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Implementing the National Curriculum Statement in the Further Education and Training Band: Educator's Experiences in South Africa

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ABSTRACT This study examined educators' experiences in implementing the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in the Further Education and Training (FET) band (Grades 10-12 schools). A quantitative research approach was used in a survey of a sample of 369 participants. To this end, a questionnaire was used for collecting data. The Chi-square test was used to analyse data and to test the hypotheses of the study. The findings revealed that educators (teachers) differed significantly with regard to their experiences in implementing the NCS. The findings also indicated that gender, age, teaching experience and qualification had no influence on the educators' experiences in implementing the NCS. The findings further revealed that educators differed in the extent to which they generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful. Furthermore, the findings revealed that except for qualification, educators' biographical variables (gender, age, and teaching experience) had no significant influence on the extent to which educators generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to democracy in 1994, the South African education system was divided along racial lines which resulted in unequal distribution of resources between historically white and black schools. Historically white schools tended to be well resourced compared to black schools. Soon after the installation of a democratically elected government in 1994 the Ministry of Education introduced a White paper on education and training in 1995. The White paper provided a policy framework for the development of a new curriculum in the post-apartheid South Africa and also proposed the development of alternative curriculum based on the principles of access, redress, equity, credibility, quality and efficiency thus transforming the curriculum in order to address the inequalities of the past (Department of Education 1995). Taole (2015) posits that a curriculum reform was important for South Africa in order to adapt to changing world and to improve quality and equity. Mohaeka and Mahao (2015) argue that global patterns of educational change have been one of the major reasons for development of new education policies in many countries worldwide. This initiative resulted in the introduction of the curriculum framework that was to introduce outcomes-based education (OBE) in the education system. This curriculum framework called Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced in 1997 (Department of Education 1997). C2005 was a radical move away from the school curriculum of the apartheid dispensation which was seen to be irrelevant since it was geared to the needs of minorities (Pretorius 1998: viii; Jansen and Christie 1999:145; Blignaut 2008: 101). C2005 became the first major curriculum statement of the post democratic South Africa, deliberately intended to simultaneously overturn the legacy of apartheid education and take South Africa into the 21st century. However, the failed plan to implement C2005 from 1998 to 2005 led to its revision in 2001. Above all, Hofmeyr (2010) emphasises that C2005 was problematic in both its approach and implementation as too much was on acquisition of skills without sufficient content knowledge. Subsequently the simplified, strengthened and streamlined version of C2005 was called the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) Grades R-9 (schools) (Department of Education 2001), and later called the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R-9 (Department of Education 2002).

Besides the introduction of C2005 and the RNCS in the General Education and Training (GET) band (Grades R-9 schools), the curricu-

lum in the Further Education and Training (FET) band (Grades 10-12) had also to change because of its historical problems. The aim of the review and modernisation process was to re-conceptualise and rewrite the interim syllabi for grades 10-12 into new, integrated and interactive teaching and learning programmes that would broaden career opportunities for all South African learners. Unfortunately, it has been stated that there were some ideological resistance in the revision of C2005, and the imbalance was not sufficiently redressed and the different specific subject contents remained under specified (Hofmeyr 2010; van der Berg 2011; Maluleka 2015). The NCS grades 10-12 (General) in schools located in the FET band was developed in 2001 and implemented as follows: Grade 10 (2006), Grade 11 (2007), and Grade 12 (2008) (Department of Education 2003: 3-5). This resulted in the replacement of the Senior Certificate with the new National Senior Certificate (NSC).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to investigate educators' experiences in implementing the National Curriculum Statement in the Further Education and Training (FET) band (Grades 10 -12 schools). The objectives to achieve the aim of the study were enumerated as follows:

i. To ascertain the extent to which educators experience implementing the NCS in the FET band.
ii. To establish whether educators' biographical variables (gender, age, teaching experience, and academic qualification) have any influence on educators' implementation of the NCS.
iii. To ascertain the extent to which educators generally find implementing the NCS to be stressful.
iv. To determine whether educators' biographical variables (gender, age, teaching experience, and academic qualifications) have any influence on the extent to which educators generally find implementation the NCS to be stressful.

Hypotheses

The following theoretical hypotheses were formulated:

i. Educators do not differ in the extent to which they experience implementing the NCS in the FET band.
ii. Educators' biographical variables (gender, age, teaching experience and academic qualifications) have no influence on educators' implementing of the NCS.
iii. Educators do not differ in the extent to which they generally find implementing the NCS to be stressful.
iv. Educators' biographical variables (gender, age, teaching experience, and academic qualifications) have no influence on the extent to which educators generally find implementing the NCS to be stressful.

