

Research Article

Investigation of the Impact of Curriculum Change in the Teaching of Sepedi Home Language Grammar Skills

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of the curriculum change in the teaching of Sepedi Home Language Grammar skills in the public secondary school. The study adopted qualitative approach and used Purposive and convenient sampling method to sample three Grade 12 Sepedi Home Language teachers due to their experiences of implementing curriculum change in the teaching of Sepedi Home Language grammar skills. Semi-structured interview was used to collect data and thematic analysis approach was used to analyse data. The findings of this study indicate that grammar skills are excluded from Sepedi Home Language curriculum despite teachers being expected to integrate grammar skills with other language skills. The study also recommends that teachers should be invited during the planning and development of the curriculum for the new curriculum to avoid situations where teachers are confused about their expectations at schools in the teaching of grammar skills.

Keywords: *Sepedi Home Language Grammar skills, curriculum change, Sepedi Home Language, curriculum transformation, Sepedi Home Language CAPS document, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*

Introduction

Educational reforms and curriculum transformation have been a priority in South Africa since the establishment of the Government of National Unity in 1994. Education is critical in redressing the injustices of apartheid colonialism, which created an inequitable and fragmented education system wherein factors such as school access, governance, curriculum, teacher deployment and financial resources were taken into consideration (Gumede & Biyase, 2016; Mendy & Madiope, 2020; Dhloomo & Mawere, 2020). Post-1994, the Department of Education in South Africa introduced three national initiatives focused on schools. The first initiative was Curriculum 2005 (the first post-apartheid curriculum), which was an outcome based approach to schooling which unified subjects into learning areas. Its desire was of a new South Africa, which its citizenry was able to build social cohesion, advocate for democracy and at the same time devote to an economically booming country (Govender, 2018; Iyer, 2018). OBE's C2005 reflected and captured elements of constructivism, progressivism and traditional essentialism marked a paradigm shift from a subject-dominated

to an integrated curriculum with an active learner and a facilitating teacher. With Curriculum 2005 failing to produce the desired or envisioned results, a review committee of the system was established in 2000 in order to deal with multiple factors that affected the educational system and curriculum 2005 under the new minister of education in Professor Kader Asmal. There has been a series of curriculum change and curriculum development that occurred every five years in South Africa. Curriculum change started with Outcome-Based Education (OBE) brought to inception after Bantu Education (BE), with its focus on integrating learners' skills, content, and the available resources (Hancock, Dyk & Jones, 2021). Secondly, there was Curriculum 2005 (C2005) (Chisholm, 2008:80). Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) came after C2005, then was followed by Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education (DBE: 2009). According to Bantwini (2010:169), curriculum change in South Africa aimed at addressing the education system that was characterized with racism, discrimination and inequalities. The democratic government found it fit to move for the change and development of the new curriculum that should satisfy the needs of all citizens of the country regardless of colour or race. According to van Deventer (2012:154), educational change in South Africa failed because the unique milieu in which it had to take place was not considered. It is often accompanied by competency-based discourses and official shifts in curriculum and assessment policy designed to lessen the significance of examinations and enhance the importance of continuous assessment as a means of stimulating learner-centered pedagogies.

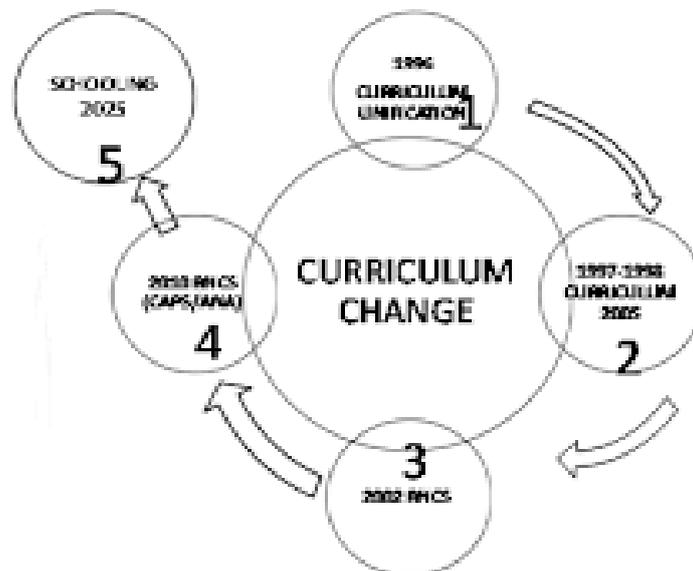


Figure1.1: Curriculum Change in South-Africa: ([Researchgate.net](#))

