Teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the Arts and Culture learning area in the senior phase

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Background to the research
The introduction of Curriculum 2005 in 1995 as the new national school curriculum was the tangible expression of the systemic change in education after the 1994 general elections in South Africa. In essence, the educational philosophy which underpinned the national school curriculum had to change, since the previous national curriculum was founded in Christian National Education (CNE). CNE was designed to justify apartheid and separate development policies. It was extremely exclusivist, and by following Calvinistic principles, “nationalism implied the Afrikaner nation and excluded all other groups in the country (Ntshoe, 2002: 3). Jansen and Christie (1999:212) thus disregard CNE as an “authoritarian, racially exclusive, expert driven and context blind” philosophy.

The educational philosophy which serves as foundation for the new national school curriculum is known as Outcomes Based Education (OBE). This philosophy is underpinned by the idea of lifelong learning and the knowledge, skills and values that a learner achieve within a particular task. OBE can be regarded as process-oriented. It is activity based and learner-centered by taking into account the general characteristics, developmental and otherwise, of different groups of learners. Different learning styles and rates of learning needs are acknowledged and accommodated. The Revised National Curriculum Statement describes OBE as “a learner centered educational process” (2001: 4). William Spady, an American educationalist, is regarded
by many as the founder of what has become known as ‘transformational outcomes based education’. His writings have also been extremely influential within policy circles in South Africa (Gultig, Lubisi, Parker, Wedekind, 1998: 23).

Several challenges however faced the abrupt implementation of the new curriculum, and in 2000 a Ministerial Review Committee was appointed to review progress. It recommended a strengthening of C2005 through the production of the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (RNCS) for South African state schools. Despite its noble intentions, it was soon clear that the process of turning a set of national outcome statements into classroom practice was a tremendous challenge, which in essence also put severe demands on schools, even those regarded as ‘very well resourced institutions’. However, perhaps the most significant effect of the change in philosophy was the required amendments to various aspects related to teaching itself. This affected the teacher's\(^1\) in particular, as it made, and is still making enormous demands on them. Perhaps the most significant implication of this change relates to the fact that teachers had to change their approaches, teaching methods and styles. Some of these implications were the following:

- It was envisaged that the traditional style of the teacher imparting knowledge and the learners being passive receivers of that knowledge would be replaced by a more co-operative style with preference being given to group work with the teacher as facilitator.
- Assessment procedures accordingly needed to change as the old style of tests and examination of content would not have been appropriate. Thus, a system of more emphasis on continuous assessment (CASS) was introduced. Continuous assessment is the process of gathering valid and reliable information about the performance of the learner on an on-going basis, against clearly defined criteria, using a variety of

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\(^1\) The terms ‘educator’ and ‘teacher’ will be used interchangeably throughout this article.
methods, tools, techniques and contexts. CASS is school-based and consists of practical work, written tasks, tests, research and any other task peculiar to that learning area\textsuperscript{2}. The form of assessment used in the schools should cover a full range of skills, knowledge, attitude and values (SKAVs). CASS constitutes a substantial component (75\%) of the total assessment of the learners academic performance (NDE\textsuperscript{3}, 2002:15).

- Resources for new learning areas in the form of supporting teaching and learning materials had to be produced. Resources for existing learning areas, such as Human and Social Sciences, previously known as History and Geography, had to be revised to remove the bias, perceived and real, of the previous curriculum. In particular, text books for the new learning areas in the General Education and Training band (GET)\textsuperscript{4}, namely Arts and Culture, Technology and Life Orientation were initially unobtainable. Unlike other learning areas, where content from previous textbooks could be adapted from the old curriculum and used in the interim, the aforementioned learning areas could not do this as a temporary measure.

- Qualified teachers for these new learning areas did not exist either. In the case of Arts and Culture for instance, those schools fortunate enough to have qualified Music and/or Art and/or Drama teachers were in a more fortunate position but in many instances, the teaching of Arts and Culture was delegated to an educator with little or no knowledge in the field.

\textsuperscript{2} This term refers to the eight fields of knowledge in the National Curriculum Statement: Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences (NS), Technology (Tech), Social Sciences (SS), Arts and Culture (AC), Life Orientation (LO) and Economic and Management Sciences (EMS). Each of these learning areas (LA) has its own Learning Area Statement (LAS). The LAS does not spell out what is to be taught or how it is to be taught. It is the responsibility of schools and educators to develop and detail learning programmes and activities (NDE, 2001:7). The term LA replaces the previously used term, subject. Tech, LO and AC are new learning areas whereas NS refers to Science and Biology, SS to History and Geography and EMS to Accounting.

\textsuperscript{3} National Department of Education.

