Appendix I: Teachers’ interviews transcripts
Re: I am doing research investigating the factors that could affect teachers implementing this new syllabus. So I want to know if you taught this syllabus. While you were using the syllabus … did you teach while we were still using the old syllabus?

T1: I never used the … eh …

Re: … the old syllabus? But, according to you, what do you think this new syllabus that you are using … what does it require you to do?

T1: Eh … (long pause). We are referring to science syllabus or …?

Re: Yes, this new science syllabus.

T1: The science syllabus? Alright. Eh … ja1 in my opinion the new science syllabus is … I see it as it is … eh … a higher standard than our kids.

Re: Hm

T1: That is point number one.

Re: Hm. How is it at a higher standard? What it is that you think would make it be of a higher standard?

T1: Because … eh … like the things that we teach these students in this new syllabus are almost the same as the things … we teaching them at the…

Re: COSC2?

T1: Yes, the COSC syllabus.

Re: Yes, but let's talk about the way it wants you to teach … this new syllabus wants you to teach. Would you say there are certain ways in which it expects you to teach? What it is that it actually requires you to do? What is it that they want you to do? Apart from its standard and everything … what would you say it is that they want you to do when you teach this syllabus?

T1: This syllabus … when we teach it … eh … it requires us to do … what? (asks himself) … to have … eh … a student-centred learning of which, in our case, I see it as it is not possible. Why? Because … eh … we … eh … have this problem of time.

Re: Time?

T1: Yes. That if we try to … to … to … approach it in a student-centred learning … eh … it consumes a lot of time and, two, we have this problem of … eh … the … the … the caliber of the students that we have here. As I see them … they are the students who are not able to make conclusions for themselves. If you try to let them discover things for themselves, you end up not achieving the goal that you wanted to achieve.

Re: Okay. Which means it requires you to use a learner-centred / student-centred approach. What else, apart from learner-centred, would you say it needs you to do?

T1: Apart from that? What else is there? (he asks himself).

Re: That’s the only thing that you see?

T1: Yes, that’s the only thing that I have seen so far.

Re: But do you have a copy of the syllabus?

T1: Yes, I do have a copy.

Re: Did you attend any of the workshops?

T1: So far there has never been a workshop.

Re: Okay. Do you think the syllabus document that you have, or whatever documents you have, have anything that helps you to teach this in such a learner-centred manner? If you are saying that it is student-centred … do you have anything that guides you towards using the syllabus?

T1: Yes, the syllabus itself. Apart from the materials that it has listed there, that are needed in the lab, it also … there is a part in the syllabus that has suggestions … where you may find, sometimes, they are advising you to take a field trip. Sometimes they are advising you to bring a guest speaker from … eh … some other sectors that are involved in that particular topic.

Re: So all this information is in that document … that syllabus document?

T1: Yes it is there in that … eh … syllabus document.

Re: So you are saying that the syllabus recommends a learner-centred approach?

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1 "Ja" is the Afrikaans word for “yes”. It is commonly used by English-speakers in South Africa, and its usage has spread to surrounding countries.

2 COSC is how Lesotho teachers refer to the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate, which is an O-level qualification. The examination is written at the end of the Form E year (Year 11 equivalent) and follows a two-year curriculum (FormD and E).
T1: Yes.

Re: What would you say a “learner-centred approach” is? Or “student-centred”, whatever … I think it is the same thing. What do you think it means?

T1: Eh … in my opinion, or my understanding? I understand it means you do … what (he asks himself). The teacher is a … what can I call it? … is an assister. He assists the students … but the students are the ones that are learning … that are discovering things. You, as a teacher, what you do is just to guide them through the expected points.

Re: So your work as a teacher is to assist and guide them, not necessarily to …?

T1: …to tell them? No, you don’t tell them.

Re: Okay, So do you think you are using …you said that because of the time and the caliber of the students, you think you are not being able to apply it?

T1: Yes.

Re: But you would want to use it?

T1: I myself … personally … I don’t like it.

Re: You don’t like it?

T1: Yes.

Re: Why?