Though the curriculum changed several times in South Africa, but still no much work is done to improve and promote the teaching and learning of Sepedi Home Language grammar aspect. Sepedi grammar is highly ignored and does not form part of the skills prescribed for the curriculum, even though grammar is the foundation to the learners' knowledge and understanding of all the language skills and other subjects taught in schools. Grammar should be the point of departure for teaching all other skills prescribed for Home Language teaching and learning in schools. The DBE does not take into consideration the grammar skills needed to be taught and at the end it affects the learners' performance negatively. In addition,

Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008:196) assert that not much of this literature takes account of African contexts. Concerning the dynamic nature of South African curriculum, Nyirenda (2012) argues that, there has been a dramatic change in the education system which affected syllabi, textbooks and many more, however these changes have not been due to changing of various socioeconomic policies but due to the wishes of the prevailing political leaders.

Sepedi Home Language CAPS document emphasizes only three skills that are regarded as the focus for the curriculum, namely; Go bala le Go bogela (*Reading and Viewing*), Go ngwala le Go hlagiša (*Writing and Presenting*) and Go bolela le Go theeletša (*Speaking and Listening*) (Setatamete sa Pholisi sa Lenaneothuto le Kelo (Sepholeke, 2011: 14). Grammar skills are not included as a stand-alone in the curriculum but have to be integrated with other skills. Even though teaching strategies and skills are regarded as guidelines for the day to day teaching, but with Sepedi Home Language, teachers seem to lack the skills of integrating grammar skills with other prescribed skills. Sepedi HL like other indigenous languages were not taken into much consideration and the OBE philosophy had mathematics in heart. And it was only aiming to achieve the best on that learning area. The development of Sepedi HL CAPS has triggered the learner's minds not to see Sepedi HL as a formal subject as required, but as a language that is acquired from birth. Most African schools have rejected a mother tongue policy in favour of maintaining English as the language of instruction (Casale & Harding, 2010:2).

According to van Deventer (2012:155), the new curriculum was never researched or properly trialled and there was inadequate preparation. In the NCS curriculum for Sepedi HL, there were four learning and teaching skills; Go bolela le Go theeletša (*Speaking and Listening*), Go ngwala le Go hlagiša (*Writing and Presenting*), Go bala le Go bogela (*Reading and Viewing*) and Thutapolelo (*grammar*). However, there were some challenges found in the NCS, it was then put out of schools. Over several years considerable criticism has been raised against the revised National Curriculum Statement (NCS) that replaced C2005 in 2000 (DBE, 2009). A major challenge was that subject specific training was not addressed, as was the case with C2005. Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was then introduced in the schools aiming at improving the implementation, the National Curriculum Statement was amended, with the amendments coming into effect in January 2012. A single comprehensive Curriculum and Assessment Policy document was developed for each subject to replace Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines in Grades R-12. (CAPS). Even though the changes were effected for all the subjects, with Sepedi HL it went from bad to worse with the exclusion of grammar as a skill where else it is the core of the language. It was said that it should be intergraded within the three skills and Sepedi HL teachers find it hard to adapt.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed critical theory by Karl Marx of 1937. Critical theory is defined as an approach that studies society in a dialectical way by analysing political economy, domination, exploitation, and ideologies. It is a normative approach that is based on the judgment that domination is a problem, that a domination-free society is needed. It wants to inform political struggles that want to establish such a society (Fuchs, 2015:1). This study analyzed the frequent change of curriculum and its impact on the teaching of Sepedi Home Language

grammar skills, and the teaching methods that are prescribed in the policy in relation to the teaching of grammar skills.