\textsuperscript{4} GET covers Grade R - 9
Hence, the change to the new national school curriculum was not unproblematic. Much has been written by recognized South African educationists such as Chisholm (2004), Christie (1999) and Jansen (1999) about the weaknesses of the curriculum itself, the poor re-training of educators, especially educators of long standing with established and entrenched teaching methods, as well as non-delivery of resources. A perusal of existing research has exposed that although there is a plethora of research into the educators’ attitudes to salaries, unions, parent bodies and other matters related to their working conditions, little research exists on the effect of the educator’s personal viewpoints with regard to the demands required by the educational change, especially when implementing a new curriculum of which they may or may not have existing knowledge. Fullan (1991: 117) thus argues that, in essence, educational change, such as described above, depends on what teachers do and what teachers think. It is as “… simple and as complex as that”. Fullan’s emphasis raises two subsequent questions, namely, what do teachers do with regard to the implementation of a new learning area, such as Arts and Culture, and what do teachers think with regard to the implementation of this new learning area. In this study, the focus was on the second question, namely teachers’ ‘thoughts’. Within the context of this study, it is assumed that the teachers’ ‘thoughts’ also include their opinions, viewpoints, beliefs and especially their attitudes\(^5\) about the implementation of the Arts and Culture learning area. The term ‘perceptions’ has thus been used as encompassing term and the main research question defined as What are the teachers’ perceptions of the implementation the (new) Arts and Culture learning area? The aim of the research then was to investigate a particular dimension related to the implementation of a new curriculum. The research was conducted at a single secondary school in Port

\(^5\) According to The Cassell Concise Dictionary the term attitude refers to “a mental position or way of thinking, behavior indicating opinion and sentiment” (1998: 88). The new Collins Thesaurus gives the following synonyms which are appropriate in the context of this article: Approach, disposition, frame of mind, opinion, outlook, perspective and point of view (1985:44).
Elizabeth and focused on the implementation of the said learning area in the senior phase\textsuperscript{6}.

**The Arts and Culture learning area**

According to the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (RNCS), the Arts and Culture Learning Area covers the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional aspects of different South African indigenous arts and cultural practices. The learning area seeks to explore societal structure through the study of music, art, dance and drama. The stated purpose is to “develop creative individuals and responsible citizens in line with the values of democracy in the Constitution of South Africa” (NDE, 2001:15). One of the unique features of this learning area is its stated intention of placing emphasis on redressing the imbalances of the past. Learners need to “learn to understand and affirm the diversity of South African cultures” (NDE, 2001: 15). The Arts and Culture learning area is intended to include the following activities, processes and practices: drama, dance, music, visual arts and design, media and communications, arts management, arts technology, literature and heritage.

From the above it is thus clear that a teacher responsible for the implementation of this learning area needs to be competent and able to meaningfully engage with a learning area that is multi-dimensional in its requirements.

**Curriculum implementation**

According to Posner and Rudnitsky (1980: 8), the term ‘curriculum’ is used to indicate what is to be learned and why it is to be learned. A curriculum can also be regarded as an instructional plan on how to facilitate learning. Implementation, on the other hand, is the putting “into practice of a new idea, programme or set of activities” (Fullan, 1986: 270).

\textsuperscript{6} Grades 8 and 9.
Implementation is by its very nature a multi-dimensional affair since a number of changes occur simultaneously.

Hence, in changing a curriculum, as in the case of South Africa, it is not just the content that changes. As soon as the content changes, other changes occur. Teaching methods, resources, underlying educational philosophies and assessment procedures all change along with the content of existing learning areas or the emergence of new learning areas. One can thus assume that, when introducing a new curriculum, there are many factors which require the attention of the managers of change. A number of approaches are put forward regarding the managing of curriculum implementation. The Research, Development and Diffusion Model elucidated by Posner (1995) has the same philosophical approach as Chin and Benn’s Empirical-Rational Model cited in Nicholls (1983: 32). In addition, Chin and Benn also describe what they refer to as a Power Coercive Model. This model seeks to acquire “mass political and economic power behind the change goals, which the strategists of change have decided are desirable” (Nicholls, 1983: 32). The underlying assumption of the Research, Development and Diffusion Model, on the other hand, is that once the basic research has been done, a new curriculum is produced and tested in field trials and then mass produced and disseminated for implementation (Posner, 1995: 212). A significant shortcoming of both these strategies is that neither of the two account for the importance of the teachers within the system. Furthermore, it appears that, in the case of South Africa, the implementation of the new national school curriculum related to a combination of these two approaches. It has already been stated that Curriculum 2005 was as much a political phenomenon as it was educational in that the Department of Education envisaged a different future for South Africa’s children. The promulgation of the curriculum in October 1997 made it national policy and all state schools were obliged to implement it. In addition, although pilot programs existed, Potenza and Monyokolo (cited in Jansen and Christie, 1999: 231) refer to the implementation of the new curriculum as “a destination without a map”.