T1: Because … eh … like I said, it is time consuming, I prefer to … tell the kids, what is happening. And then, because these things we are surrounded by … eh … many things. It is this … the walls, the other kids. And these kids, as they are there, all of them, their IQ’s are not the same. And the environment that they are from … it is not the same. So those factors … all of them … when you combine them, you find that … eh … it is more difficult to use that approach.

Re: Okay. So you find that using … that looking at their IQ’s, looking at their background, looking at everything … it gets difficult for you to do it?

T1: Yes.

Re: Okay. Another thing … you will find that the cover books of the Lesotho Junior secondary science, it says that you use activity-based lessons. Have you ever seen that the cover books (covers of the books) are saying that?

T1: Which books?

Re: The Lesotho Junior Secondary Science …

T1: Okay. The Macmillan one.

Re: Yes. Have you ever seen that on the cover they talk of “activity-based”? Have you ever heard of the word “activity-based” from that?

T1: I have never seen it.

Re: You don’t even know what “activity-based” is?

T1: As I understand it … eh … it’s … eh … like … What I know about those books is that inside they have the activities that you can let the students work through. The activities that have been designed to … assist you as a teacher to achieve a certain goal … of the syllabus. But very unfortunately … you will find that sometimes there are not enough materials that you can use to work through eh those activities.

Re: So “activity-based”, according to you, is when you just go through those activities?

T1: Yes.

Re: It doesn’t have anything that says maybe “these activities are used for this … or these activities have this purpose”? I am doing these activities for this purpose?

T1: Yes. You …. You … activity-based, according to how I understand it, you … how can I put it? Eh … we do what? We are trying to … to … to … we are teaching these kids some topics, but we are trying to make this topic relevant to their everyday life …

Re: So those are activities?

T1: Yes … through the activities.

Re: Which means the activities are used to verify what they have learned so that they see what they have learned … or we use those activities to make them understand? Which one would you say are more activity-based? Are you using them to verify what they have already learned? You teach them first then do activities, or you teach from activities? How do you do it?

T1: It depends on the kind of topic that we are dealing with at the particular time. Some topics are just too abstract. For example, you talk about a topic … the structure of an atom. It’s an abstract … eh … topic of which you could not be able to go into the laboratory with kids to see the atoms and all that stuff. What you do in that particular case, I teach the kids first and then after that I will be bringing the activities. For example, there will be an activity … we have learned the structure of the atom, so now we try to do … what? We have an activity
... trying to draw the structure of an atom and place in the electrons in that structure, accordingly. That is an abstract topic. But in other cases you find a topic which is more manipulative, that is not abstract ... as atom structure.

Re: ... atomic structure?

T1: Yes. For example ... hm. ... I am teaching these kids how to measure the volume of ... sorry the density of an irregularly shaped object. It is a ... a topic that you can teach through experimental ...

Re: ... through activities?

T1: Yes. So it depends on the kind of topic.

Re: Which means you can either use activities to verify what they have learned or to teach, depending on the type of topic?

T1: Yes.

Re: But would you say “learner-centered” and “activity-based” are the same?

T1: I would say ... somehow they are the same. Eh ... what I say is the following. We have this ... eh ... activity-based ... you can still do ... what? (asks himself) ... do activity-based ... but verifying what you have taught ... but also you can use the activities for the student to discover what you want them to ... to ... to discover.

Re: So, if you are saying you can use activities to verify what you have done, and you can use them for students to discover? You are saying these are two things?

T1: No, I am not saying they are two things. I am saying that ... eh ... activity-based ... you can use it in a student-centered learning. You can also use it in a ... I don’t remember this other approach ... but that one where you teach the kids and then after that you are expecting them to reproduce the information. (Re: okay, okay) Those two methods of teaching ... both of them you can use activity-based.

Re: But they are not necessarily the same?

T1: Yes. They are not the same.

Re: Okay. What ... when you were ... okay ... the syllabus also requires you to teach ... requires learners to develop skills and attitudes. Are you aware of that? Are you aware that you have to teach skills and attitudes?

T1: Yes.

Re: You are aware of that? Are you teaching that?