Research Context

Although very few, if any studies have been conducted on educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band, however, reference can be drawn from experiences of educators in the GET band. Literature shows that the implementation problem of C2005 started almost immediately after 1998 and the Department of Education was unable to stick to its time table. The minister's office was ready to start the process but educators were not properly prepared and trained to cope with the new system. There were no support and monitoring mechanisms in place for those who would be stressed by the process. The philosophy behind OBE and training was not fully understood in the education system and also by some provincial education departments responsible for implementation (Maphalala 2006; Van Rooyen and Prinsloo 2003). Taole (2015) argues that C2005 brought challenges of greater professional autonomy which required teachers to have new knowledge and applied competencies including the use of technology in planning and presenting their lessons.

What became known as OBE training for educators was clearly problematic, given that the time between the completion of curriculum development and its implementation was not sufficient for optimal training of educators. The Department of Education provided 40 hours training (per educator) to prepare educators for the curriculum, while principals were not trained at all (Gauteng Department of Education 2005; Lessing and De Witt 2007). The Department of Education and its various provincial counter-

parts had no choice but to provide crash course training for educators. The main problem with these teacher training workshops was that they were presented during school holidays and teachers felt that they need the school holidays to recover from all their hard work during the term (Lessing and De Witt 2007:65). Training was contracted to a range of consultants and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) hence the quality of training was uneven. The cascading model used during training was problematic since many educators were not sufficiently equipped to replicate the training with their districts and schools (Chisholm 2004: 200). Continuous assessment had provided early warning signals to policy planners that reform would not be a simple implementation matter. It was, in particular, a big challenge for the majority of primary schools in rural and under serviced areas as they failed to implement the new curriculum (Chisholm 2004: 200; Nakabugo and Siebörger 2001).

The findings contained in a probing, independent research report on how the NCS was being implemented by educators in the foundation phase of schooling, stated that ''learners in the early primary from the reception Grade R up to Grade 3 are unable to read, write and count at the required levels because their teachers do not understand the teaching methods required by the National Curriculum Statement' (Kgosana 2007). The findings also revealed that 85 percent of the educators were not trained well enough for the new curriculum and were finding it difficult to use its teaching methods in their classes. The findings further revealed that 73 percent of principals acknowledged that teachers in their schools did not understand the new curriculum and were reverting to old methods of teaching (Kgosana 2007). Principals blamed the poor use of resources by teachers and their inability and unwillingness to use teaching methods prescribed by the National Curriculum Statement (Kgosana 2007:1).

Lastly, there is less information on educators' biographical attributes with regard to the implementation of NCS. Educators' attributes are important aspect to be studied in order to identify their need and desire towards change in teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers' practices are also influenced by manipulating element of instructional policy in educational reform and also by teacher individual differences such as age, gender, teaching experience (Ismail et al. 2010:300). These biographical attributes also provide policy makers with the opportunity to influence the complexion of the Nation's teaching workforce (Aziz 2012: 19; Ismail et al. 2010: 300).

Problem Statement

The implementation of curriculum 2005 was beset with problems which led to the RNCS for grades R-9 schools in the GET band. In view of such problems, the researcher developed an interest in investigating educators' implementation of the NCS in the FET band (Grades 10-12 schools). Very few, if any studies, have attempted to investigate educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. The present study intends to do that. More specifically, this study attempts to find answers to the following research questions:

i. To what extent do educators experience implementing the NCS in the FET band?
ii. Do educators' biographical variables (gender, age, teaching experience and academic qualifications) have any influence on their implementation of the NCS?
iii. To what extent do educators generally find implementing the NCS to be stressful?
iv. Do educators' biographical variables (gender, age, teaching experience, and academic qualifications) have any influence on the extent to which educators generally find implementation the NCS to be stressful?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

There were four educational regions in the KwaZulu-Natal province in the time of investigation. In order to ensure that the results were not biased, a sample was drawn from each region. A list of grade 10-12 schools in each region was obtained. Simple random sampling was used to select five schools from each region. Therefore, the total number of randomly selected schools was 20. The twenty selected schools were used to draw a sample of educators for this study. Participants volunteered to participate in the study (Table 1).