They further maintain that “curriculum change should have as an integral part teacher involvement and development. However, both of these aspects appear to have been afterthoughts in the process of developing a new curriculum” (1999:236).

Dalziel and Schoonaver (1988: 52) suggest a plan for the managers of curriculum change when they discuss how to prepare an organization for the implementation of an innovation and then how to translate these innovations into practice. The first barrier to change is whether previous innovations have been successfully implemented. In other words, what is the history of change experience? It is doubtful whether there is empirical evidence for this in South Africa since there had been no systemic change in education in recent history. However, they do suggest that one of the ways to remove this barrier is to explain the change fully. Fullan refers to this as the balance of rewards and costs. Teachers may ask, “Why should I put my efforts into this particular change” (Fullan, 1991: 127). The next barrier which Dalziel and Schoonaver (1988: 53) identify as an obstacle to change effort is whether the managers make clear whether the resources for the change are in place. This requires analysis of what is going to be needed by the implementers, the objectives and goals of the curriculum, the content and who should produce the materials. Whilst these theories are aimed at macro level implementation management, it can be assumed that they are also true at ground level.

There are a number of theoretical strategies which could be applied to the implementation of C2005. The *Concerns Based Adoption Model* described by Loucks and Hall (1979: 2) views the educators and their “growth in relation to the innovation” as the focal point in the implementation of a new curriculum. Two dimensions to this model are ‘stages of concern’ and ‘levels of use’. The ‘stages of concern’ are divided into “self, task and impact concerns” (Rutherford, Hall and Huling, 1983:136). This is concerned with what an
educator thinks and feels, as well as what they see as their classroom activity and how it impacts on their life world. Within the dimensions of ‘levels of use’ it is apparent that the implementation of C2005 has not advanced beyond mechanical use where users are focusing their efforts only on what they are doing and not on the long term goals which results in what Rutherford, et al., (1983: 139) describe as “disjointed and superficial” use of the curriculum. Jansen and Christie, (1999: 208) contend that this raises an important issue witnessed during these interactions, particularly with white teachers: a high level of ambiguity about their own practices ... and strong feelings of confusion and uncertainty about whether they really were understanding or doing OBE.

What is essential is that the managers fully understand the “subjective world” Fullan (1991: 161) of the teachers before forcing them to implement change in their classrooms. Fullan (1991: 133) points out that where there are shared goals, effective change takes place through educator learning and collaboration and achieves what he refers to as “teacher certainty”. This leads to educator commitment and thereby lifts the level of use to the interaction and renewal level where pupil learning is achieved.

The school heads or principals, because of their authority, control of resources and contact with the agents of change outside the school, are crucial in the success of any new innovation. The principal needs to be confident and committed to the change and be willing to be the driving force within the school for the implementation of the new curriculum. Fullan (1991: 161) thus suggests that the larger goal of the principal is to “transform the culture of the school.” The managers of implementation need to assist and support the principal in attaining this goal.

From the above one can thus conclude that the implementation of a new national school curriculum, as in the case of South Africa, is a complex issue that requires meticulous planning at government, provincial and local levels
so that the capacity exists to assist and manage the process of change at school level.

Research design
Teachers are the primary implementers of a curriculum as they need to bring the curriculum to life in the classroom. In order to optimize the success of the implementation of a specific curriculum, it is necessary to monitor the experiences of the educator in the classroom and in drawing conclusions from the data gained, make recommendations for the continued improvement of implementation. As mentioned earlier, Fullan’s reference (1991:117) to the significant effect of teachers thoughts on the implementation gave rise to the central research question, namely to determine teachers’ perceptions about the implementation of the Arts and Culture learning area at a particular school ‘Perceptions’ however, is a subjective concept and thus any form of quantitative research would appear to be inappropriate. Based on the above it was decided to approach this investigation qualitatively and so this project was done within the qualitative paradigm.

In qualitative research, questions and problems for research most often come from real world observations, dilemmas and questions. They take the form of wide-ranging enquiries reflecting complex situations (De Vos, 2000: 103). This appears to pertain to the situation of exploring educators’ perceptions when key words in the De Vos text are considered. "Real world observations“ can be translated into “classroom practice”, “dilemmas and questions” explore the crux of the educators experience and “complex situations” describe the complexities of implementing a new learning area. De Vos further states that an exploratory study using qualitative methods usually does not have a precisely delimited problem statement or precise hypothesis. One purpose of qualitative methods is to discover [original emphasis] important questions, processes and relationships, not to test them (1998:104).
This statement applies directly to any study undertaken that attempts to theorize the emotional experience of human beings and by implication for the purposes of this study, what the educator feels. Schurink (cited in De Vos, 2000: 240) accordingly argues that the findings of such an investigation “are literally created through the process of interaction between the researcher and the subjects.