T1: That is where the student-centered learning is more important than other teaching. Because skills ... eh ... eh ... in there ... this is where the kids are able to ... to ... they have a role and the information. They are able to manipulate it ... and ... eh ... by so doing, in the process, they acquire that skill.

Re: What kind of skills do you think they acquire from that? Can you name the skill they acquired?

T1: They acquired the skill of being able to work together. Two, they acquired the skill of being able to manipulate the instruments used and ... eh ... what else? (he asks himself). I don’t know.

Re: Are you aware that in the syllabus there are some skills that they are saying “this skill has to be taught”. Are you aware there are certain skills that are listed, even though they may not be all of them, but that there are some skills in the syllabus?

T1: Yes.

Re: And are you aware, again, that they expect you to teach attitudes?

T1: This attitude thing is the one that I don’t understand.

Re: You don’t even understand it? Which means you cannot even say you are teaching it because you don’t really understand it?

T1: Yes, I don’t really understand it.

Re: How do you feel about that, the fact that you are teaching and they are expecting you to teach attitudes, but you are not even sure yourself? How would you comment around that?

T1: (Pause) My comment about that?

Re: To the curriculum developers, or anybody. How do you feel about the fact that I am supposed to teach attitudes and I am not sure if I know what this “attitudes” is?

T1: Whew. What a difficult answer. But it is a ... you ... you understand that somehow ... eh ... eh ... as I talk to you it makes me feel like ... insufficient. But when going to the kids they don’t know anything so you ... you ... it’s the same.

Re: Are you saying you are insufficient, or that the syllabus itself is not giving enough help to you? Is it because you are really insufficient or is it because maybe the syllabus is not giving you enough to allow you to do that? And that the curriculum developers are not giving you ... enough, maybe? Because if you are saying you are insufficient ... where your content knowledge is okay ... I will give you that ... but this is the requirement of the syllabus?

T1: Yes. The attitude one.
Re: Yes.

T1: Yes. I think the curriculum developers, also. They are not providing us, as teachers, with enough information regarding that. They are not providing us with enough information and in the process that thing you seen eh... for the kids we don’t have problem, but when we come to you people who have some information about this... that is where the problem lies.

Re: But, other than that, you feel comfortable teaching?

T1: I don’t even know that there is that one of attitude.

Re: Okay. When you … did you teach this topic on breathing and respiration? Have you ever taught it?

T1: Yes, I did.

Re: You did teach it? And can you just think of the activities that you did when you were teaching it?

T1: Activities? Yes. … You see there was this one activity where we were trying to demonstrate how … when somebody is breathing in and when he is breathing out … how the … these things … the ribs … intercostals muscles … and …what? (asks himself). Yes. How do they react? What muscles contract and which ones do not contract. So this activity of … we were [one word inaudible] to the kids …. They breath in and observe what happens to them. Obviously the ribs will be moving in?… out? Yes … and then from there you can develop … eh … that … eh ...

Re: Concept?

T1: Yes … concept.

Re: When you are doing this, who decides on the activity? Are you deciding on the activity or the children? Who is deciding on the activities? Who decides which activities should be done?

T1: I decide which activities are to be done.

Re: Where do you get ideas for the activities you have to develop and all that?

T1: Eh … except the books … because some of the activities are there in the books … except for that, we as teachers here sometimes we do … you can ask your colleague “how did you teach this?” Then he will tell you and then from there you can … if you like what they did … you can take it and use it.

Re: You actually go out and find things that can …?

T1: Yes.

Re: What is the purpose of these activities? When you do these activities what can you say is the purpose of the activities that you are doing?

T1: Eh … the purpose of the activities, as I have said earlier, is that … hm … we are trying to … to do what? (asks himself) … to ... to ...to bring these things that the kids are learning so that they can see that they are applicable. It’s the things that are happening.

Re: And how do you … do you … accommodate children from different backgrounds?

T1: (Pause), Different backgrounds?

Re: If you do?

T1: I don’t get the question properly, but if … eh … you are talking about the socio-economic background … are you talking about that?