Table 1 shows the distribution of participants in according with their biographical vari-

Table 1: Distribution of subjects according to biographical variables (N=369)

Criteria	*Levels*					
Gender	*Male*				*Female*	
	173				196	
Age	*25 and below*	*26-35*	*36-45*	*46-55*	*56 and above*	
	37	154	131	43	4	
Teaching Experience: In Years	*0-5*	*6-10*	*11-15*	*16-20*	*More than 20 yrs*	
	131	78	66	66	28	
Qualification	*RQV10 (Matric and below)*	*RQV11 (M + 1)*	*RQV12 (M + 2)*	*RQV13 (M + 3)*	*RQV14 (M + 4)*	*RQV15 (M + 5) and above*
	16	23	32	137	12	35

ables, namely gender, age, teaching experience and academic qualification. Out of 400 questionnaires that were distributed, 369 were returned, which is a 90.25 percent return rate.

Measures

A quantitative survey research was used as an appropriate approach for achieving the aims of this study. The questionnaire was used as a research instrument for collecting data. The questionnaire was employed because of its ability to gather information from a large population without making personal contact with the respondents (Bless and Achola 1990). The questionnaire was appropriate for eliciting and rating educators' responses as well as for quantitative analysis of data. It consisted of three sections covering the aims of study. The first section (Section A) consisted of educators' biographical information, namely gender, age, teaching experience, and academic qualifications. The second section (Section B) consisted of 32 items, probing educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. Section C consisted of only one item, probing the extent to which educators generally find implementing the NCS to be stressful.

In section B of the questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate in a four-point scale whether they "Strongly Agree" (4) "Agree" (3), "Disagree" (2) or "Strongly Disagree" (1) with positively worded statements. The scoring was reversed for negatively worded statements. The internal-consistency reliability for the whole scale in this study measured by Cronbach's alpha was .86, which is considered acceptable or excellent in most social sciences research (MacMillan and Schumacher 2010:179). An instrument with alpha measure with co-efficient alpha measure which is over .80 is regarded as highly reliable (Cohen et al. 2011: 640).

Since Section B consisted of 32 items, the lowest possible score was 32 (32x1) and the highest possible score was 128 (32x4). This continuum of 32-128 was arbitrarily divided into four categories, namely: 32-56 indicating a very negative experience (VNE); 57-80 a negative experience (NE); 81-104 a positive experience (PE); and 105-128 showing a very positive experience (VPE). Thus the respondent's summated score was classified accordingly into one of these four categories. This procedure yielded data to fulfil the first aim of this study. Data obtained through this procedure were also used together with those of educators' biographical data in order to meet the second aim of the present study.

With regard to the single item scale (Section C) on educators' general finding of implementing the NCS to be stressful, respondents were asked to indicate in a five-point scale how they find implementing the NCS to be stressful. The ratings consisted of "Not at all Stressful" (1), "Mildly Stressful" (2), "Moderately Stressful" (3), "Very Stressful" (4), or "Extremely Stressful" (5). Thus the respondent's single score was classified accordingly into one of these five categories. The procedure yielded data to fulfil the third aim of this study. Data through this procedure were also used together with those of edu-

cators' biographical data in order to meet the fourth aim of the present study.

Procedures

Questionnaires, with a letter ensuring the participants of the confidentiality of their information and explaining the nature and purpose of the research, were personally delivered to schools that were part of the sample and were collected after completion.

In order to achieve the aims of this study, various statistical procedures were followed. The Chi-square one sample test (Behr 1988) was used to ascertain the extent to which educators experience implementing the NCS in the FET band (aim number one) as well as the extent to which they generally find implementing the NCS to be stressful (aim number three). The chi-square test of independence (Harris 1995) was used to determine whether educators' biographical variables (gender, age, teaching experience and academic qualifications) have any influence on educators' implementation of the NCS (aim number two) as well as on their general finding of the implementing the NCS to be stressful (aim number four). The Chi-square test is appropriate for categorical data (Behr 1988; Borg and Gall 1989; Bless and Kathura 1993; Harris 1995; Babbie and Mouton 2001; Goddard and Melville 2001).

RESULTS

Table 2 shows the extent to which educators experience the implementation of the NCS in the FET band.

Table 2: Group and experience levels

	VNE (36-56)	*NE (57-80)*	*PE (81-104)*	*VPE (105-128)*
Frequencies	2	73	269	25

χ^2 =479.986; df=3; p<0.05

The chi-square test (χ^2 =479.986; df=3; p<0.05) indicated that significant difference was found among the very negative experience (VNE), negative experience (NE), positive experience (PE) and very positive experience (VPE) groups (Table 2). This finding shows that educators differed in terms of their experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. The results of analysis show that the differences among the four groups were not due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 3 shows the influence of gender, age, teaching experience and academic qualification on educators' experiences in implementing the NCS.