In order to answer the central research question, which seeks to investigate the perception of the educator in the classroom, this investigation can furthermore be regarded as a case study since the parameter of the research is confined to a homogenous group at a particular institution. Bogdan and Bilden (as cited in Wellington, 2000: 90) define a case study as “a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, or one single depository, or one particular event... The unit may be a school (or even a setting within it) in educational research. This investigation was confined to only one school, of a particular type and investigated the implementation of only one learning area.

Within the context of the case study method, this particular investigation can also be regarded as naturalistic, since it has been carried out in a natural setting. I, as the researcher, was the primary data capturing agent and had background knowledge of the particular context. Furthermore, qualitative methods were used and sampling was specific rather than random. The final design emerged as the study progressed and the theory emerged from the data. The criteria mentioned are all pertinent to this project.

Wellington (2000: 98) argues that, as the scope of case study research is limited, one needs to consider two important questions asked of case study research, namely is it externally valid, or generalisable, as well as, is it internally valid? The internal value of this research project for the particular school is assumed because the research has been undertaken against the
backdrop of the schools’ ethos. In this regard Wellington argues that a case study can involve appraisal or simply a feel for [original emphasis] the style and ethos of an organization. This is something that can be gauged as much by intuition as by structured observation or interviewing (2000: 94).

The external validity, however, cannot be guaranteed as a single case study cannot produce generalisations but it can be used in conjunction with other case studies cumulatively to produce generalisations (Yin, cited in Wellington, 2000: 99). Wellington thus believes that “people reading case studies can often relate to them, even if they cannot always generalise from them” (2000: 100). Furthermore, it is hoped that it may stimulate similar research within a broader context.

Research method: narratology
In this investigation it was decided to use the narrative method in order to answer the research question. Scott and Usher (1996: 18) point out that in social research, knowledge is not concerned with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination. The authors furthermore state that all human action is meaningful and hence has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practice.

Koch argues that story-telling has been used for centuries as a powerful vehicle for communication (1998: 1182). Stories involve events and characters. Although descriptive in character, the interpretation of the story has come to be regarded as a ‘legitimate research product’ (Koch, 1998: 1182). This researcher also asserts that research is an interactive process, shaped by personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity of the people in the setting. Koch’s views concur directly with the subjects involved in this research as all the criteria mentioned above have a bearing on their stories. Denzin and Lincoln (1998: 155) hold that
narrative names the standard quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. To preserve this distinction, we use the reasonably well established device of calling the phenomenon story and the inquiry narrative [original emphasis].

Narratives can take a number of forms, inter alia interviews or written responses. For the purposes of finding appropriate data to answer the central research question of this study, namely *What are the teachers’ perceptions of the implementation the (new) Arts and Culture learning area?* It was decided to prompt participants to provide written responses to the following question: *How do/did you experience your teaching of Arts and Culture in the Senior Phase?* It was expected that this broader question, which, although emphasising experiences, would enable me, as the researcher to establish their perceptions as it is assumed that personal experience inform an individual’s perception of a particular event or phenomenon. It was further assumed that the anonymity of a written response would encourage utter truthfulness and spontaneity thus rendering the data completely authentic.

In the context of this research, it is the collaborative quality of the narrative method that is appealing. Connelly (1990: 4) holds that there needs to be a relationship between the person seeking the data, in other words, the researcher, and the participant as the person living and retelling the story. Connelly furthermore asserts that in narrative inquiry it is important that the researcher listens to the story and that the respondent, who has long been silenced in the research relationship, is given the time and space to tell her or his story in order to add the authority and validity that the research story has long had (1990: 4).

Teachers are the primary implementers of a school curriculum therefore their narratives can be regarded as primary data. By capturing their experience of the implementation process, one should thus also be in a position to identify factors that could be impeding quality or authentic implementation. Realistic meanings are inferred when phenomena are experienced
(Riessman, 1993: 95). In short, the co-operative, collaborative relationship gives the participant a platform and a voice and it provides the researcher with primary, rather than secondary data.

Because of the qualitative nature of the research, human nature comes into play and one must bear in mind that the narratives are at risk of being subjectively interpreted. In this regard, Riessman (1993: 11) warns that it "might have taken on a different form if someone else was the listener'. On the other hand, the participant might knowingly or unknowingly omit vital data, either because they did not recall it or because they decided it was not important. With regard to validation, Riessman (1993: 64) reminds us that narrativization assumes a particular point of view. The same events will be narrated in different ways depending on the values and interests of the narrator. The trustworthiness of interpretation therefore takes on significant importance as once again Riessman (1993: 65) reminds us that there is a key semantic difference between ‘trustworthiness and ‘truth’.