Problem of The Study

Sepedi Home Language teachers find it difficult to adapt to the curriculum change because there is a problem in applying the changes made in the Sepedi CAPS document as compared to the previous curricular, hence the grammar element is not included in the curriculum document. Mokua (2010:11) indicates that due to the changing curriculum in South Africa, teachers find it difficult to cope with the demands posed on them with regard to curriculum roles. Sepedi teachers struggle in integrating Sepedi Home Language grammar skills with the other given skills. The curriculum seems to be over-viewing the issue of grammar being taught implicitly. When looking at Sepedi Home Language, one can see that the indigenous languages are looked down at and are not promoted like English and Afrikaans. Sepedi HL focuses on three skills as the prescripts for teaching the language in all grades, namely: Go bala le Go bogela (*Reading and Viewing*), Go ngwala le Go hlagiša (*Writing and Presenting*) and Go bolela le Go theeletša (*Speaking and Listening*) with the exclusion of grammar (Sepholeke, 2011:14).

Significance of The Study

The study will be useful to the subject advisors, Sepedi Language HoDs and teachers in South African secondary schools as it will suggest the strategies that might assist in improving the teaching and learning of Sepedi Home Language Grammar aspects. Teachers will have to take Sepedi Home Language grammar section as a tool for language learning and that in turn will benefit the learners. The Sepedi Home Language HoDs and teachers will also recognize the importance and worth of grammar being taught explicitly. The study will benefit the national education policy makers to realize the flaws on Sepedi Home Language skills and other elements for the effectiveness of Sepedi Home Language teaching and learning. They will also have to improve their rule of engagement and avoid making policies for the teachers without the teachers, while teachers are the implementers of the curriculum. The study will be useful to the researchers, teachers at schools or scholars at high education doing studies on the curriculum change or transformation. The society will benefit from this study because the findings of the study will inform the improvement of curriculum through which their indigenous language aspects will be taught effectively to promote the quality of their indigenous language.

Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of the curriculum change in the teaching of Sepedi Home Language Grammar skills in the public secondary school.

Research question

How does curriculum change have any impact in the teaching of Sepedi Home Language in the public school?

Methodology

Sampling

The research setting of this study is comprised of one South African rural secondary school located in Tubatse Circuit, Limpopo Province. The sample of this study is comprised of three

Grade 12 Sepedi Home Language teachers. Purposive and convenient sampling were used due to the qualities respondents possess in terms of their experiences and implementation of curriculum change in the teaching of Sepedi Home Language grammar.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews

The data collection technique used in this study was semi-structured interview to explore the experiences, thoughts and feelings of respondents in using open-ended questions about the implementation of curriculum change in the teaching of Sepedi Home Language grammar in Grade 12 at a South African rural secondary school.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis approach was used to analyse data after the transcription of the interview. The analysis of data was guided by the following research question:

- How does curriculum change have any impact in the teaching of Sepedi Home Language in the public school?

Discussion of the findings

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of the curriculum change in the teaching of Sepedi Home Language Grammar skills in the public secondary school. The findings of this study were discussed and presented according to the following research questions:

What challenges do you encounter in teaching Sepedi HL grammar skills?

This question seeks to elicit information from respondents on their challenges of teaching Sepedi Home Language grammar skills. Respondents said the following in explaining their challenges of teaching Sepedi Home Language grammar skills:

Excerpt 1

The issue of integration becomes a problem because the only skill that I can only use in integrating grammar more efficient is the reading and viewing. In most cases the learners loose the main focus of the day's topic.

Excerpt 2

It takes a lot of time to teach grammar skills since the omission of the grammar as a skill. It is also time consuming to be trying to intergrade it as required by the CAPS document because it comes with confusing terminologies that are time consuming.

Above excerpts indicate that grammar is not fully taught as the teacher will find it difficult to integrate grammar in listening and speaking. This results into poor teaching services to the learners as the educational or learning platform is hindered by the incompetency of the teachers because of frequent change of the curriculum, which makes the teachers find it difficult to adapt. This means that having grammar as a skill like it was in the previous curriculum made things easy for teachers, especially in time management and proper planning as teaching grammar had its own slot. Therefore, that made teachers not have trouble when teaching grammar skills, unlike now as they are expected to integrate grammar when teaching other language skills. The difficulty teaching of grammar is due to the confusing terminologies that new curriculum entails which still demand more time to integrate grammar in the teaching of other language skills that makes the whole teaching session a bit difficult for learners to understand. Thus, this makes learners not to be interested in the lesson as it becomes complicated and confusing.

How often do you teach Sepedi HL grammar skills?

This question seeks to elicit information from respondents on how often do they teach Sepedi Home Language grammar skills. Respondents said the following in explaining how often they teach Sepedi Home Language grammar skills:

Excerpt 2

I teach it once in a week because I sometimes forget to include grammar skills on my lesson plans.