Re: Not necessarily. Like you said they had different IQ’s … like what you said earlier, they have different IQ’s.

T1: Some learners are different … they have different …

Re: Some are from rural, some are from urban?

T1: Some are from rural, some are from urban?

Re: What makes a child what he is. How do you cater for that as you are teaching?

T1: Eh … in the class I teach … but there are some times when I … have a chat with a student face-to-face … For example, when you give the students activities, as they are doing the activities you will be going around and helping them individually. Also, when marking, if you see this one is backward here you will call that particular student and then you sit and you discuss that issue with him.

Re: Do you think that you are coping with this new syllabus? Are you comfortable teaching it?

T1: Eh … content-wise I am comfortable with this. But there is this thing that I have stated earlier that … it is just too big … It is too big and it is … eh … I had Form C when I got here in 2004 … last year …. no, when I got here in 2005. (In) 2006 I also had Form C. But to tell you the truth I have never finished that syllabus with any year group.

Re: Because you feel there is a lot?

T1: Yes. It is too big.

Re: Okay. What support would you say you need, so that you can understand this better? What kind of support would you expect to be given so that maybe you can cope better?

T1: The support …?
Re: If you had a say to the curriculum developers what kind of support … what kind of help … would you say you need?

T1: Wow. Eh … one of the things that I have realized is that they make this syllabus to be even more … big … is the fact that when these kids arrive here … as Form As … they do … what? (asks himself). They arrive here with less information. So you spent a lot of time trying to set up the ground to take off.

Re: To understand the students …?

T1: Yes. So what I could say is that … eh … if the … I don’t know the syllabus of … of … of primarys, but if somehow these things could be made to be linked so that when we take off here we … we … these kids have already acquired some of these things from primary.

Re: From the primary? So you think this will help?

T1: Yes, I think it would help.

Re: It would help … knowing what they are doing there …

T1: Yes.

Re: … but … maybe … you haven’t talked to the other teachers? I mean teachers who are teaching Form A? For example, you said you have been teaching only Form C. What do teachers who are teaching Form A feel like? Because they are the ones that are directly linked with the primary.

T1: No … the thing is … eh … you have misunderstood me. I have these Form Cs that I have been teaching at 2006. I taught them when they were doing Form B. Yes.

Re: Okay. Now you have gone with them to Form C?

T1: Yes. So I still do have Form As.

Re: So you feel there is not much link between what they do in primary and Form A?

T1: Yes.

Re: Okay, *nate*³. Thank you for your time.

T1: You are welcome.

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**Interview with Teacher 2**

Re: Thank you very much, ‘*me* (Mrs)⁴, for agreeing to see me and to spend your time talking to me, as part of my research. I am investigating factors which could affect teachers implementing this new curriculum that we are now using in Lesotho, for my study. Eh … I am sure the information you will give me is going to help me understand the syllabus much much better.

Re: Whether you taught when the new syllabus … oh, the old syllabus … was still in place? Did you teach in that old syllabus?

T2: Yes, I did.

Re: You did?

T2: Uhuh (affirmative).

Re: Would you say … what changes would you say were made in the new syllabus, that were not there in the old one?

T2: Eh … at the moment, what we are seeing is that it’s more a spiral.

Re: More spiral? Meaning?

T2: Eh the … the topics … they are linked in such a way that they correlate.

Re: Okay … the topics in the syllabus?

T2: Uhuh.

Re: Eh … do you have a copy of the syllabus … of this new syllabus?

T2: Of the new syllabus? I think do.

Re: Do you have any other document, apart from this new syllabus, that you are using … any other document that is maybe helping you understand the syllabus better? Yes … do you have that?

T2: We were given or we were issued the teacher’s guide. It tries to … simplify the new syllabus.

Re: Which means on top of the syllabus document you also have the teacher’s guide?

T2: The teacher’s guide.

Re: Okay did you attend any of the workshops relating to the new syllabus?

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³ This is a title of respect for older males.