**Sampling**

There were thirteen educators teaching Arts and Culture at the site of this investigation, which is an ex-model C well-resourced high school in an affluent area in Port Elizabeth. All teachers are graduated and all have post-graduate diplomas in education. Their teaching experience ranges from two to thirty years. In the group there were two music specialists, one specialist art educator, two mathematics educators and the balance consisted of

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7 The previous government towards the end of its reign, allowed government schools to appoint additional educators and operate extra facilities at their own expense, *defacto* by raising the necessary funds in the form of school fees or other fund raising activities. If parents chose to send their children to these schools, they were held responsible for the agreed school fees and could be sued for non payment. These schools were regarded as being more affluent and were referred to as Model C schools. Model C schools are now colloquially referred to as former Model C schools as this system of classifying schools no longer exists. However the practice of allowing schools to appoint extra educators currently persists.
language educators, two of whom have a background in theatre. The sampling intended to include all the educators associated with this learning area in the senior phase. Only one educator did not return her narrative.

Coding
The coding theory used in this project was one identified by Polkinghorne as *paradigm analysis* (cited in Tanya. Hugh and Jennifer, 1999: 354). Paradigm analysis moves from stories that were collected as data to common elements or themes that can cut across the stories, characters or settings to produce general concepts. This can be done deductively by applying theory to data, or inductively by allowing themes to emerge and concepts to develop from the stories. In this study, the inductive approach was used. The coding was undertaken by me as principal researcher and three additional coders. All the coders analysed the narratives independently and identified emerging themes. Consensus discussions were then held and agreement reached on the emergence of three main themes.

Research findings
From the analysis of the educators’ narratives, three main themes could thus be identified. These themes not only reflected the teachers’ experiences and subsequent perceptions, but their use of language furthermore suggested that strong emotions were being expressed. To justify this statement, some of the teachers’ responses will be included *verbatim*.

- **Theme 1: Educators are frustrated and angry**
  From the narratives it was evident that the teachers faced multiple frustrations. Many educators used very strong language, a clear indication of their levels of anger and annoyance. Firstly, almost all the respondents mentioned that they felt they had been dumped with the subject because they
had time available on their timetables. “I was given an arts/culture class in order to fill up my time table”. “When I got involved in teaching Arts and Culture, it looked as if it would only be to fill free lessons”. “Nearly all the Arts and Culture teachers were language teachers seconded to fill the gaps so none of us were keen” “My grootste problem met die vak was dat dit vir my gevoel het asof ek gedwing was om dit aan te bied sonder enige keuse” (My biggest problem was that I felt I was being forced to give the subject without any choice in the matter’). Furthermore, they believed they had not been trained in the discipline of Arts and Culture and this problem was exacerbated by the fact that they received either no training or irrelevant training. “Most of what I had learnt at the course could never be used with the current pupils largely because of everyone’s attitude to A & C”. “I’m not sure that any of the teachers knew what they were doing”. “It was stressful in that I had no actual training in this field”. Numerous teachers commented on their frustration at not having a syllabus or some sort of coherent overview of the subject. Furthermore, it appeared that they were given merely verbal and no written instructions. “I was told to find info on myths and legends…”

Frustration and anger also related to the management of implementation. “It took about 20 minutes to read through the notes slowly and then I was left with three and a half lessons to fill with…???” “Term three has been a winner (sic). I have had zero instructions or guidance”. “Well, we sit - my class seems content to do SUDUKO on quiet days and learn for tests and catch up on homework when things are a little less hectic”. “Pupils enjoy my classes and behave well because an Arts and Culture class, once some ridiculous task has been completed, amounts to little more than a free period”. “I have been given no guidance/training/inspiration regarding A/C”. “Ek is nie in Kuns en Kultuur opgelei nie dus ploeter ek maar na goedenke in die duister rond”.

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8 Arts and Culture
(I have not been trained in Arts and Culture consequently I fumble around in the dark to the best of my thinking).

Another source of frustration appeared to be the fact that the educators did not appreciate the importance of what they were doing. They felt that their time was being wasted. “An absolute disaster. I marked 120 myths and listened to 120 boring orals. The marks were not used at all. This was incredibly irritating and frustrating and a complete waste of my valuable time. The A/C department is a total f*** up and I hope never to be involved in this subject again.”