Excerpt 3

I am supposed to teach it every day on each of my lessons according to CAPS as the recent curriculum, but I do it once or twice in a week.

This indicates that educators are mainly focused on getting the work done within the given period without considering the important teaching aspects due to the low understanding of the requirements as stipulated in the curriculum in integrating grammar skills within the lesson of Sepedi Home Language. This disadvantages or limits the knowledge of the learners to learn Sepedi Home Language due to the omission of the teaching of grammar skills. This implies that teachers are the ones who ignore the importance of integrating grammar skills in their lessons. Accordingly, learners get to suffer the consequences of failing to meet the minimum requirement due to misunderstanding answering the questions during exams. With that, teachers further blame learners for not being competent or even taking their work seriously due to the expectation of the teacher to account to the poor performance of the class as it results to poor school image as lowering the school performance.

Which teaching strategies do you use in teaching Sepedi Home Language grammar skills?

This question seeks to elicit information from respondents on how they teach Sepedi Home Language grammar skills. Respondents said the following in explaining how they teach Sepedi Home Language grammar skills:

Excerpt 1

I use explanatory strategy to teach learners what they need to do when faced with a grammar question. Time always restrict me, so it is difficult for me to integrate grammar with given three skills. Teaching grammar is difficult.

Excerpt 2

I teach it using the same method of the olden days, where I just go and teach grammar for the day. I am unable to intergrade it.

The above excerpts indicate that the teaching of grammar is time-consuming, as it cannot simply be explained in one line for a learner to understand despite teachers using explanatory teaching strategy. This means that more time is needed for clarity of certain things to the learners when having grammar questions, which the explanation at times even requires the teacher to provide several examples to support the explanation. As a result, grammar is difficult to be incorporated with other skills without having it as skill on its own as it involves lot of aspects that need to be broken down for learners to clearly understand. This implies that having grammar as a skill simplifies things for both educators and learners when using explanatory teaching strategy. It could be that it is simple to clarify how things need to be done, or why certain statements are in certain way, without having it integrated with other

skills which complicate the entire teaching session and leave the learners confused for the day, of which the confusion could result to learners feel incompetent then dropout.

Do you think the DoE language policy give enough time for teaching grammar skills?

This question seeks to elicit information from respondents on what DoE language policy say about teaching of Sepedi Home Language grammar skills. Respondents said the following in explaining what DoE language policy say about teaching of Sepedi Home Language grammar skills:

Excerpt 2

I think languages are given enough time on the timetable, but due to the workload, it becomes hard for one to work on certain aspects of the language such as grammar because it needs time.

Excerpt 3

No. Because of the workload that we are supposed to do, time is not enough. And even though, we have enough language periods in schools, what we do is provide lessons based on the other three skills excluding grammar.

This implies that other language skills are credited more than just teaching grammar on its own, hence they expect grammar to be incorporated in the lesson of other language skills. With that, teaching grammar is undervalued. This implies that even if more time is allocated for teaching grammar in classrooms; grammar still makes the teaching environment not enjoyable as the class time can even elapse without completing certain issues as scheduled for teaching session. Therefore, integrating grammar is an impossible mission to accomplish simultaneously with time management.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of the curriculum change in the teaching of Sepedi Home Language Grammar skills in the public secondary school. The findings of this study indicate that grammar skills are excluded from the curriculum despite teachers being expected to integrate grammar skills with other language skills that are prescribed. The difficulty in teaching grammar is due to the confusing terminologies that new curriculum entails which still demand more time to integrate grammar in the teaching of other language skills that makes the whole teaching session difficult for learners to understand. This disadvantages or limits the knowledge of the learners to learn Sepedi Home Language due to the omission of the teaching of grammar skills. The findings also indicate that teachers use explanatory teaching strategy to teach grammar skills and clarify how things need to be done, or why certain statements are in certain way, without having it integrated with other language skills. The study recommends that grammar skills of Sepedi Home Language should be taught explicitly alone instead of integrating them with other language skills such as reading and viewing, writing and presenting, listening and speaking. The study also recommends that teachers should be invited during the planning and development of the curriculum for the new curriculum to avoid situations where teachers are confused about their expectations at schools in the teaching of grammar skills.

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