⁴ This is a title of respect for older females.
T2: Not yet.
Re: One of the things that I see from the syllabus is that it says that a learner-centred approach should be used. What do you think is meant by that “learner-centred”?
T2: The children should discover concepts on their own.
Re: Learners should discover concepts on their own? Only that?
T2: With the help of the teacher.
Re: Anything that you can say on that … apart from discovering things for themselves? … Anything that you can say, maybe, that I need to do, in order to make it learner-centred? I am just trying to understand that.
T2: How I understand learner-centred? … How should it go? … What can I …?
Re: So you think you are using that approach, as it is suggested?
T2: We are not using it.
Re: You are not using it?
T2: We are not using it.
Re: What are your reasons for not using it?
T2: Eh … the ratio … teacher:pupil ratio. We have quite a number of them. Within a short time. Materials … we don’t have enough of the materials, so mostly we use the demonstration.
Re: You use demonstrations? Okay, if you look at this cover books (pages) of this Lesotho Junior Secondary Science, they also say that you should use “activity-based”. Have you ever heard of that word … “activity-based”?
T2: Kea (I) prepare our worksheet and kea kholoa (I mean) a well-tabulated worksheet … then some materials to help them understand better, because if they do, (then) they understand better … and also I monitor the groups.
Re: So you think you are using that approach, as it is suggested?
T2: We are not using it.
Re: Are you not using it?
T2: We are not using it.
Re: What can you do in class … if you are saying you are in a class, what do you do to make that class learner-centred?
T2: Kea kholoa (I think) prepare our worksheet and kea kholoa (I mean) a well-tabulated worksheet … then some materials to help them understand better, because if they do, (then) they understand better … and also I monitor the groups.
Re: So you think you are using that approach, as it is suggested?
T2: We are not using it.
Re: You are not using it?
T2: We are not using it.
Re: What are your reasons for not using it?
T2: Eh … the ratio … teacher:pupil ratio. We have quite a number of them. Within a short time. Materials … we don’t have enough of the materials, so mostly we use the demonstration.
Re: You use demonstrations? Okay, if you look at this cover books (pages) of this Lesotho Junior Secondary Science, they also say that you should use “activity-based”. Have you ever heard of that word … “activity-based”?
T2: Activity … ?
Re: Activity-based?
T2: I don’t remember that phrase.
Re: But activities? You are aware of activities?
Re: How do you use activities?
T2: Hm …. (long pause). I don’t know what to say. But anyway … we are trying to use some … not a lot of them kea kholoa (I think) on those chapters which need to be … which are … a little bit difficult … in order to understand the concepts.
Re: So, you use activities to make learners understand? When do you use activities? Do you use activities at the start or at the end? How do you use those activities?
T2: Eh … mostly I use it when I introduce … well, after I have introduced the lesson. We introduce the lessons and then get into the activities.
Re: Uhum. Then from the activity … ?
T2: From the activity … then we go into explanations and come up with conclusions and the observations, and what can they deduce from what they have done.
Re: Okay. Let’s think of when you were teaching. Did you ever teach breathing and respiration … did you ever teach breathing and respiration?
T2: Umm …
Re: You are not … you are not a biology teacher?
T2: I didn’t touch that.
Re: So I am not going to ask you that part. How do you do here? Even when you are teaching JC\(^5\) … someone teaches the chemistry part, the other one teaches (the) physics part, and the other one (the) biology part? Is that how you do it?
T2: No. … We are all teaching them the physics, biology, and chemistry in JC. One teacher teaches those three.
Re: So how do you pass that topic on breathing and respiration … because it is there?
T2: Kea kholoa (I think) eh … the groups that I am teaching … I have not gone into that.