Another source of frustration mentioned by many educators was the physical problems associated with the presentation of this learning area. “One negative aspect of the rotation system is the collecting of assignments - once a class moved to another teacher it was very difficult (sometimes impossible!) to get anything back from the pupils, resulting in a lot of frustration and extra work.” From the narratives, it was furthermore evident that at this particular school, Arts and Culture educators were expected to produce articles of work, done in rooms that were not equipped for the purpose. “Another huge downfall was the lack of adequate facilities. A music centre, TV and video machine or DVD player are the minimum requirements but I had none. This year as a roving teacher has been the worst experience of all. For an educator to do her best, all of the above are required as well as a fully equipped art room and plenty of space for the dancing and drama aspects of A/C as well”. “Teaching this section of the syllabus should be very enjoyable for me and it would be if I were able to work in a fully equipped art room with plenty of working space, storage and running water instead of my having to carry boxes of paint, brushes, rollers, cloths, clay etc all over the school and spend 10 minutes at the start of the period unpacking and another 10 minutes before the end of the period packing up...”
From the narratives it also became clear that anger and frustration is directed towards particular individuals who were either responsible for managing the implementation, or were members of the learning area team. In the following quote certain words have been omitted to protect the identity of the person. “My biggest frustrations are caused by______ ______. He is___ _____ and the ____ teacher but is so disorganized and disinterested that the problems that he causes are never little ones. When 2 classes out of 6 are not able to answer his section of questions on an exam paper, then obviously the work was not done with them, yet he swears blind that he covered everything with all of the classes. It should not be necessary for me to check…”

All the above points illustrate in very clear terms that the teachers responsible for the implementation of the Arts and Culture learning at this particular school are experiencing multiple frustrations, which mostly relate to lack of planning, training and communication.

• Theme 2: Educators are not sufficiently empowered with knowledge and skills

The fact that the teachers felt that they were not trained as Arts and Culture teachers and received little training or guidance has already been mentioned. From the narratives it became dear that the teachers felt unequipped because they have not been provided with actual curriculum documents. “I found the subject too informal. I would have preferred a more structured syllabus, with boundaries”. The lack of curriculum documents also has the consequence of educators being unaware of the stated intention and outcomes of the particular learning area, as described in the RNCS. In the narratives, this was then reflected as either disagreement with the content of textbooks, or views by educators on what they think should be included in the curriculum. “There is an awful lot of information on far more valuable areas of culture and art not being used. The majority ... seems to be entirely indigenous in nature”.


“I find the ‘culture’ section of the syllabus very afro centric and not transparent”. “Die probleem is dat die bestaande handboeke se inhoud daartoe neig om meer te focus op die Afrika kultuur” (The problem is that the text books tend to focus on the African culture). “The Renaissance shrieked for attention, not just aspects of developing, music, theatre etc but also the sciences, Copernicus, Descartes etc. From the Renaissance one would move through the areas glancing at and noting the different civilizing factors through the ages. How to argue the case for good taste for example... Persian carpets, Chinese vases, salmon pink?? Quite daunting. But then the booklets arrived. Fine wines with perhaps Table Mountain as a backdrop? Not at all. The booklets seem to promote instead ‘Anthropology Today’”. “The Iron Age in Today’s Society”.

Some educators alluded to the fact that they were unaware of what their colleagues were doing. “...although I’m not sure what each of the other teachers do”. “Imagine my horror when at the end of the 1st cycle I found out (via the grapevine) that there was to be no rotation and that some of the other classes are doing exciting things like beadwork and mosaics”.

The narrations in this section would appear to indicate that educators are not empowered to engage with the content of this learning area. It further seems that their expectations of what they think should be in the curriculum are not being met and they are operating outside the social justice aspect of the curriculum. They do not have the security of knowing exactly what is expected of them.

• Theme 3: Educators are endowed with an inherent positive spirit.
A number of respondents in this investigation mentioned that, although they felt that they had been forced into teaching the Arts and Culture learning area, they were prepared to accept the challenge in a positive spirit. “Ek geniet dit eerlik nie om die vak te onderig nie, maar probeer nohtans my
uiterste beste ter wille van die leerders". (I honestly do not enjoy teaching the subject, but try my utmost best for the sake of the learners). “I really do believe that getting involved in a new curriculum can change the attitude of the presenter”. “The end result was some very, very interesting work as well as some fantastic efforts by the learners. This made me realize that one’s attitude towards a subject can either make the subject alive or kill it for the learners”. “I hated teaching A/C but now I actually quite enjoy it. Maybe I’ve just mellowed”. “It was new and I was willing to learn and broaden my horizon”. “I must admit the lessons where I knew that I was well informed I enjoyed a lot”. “I do feel Arts and Culture is a worthwhile subject as it teaches a variety of skills and gives them greater general knowledge”

This third theme serves to illustrate that despite all the frustrations being experienced, teachers acknowledge the positive aspects of the learning area and are able to formulate and express their positive feelings and experiences. They also show a sense of responsibility to their learners.