Table 3 indicates no significant difference between males and females with regard to experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. This finding shows that gender had no influence on educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. Gender differences pertaining to the four experience levels were due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 3 also indicates no significant difference among the 25 and below, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, and 56 and above age groups with regard to educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. This finding shows that age had no influence on educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. Age differences pertaining to the four experience levels were due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 3 further indicates no significant difference among the 0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, and above 20 years of teaching experience with regard to educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. This finding shows that teaching experience had no influence on educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. Any teaching experiences-related differences pertaining to the four experience levels were due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 3 further more indicates no significant difference among the Matric and below, M+1, M+2, M+3, M+4, and M+ 5 and above academic qualification with regard to educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. This finding shows that academic qualification had no influence on educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band. Any academic qualification-related differences pertaining to the four experience levels were due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4 shows the extent to which educators general find implementing the NCS to be stressful.

The chi-square test (χ^2 =149.198; df = 4; p<0.05) indicated that significant difference was

Table 3: Biographical variables and experience levels

	VNE (32-56)	*NE (57-80)*	*PE (81-104)*	*VPE (105-128)*
Gender				
Female	2	28	127	16
Male	0	45	142	9
χ^2 =7.350; df=3; p>0.05				
Age				
25 and below	0	9	27	1
26-35	1	28	119	6
36-45	1	25	92	13
46-55	0	11	27	5
56 and above	0	0	4	0
χ^2 =10.756; df= 12; p>0.05				
Teaching Experience: In Years				
0-5	1	28	96	6
6-10	0	16	58	4
11-15	0	10	51	5
16-20	1	14	42	9
Above 20	0	5	22	1
χ^2 =10.644; df =12; p>0.05				
Qualification				
Matric and below	0	3	11	2
M+1	0	6	17	0
M+2	0	4	28	0
M+3	1	24	105	7
M+4	1	27	85	13
M+5 and above	0	9	23	25
χ^2 = 12.851; df = 15; p>0.05				

found among the not at all stressful, mildly stressful, moderately stressful, very stressful and extremely stressful groups (Table 4). This finding shows that educators differed in the extent to which they generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful. The results of analysis show that the differences among the five groups were not due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 5 shows the influence of gender, age, teaching experience and academic qualification on the extent to which educators generally find implementing the NCS to be stressful.

Table 5 indicates no significant difference between males and females with regard to the extent to which educators generally find implementing the NCS to be stressful. This finding shows that gender had no influence on the extent to which educators generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful. Gender differences pertaining to the five stress levels were due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4: Group and stress levels

	Not at all stressful	*Mildly stressful*	*Moderately stressful*	*Very stressful*	*Extremely stressful*
Frequencies	36	108	145	63	17

χ^2 =149.198; df = 4; p<0.05

Table 5: Biographical variables and stress levels

	Not at all stressful	*Mildly stressful*	*Moderately stressful*	*Very stressful*	*Extremely stressful*
Gender					
Male	24	46	64	29	10
Female	12	62	81	34	7
χ^2 =7.887; df=4; p>0.05					
Age					
25 and below	3	14	15	3	2
26-35	11	43	71	22	7
36-45	15	38	47	27	4
46-55	7	12	11	9	4
56 and above	0	1	1	2	0
χ^2 =18.696; df=16; p>0.05					
Teaching Experience: In Years					
0-5	11	36	62	16	6
6-10	11	17	31	15	4
11-15	6	28	15	15	2
16-20	6	19	29	10	2
Above 20	2	8	8	7	3
χ^2 = 22.965; df = 16; p>0.05					
Qualification					
Matric and below	3	7	3	1	2
M+1	3	6	11	2	1
+2	0	17	14	1	0
M+3	12	33	65	21	6
M+4	13	36	44	25	8
M+5 and above	5	9	8	13	0

χ^2 =2.995; df= 20; p<0.05)

Table 5 also indicates no significant difference among the 25 and below, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56 and above age groups with regard to the extent to which educators generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful. This finding shows that age had no influence on the extent to which educators generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful. Any age-related differences pertaining to the four stress levels were due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 5 further indicates no significant difference among the 0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, and above 20 years of teaching experience with regard to the extent to which educators generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful. This finding shows that teaching experience had no influence on the extent to which educators generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful. Any teaching experience-related differences pertaining to the five stress levels were due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

The chi-square test (χ^2 =2.995; df= 20; p<0.05) indicated that significant difference was found among the Matric and below, M+1, M+2, M+3, M+4, M+5 and above academic qualification groups of educators with regard to the extent to which educators they generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful (Table 5). This finding shows that academic qualification had an influence on the extent to which educators generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful. Academic qualification-related differences pertaining to the five stress levels were not due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that educators differed in terms of their experiences in implementing the

