, the worry about subjectivity arises." This is a concern for those who follow other research methods because in qualitative research the researcher plays the key role in collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. I also had assumptions, which can be said to be biases, when getting into the research. However, I held conversations with the various respondents, spent a considerable time doing this,

and in this way laboriously collected a lot of data in the empirical world. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:42) say, “the data must beat the weight of any interpretation, so the researcher must constantly confront his/her own opinions and prejudices with the data. Besides, most opinions and prejudices are rather superficial. The data that are collected provide much more detailed rendering of events than even the most creatively prejudiced mind might have imagined prior to the study.” Throughout the data collection and analysis, I would go back to the interviewees so as to ensure that what I am writing and my interpretations correctly reflect what they have said. I also allowed my peers to read and comment on my research, thus eliminating bias.

In addition my intention was not to pass judgement, but to add to knowledge, for the worth of a study is in the theory, description or understanding it has generated, or can generate. I understood that situations are complex and not simple and hence I attempted to portray as many diversions as possible, and did not narrow the field. I tape recorded each interview and transcribed each interview word for word into paper. In the one interview which was not tape recorded I took detailed notes immediately after the interview or conversation. This guarded against the possibility of my own biases creeping into the notes because of the time lag between data collection and the writing of the notes. The detailed notes also included reflections on my subjectivity. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:43) further contend, “qualitative researchers attempt to seek out their own subjective states and their effects on data but they never think they are completely successful. All researchers are affected by observers’ bias. Questions or questionnaires, for example, reflect the interest of those who construct them, as do experimental studies. Qualitative researchers try to acknowledge and take into account their own biases as a method of dealing with them.” As Mertens (1998:175) says, “qualitative

research texts recognize the importance of researchers' reflecting on their own values, assumptions, beliefs, and biases and monitoring those as they progress through the study ... to determine their impact on the study's data and interpretations."

3.10. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The study did not explore the whole field of support in education, but only explored that support that has to do with teachers and the enhancing of their teaching. It would be impossible to explore the whole field of support in education in just one study.

The research was limited to Thohoyandou District, Northern Region, Limpopo Province. This again was done in order to avoid making the study area so large and cumbersome that it would be impossible to cover well. Also, in qualitative research the intention is not to get responses from hundreds of respondents, but to gain insight even from a small pool of respondents, or even from a single case or two cases. I therefore interviewed five teachers from the study area. As Lawrence-Newman (1997:419) says, in qualitative research adequacy "refers to the amount of data collected, rather than to the number of subjects, as in quantitative research." Finally in qualitative research the intention is not to draw generalizations, hence the researcher here had the intention of covering a particular setting within a particular context and to fully explore what is happening here. It is for the reader to see whether the descriptions, analyses, findings and conclusions made and arrived at here are applicable in the setting he/she wishes to apply this research at. Generalizability, in the statistical sense, is not possible in qualitative research.

I also collected my data between February 2001 and October 2001. I had an open mind as far as time was concerned, although I had the notion that the research should yield enough information and understanding of professional support for teachers so as to be useful to teachers and the authorities in charge of education. However I only decided to stop collecting any further data when regularities emerged i.e. when, as Mertens (1998:350) maintains, "no new information" emerged, "with additional data analysis"

3.11. SUMMARY AND FURTHER PROGRAMME

This Chapter, Chapter three, explained the methodology used in the research. It highlighted the theoretical underpinnings of this research, and also explained the data collection and analysis methods used in this research, explaining that credibility, transferability, and dependability, and confirmability were important considerations in this research. Limitations of the research were also highlighted in this Chapter. The next chapter will present the data and discuss this data in a comprehensive manner.