Data analysis
At the heart of C2005, and subsequently the RNCS, is a set of values linked to social justice, human rights, equity and development. In essence, the current national school curriculum has a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning (Chisholm, 2004: 218). This also applies to the implementation of the Arts and Culture learning area.

The biographical data of the respondents in this research projects indicated that the educators who were expected to teach the Arts and Culture learning area, were teaching in their original expert subject fields, namely mathematics, art, music and languages. Therefore, one is lead to the conclusion that the respondents were not only exposed to the central philosophy of the RNCS through the teaching of Arts and Culture but also
through other learning areas. One assumes therefore that these teachers were aware of the values of social justice and human rights inherent in the curriculum.

Potenza and Monyokolo, cited in Jansen and Christie (1999: 236) highlight the fact that teachers themselves are,

... the most important resource we have and they will determine whether the new curriculum succeeds or not. Therefore the success of the new curriculum depends on the training and support that teachers receive, and their ability to mobilize and manage the resources around them to implement the curriculum.

The fact that the respondents appeared to be disempowered to the point that they were not able to engage critically with the requirements of the Arts and Culture learning area is an area of concern.

There is furthermore reason to suspect that many of the teachers at this particular school who participated in this investigation have not made the required paradigm shift. Leithwood and Montgomery (1982: 10) however warn that an individual users consuming and implementation of an innovation should be conceived as a slow and gradual process. It largely depends on the users acquisition of new knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Furthermore, in South Africa, according to Chisholm (2004: 217) there are in fact few genuinely anti-racist classrooms or teachers who are truly sensitive to the differences amongst learners at school. The negative sentiments expressed at the Afro-centric elements of the curriculum suggest that the teachers at this particular school are still uncomfortable at having to engage with aspects that are not part of their life world. In this regard, however, Christie (1999; 282) is of the opinion that,

it may be argued that paradigm-switching policy visions are important in displacing the social engineering of apartheid and that they provide an enticing picture of an alternative system. However, as they stand, the Department of Education’s policy documents are idealistic texts in an essentially top-down policy process which is not rooted in the realities of schools or responsive to conditions on the ground.
Within the context of this study the implication of Christie’s assertion is that as the Department of Education applies a top down approach, so the school too applies a top down approach. But the reality on the ground is that the educators are in the slow and gradual process of paradigm-switching whilst the system is demanding a more instant and immediate response.

Furthermore, educators with vast resources such as internet and access to libraries are in a better position to empower themselves with the required knowledge to implement a new learning area, than are educators in the rural areas or under-resourced schools whose facilities may be inadequate. The data suggests though that, at this school, which is considered to be a well-resourced ex-model C school in an affluent area, there is no large scale self-educating activity. One has reason to suspect that this may be linked to the fact that the teachers felt that they were ‘forced’ into teaching the learning area. The consequence of this action appears to result in the educators placing a higher priority on their original field of trained expertise.

Of great concern is that fact that the narratives strongly point towards a problem with the management of the implementation. A significant number of the respondents mentioned lack of proper guidance and coordination at this particular school. In addition, it seems that the educators have not been provided with curriculum documents. This however highlights differing attitudes in the educators. One educator reacted with sarcasm and referred to the tasks set as ‘ridiculous’. Another teacher allowed the learners to either play SUDUKO or to have a free period to do homework. Another teacher admits to trying her best for the sake of the learners even if she feels she is ‘fumbling in the dark’. The data therefore suggests that some educators are prepared to take ownership by using their own initiative in the absence of proper guidance. On the other hand, other teachers were seemingly prepared
to wait, apparently in vain, to be told what to do. In addition they may also be experiencing what Fullan refers to as “routine and overload” (1991: 118).

The above seems to support Christie’s (1999: 284) argument that

South Africa has excellent policies but knows nothing about implementation. A strong version of this position contends that policies are best understood in terms of practices on the ground, rather than idealist statements of intention or blueprints for action.

What is happening ‘on the ground’ at the site of this investigation is cause for concern. The overriding theme that emerges in the narratives is frustration and anger over a number of serious issues that theoretically, one would seem to be able to overcome.