NCS in the FET band. A significant high percentage (72.90%) of educators reported a positive experience level as compared to those who reported a negative experience level (19.78%), those who reported a very negative experience level (0.54%) and those who reported a very positive experience level (6.78%) (Table 2). These findings are in agreement with those of Maphalala (2006). However, these finding almost relate to those reported in a study conducted among school educators in one educational district in Zimbabwe (Maphosa and Mutopa 2012) where the researchers reported that the majority (65%) of educators confirm that they have knowledge on curriculum necessary for the implementation improvement. One possible reason for many educators to positively experience implementing the NCS in the FET band may be that they were exposed to training on NCS during the Department of Education workshops. The other reason may be that they might have come across it in policy documents.

The findings indicated that gender had no significant influence on the educators' experiences in implementing NCS (Table 3). This means that irrespective of gender, educators' experiences in implementing the NCS in the FET band are the same. These findings are in accordance with those of Maphalala (2006). However, these finding are contrary to those reported in a study conducted among secondary school teachers in Malaysia (Ismail et al. 2010) where the researchers reported that there was a significant difference with regards to educators' aspiration towards change in teaching and learning between males and female educators.

The findings revealed that age had no significant influence on educators' experiences in implementing the NCS (Table 3). This means that irrespective of age, educators' experiences of implementing the NCS are the same. These findings are in accord with those of Hanmza and Sinnasamy (2009) which indicated that it is due to a large number of educators were new or young. These findings contradict those of Maphalala (2006), which found that the majority of young educators had a negative experience about implementing the National Curriculum Statement in the GET band while the older ones had a positive experience.

The findings indicated that educators' teaching experience had no significant influence on educators' experience in implementing the NCS (Table 3). This means that irrespective of years of teaching experience, educators' experiences of implementing the NCS are the same. These findings are contrary to those of Maphalala (2006) and Handal (2010), which reported that the majority of young educators had a positive experience about implementing the National Curriculum Statement in the GET band. The findings of these researchers can be supported by the argument of Fullan (2001), where the researcher posits that educators' current practice is rooted in beliefs and in experience accumulated overtime and this often makes them resistant to change.

The findings showed that academic qualification had no significant influence on educators' experiences on implementing the NCS (Table 3). This means that irrespective of academic qualification, educators' experiences of implementing the NCS are the same. These findings concur with those of Alexander et al. (2010) in showing no significant result regarding educational level of educators in implementing curriculum in their classrooms. Ismail (2010) revealed that teachers with certificates have lower aspiration towards change and in their actual teaching practice compared to teachers of other qualification. However, these findings contradict those of Maphalala (2006), which found that 100 per cent of unqualified educators and 70 percent of highly qualified educators reported a positive experience about implementing the National Curriculum Statement in the GET band.

The findings revealed that educators differed in the extent to which they generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful. A very small percentage (21.68%) reported above average level of stress compared to those who reported below average level (39.02%) and those who reported an average level (39.30%) (Table 4). This indicates that although most educators had a positive experience about implementing the NCS but some of the educators still found it to be generally stressful to implement. These findings are in accord with those of Maphalala (2006). The reasons may be that, firstly there is too much administration and paper work for the educators, secondly this could be due to the fact that there has been inadequate support and training for in-service educators, and thirdly the problem could be lack of enough or no material at some schools.

The findings indicated that, except for academic qualification, other educators' biographi-

cal factors (gender, age, and teaching experience) had no significant influences on the extent to which educators generally found implementing the NCS to be stressful (Table 5). Akpochafo (2012) argues that if conditions of services are not favourable, the young and the old will face stress the same way. These findings are in agreement with those of Maphalala (2006) in reporting that gender, age, and teaching experience have no significant influence on the extent to which educators generally find implementing the NCS to be stressful but not in that academic qualification does. Surprisingly, the majority (62.5%) of educators who reported below average level of stress from implementing the NCS were those with the matric qualification and below.

CONCLUSION

Deducing from the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn; educators have a positive experience in implementing the National Curriculum Statement in the Further Education and Training band; educators' biographical variables (gender, age, teaching experience and academic qualification) have no influence on educators' implementing of the NCS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study, which indicated that although most educators had a positive experience about implementing the NCS but some still found it to be generally stressful to implement leaves room for concern. Therefore, it is recommended that more workshops on the implementation of the NCS be organised for educators. This may assist in alleviating stress that educators generally find in implementing the NCS.

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