The narratives furthermore raise a number of issues regarding the particular school management team’s approach to the Arts and Culture learning area. If educators complain at having to carry around art materials and waste their time packing and unpacking, then there is reason to suspect that the visual arts room is not being used for its intended purpose. If non-art teachers have to teach arts and crafts in rooms not designed for the purpose, then it suggests that the particular qualified visual arts teacher is not being assigned to cover the visual arts component of the learning area. In addition, if an educator has no access to a television set or DVD player in a school that owns a number of these appliances, then one has to suspect the presence of impeding and obstructing elements. There is thus reason to believe that with regard to implementation and utilising of available physical and human resources, the Arts and Culture learning area is not high on the school management team’s priority list. One reason may be the fact that this learning area ceases to exist at the end of grade nine and is thus not a ‘matric exam subject’. The NDE however, makes no such discrimination and according to the official policy on assessment, the Arts and Culture learning area carries
the same weight as all other learning areas with the exception of literacy and numeracy (NDE, 2002:5).

Conclusions and recommendations
The primary conclusion drawn from this investigation is that what teachers *think* impacts on what teachers *do* in the classroom. This highlights the importance of a teacher’s attitude towards his or her teaching of a particular subject or learning area. It is clear that the attitude that an educator brings to the classroom influences classroom practice. Consequently, if this is negative, the intended curriculum outcomes are mutated.

Of particular concern is that, despite the fact that this particular school can be regarded as very well-resourced in terms of human, capital and physical amenities, the teachers are still experiencing significant problems related to the implementation of the Arts and Culture learning area. Although Christie (1999: 285) asserts that “mandating quality of teaching and learning in classrooms cannot be done even by the best organized policy makers”, the expectation is that schools with better resources would have fewer problems in this area. In this regard, Christie (1999: 282) furthermore points out that a number of analysts, (De Clercq, Greenstein, and Jansen) have highlighted the fact that the sophistication of the policies brings the unintended effect that they are likely to be of most benefit to those communities and schools that have the resources to take advantage of the opportunities they offer. From the results of this study, it would appear however that infrastructural advantage does not automatically equate with good implementation or good implementation management.
In the light of the three themes, the following three recommendations are made: Firstly, the frustrations that the educators are experiencing have to be dealt with. In acknowledging that it is not known to what extent the principal or management team of the school are aware of the frustrations being experienced by the educators, the results of the research will be made known to them. The educators have seemingly had no platform to express themselves before. One educator wrote on the back of her response, “So nice to let off steam - I enjoyed this. Pity we ran out of paper”. This would seem to suggest an authoritarian top down approach at this school. I believe it requires an act of will by the management of the school to acknowledge the systemic change and re-organise the functioning of the school to acknowledge the equal importance of all the learning areas. In doing so it would have to make available the infrastructure on an equitable basis.

Secondly, a person capable of implementing the principles of sound implementation management needs to be appointed to drive the initiative. Educators need to know what to do, why they have to do it, and why it will be beneficial. As Fullan (1991: 347) points out “I cannot implement X” unless we can continue the sentence by saying, “because I am bringing about improvements in Y and Z”. The biographical profile of the educators suggest that they in fact collectively have the very skills needed to teach Arts and Culture but that these skills are not being channeled in the appropriate manner. I suggest that if the educators knew the parameters of what was expected of them and if they were able to operate within their area of expertise or interest, they might be more inclined to take the learning area as seriously as their “traditional” teaching subject. For example, the teachers interested in drama should be encouraged to develop that particular part of the learning area, not in the sense of isolation, but in the spirit of collegial collaboration so that everyone involved sees the bigger picture. Van den Berg (1981: 47) suggests creating a “team of change agents”. A good implementation manager should endeavor to create a team of Arts and
Culture educators who are mutually supportive rather than create problems for each other as the data suggests.

In the third theme identified in the coding of the narratives, there are many comments by educators that allude to the positive aspects of teaching Arts and Culture. Some are pleased to be involved in something new for a change, others enjoyed learning new skills and took pleasure in what the learners were able to produce and many commented on the value they saw in a learning area that not only improved the learners’ general knowledge, but their own as well. My final recommendation is to suggest that whoever is tasked with managing the implementation of Arts and Culture should capitalise on these positive points. One possible way of doing this would be to identify those educators who exhibit some flair at presenting this learning area and teaming the educators in pairs so that (hopefully) the more positive educator would enthuse the more reluctant educator. I suggest that it would be a good idea to inculcate a culture that “success breeds success” within the learning area.

Final comment

There can be few, if any, areas of education that have been left untouched by the drive since 1994 to overcome the legacy of apartheid. And yet there is a powerful perception that not much has changed and that things may even have become worse (Chisholm, 2004: 201).

This article, although limited in scope, has served to highlight certain aspects of what educators are experiencing when implementing a new learning area. I believe it has also demonstrated that the educator’s attitude has an impact on classroom practice. Some strong feelings have been expressed. Chisholm’s perception is borne out by this study. One might assume that if this is what is revealed in a micro investigation, some significant insights may be gleaned from an investigation of a broader nature into what educators are actually experiencing in the classrooms of South Africa.
Bibliography