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\(^5\) JC is how the teachers in Lesotho refer to the Junior Certificate curriculum. This is the three-year curriculum followed in Forms A to C, with a final external examination leading to the award of the Junior Certificate.
Re: But with your everyday teaching normally, where do you get the activities that you use in your everyday
teaching … when you are teaching? You said there are activities that you use. Where do you get those
activities? Are they from your mind? From textbooks? Where do you get the activities? Leading question
T2: Some of them, I think of them … yes. Some are stipulated in the books … so we just follow them.
Re: Is there a chance that learners can come up with activities?
T2: Yes, they do. They do come up with activities, at times.
Re: How often does that happen … that they come up with activities?
T2: Ua bona (you see) a lot depends on the chapter you will be teaching.
Re: Okay. If you are saying you use activities … would you say that using of activities … and … I don’t want to
use “activity-based” because you said this phrase is making you a bit uncomfortable. If you are talking about
these activities, and “learner-centred” … would you say “learner-centred” and “doing activities” is the same
thing?
T2: No.
Re: They are not?
T2: They are not the same.
Re: How are they different?
T2: They are different, in that … at times they don’t have to get into the activities to get to the core of the topic. The
well prepared worksheet can guide them to get what you are trying to find out from them. That is learner-
centred.
Re: Okay. If you are saying you use activities … would you say that using of activities … and … I don’t want to
use “activity-based” because you said this phrase is making you a bit uncomfortable. If you are talking about
these activities, and “learner-centred” … would you say “learner-centred” and “doing activities” is the same
thing?
T2: Yes, how to do it.
Re: You lack that … if they can be able to give you more on how to do that thing, it would be better? Okay. Again
the syllabus talks of learners developing … teachers and learners developing skills and attitudes.
T2: Ja.
Re: Are you aware of that?
T2: Yes I am.
Re: Are you teaching them?
T2: Eh … teaching skills? No we are not (laughing).
Re: You are not? So you cannot even give me one skill that you have taught? What are your reasons for not
teaching them?
T2: The skills? ….. (long pause). There is this one of trying to find out things on their own. That is not a CHECK
skill isn’t it? To get to … to try to get … to acquire … to get the concept on their own? That is a skill isn’t it?
We don’t really (teach skills).
Re: Yes, because in the syllabus … if we look at the syllabus … there are a number of skills they are actually
saying learners should have these skills. Are you aware of that?
T2: Eh (yes).
Re: But you are not really following the syllabus? But do you find it easy to follow the syllabus, when you teach …
because I have heard some people say that teachers tend to use the textbooks more than the syllabus? They just
look at what the books have, and they teach.
T2: And follow the topics as they are?
Re: So do you think you have … have you always been using the syllabus when you were teaching … even in the
old syllabus?
T2: We have been consulting the syllabus and the textbooks … teaching the syllabus, not the book.
Re: So you cannot say it is still that thinking up ea hore (that) you used to use only the textbooks … so you have
always been using the syllabus? But you are just … maybe not … there is still this thing that you maybe don’t
teach the skills. … and believe me you are not the only one. A lot of people say that they are not teaching the
skills … they are not even aware that they have to teach the skills. A lot of people will have issues around that.
What could you say about that? Is it because the people are … maybe not confident? What would you say is … maybe … preventing you from teaching those skills and attitudes? Are you aware that there are not just skills but also attitudes? Or you haven’t even given it a thought?

T2: I don’t think … eh … that it is because we are not aware. We are … we are aware that we have to teach them. One, may be the time factor. Two, kea khola (I think) not being comfortable … not comfortable to teach the skills could be one of them.

Re: Hence why you are saying you need to be given more direction, more information on how…?

T2: Umm … information on how to do it, yes.

Re: I think I will just stop there. Thank you for your time.

T2: Thank you ‘me (Mrs). Okay

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**Interview with Teacher 3**

Re: Thank you very much, ‘me [name withheld], for agreeing to see me … for your valuable time. I know people… teachers are busy people. You know I am Maisia Phakisi. I am doing my studies at Wits, and I am researching the factors that could affect teachers implementing this new syllabus. So I will ask you some questions of which I think your answers will be very helpful for me to understand this. So my first question to you will be whether you taught when the old syllabus was used?

T3: Yes, I did teach when the old syllabus was still in use.

Re: Eh. Looking at that old syllabus, and this new one now, what kind of things could you say are new in the curriculum … in the new syllabus? In this new … the new syllabus?

T3: In the new syllabus? When you look at the new syllabus actually there are some concepts or topics which are … will require me using material that is readily available … that is … you realize that we have … that we can improvise a lot unlike in the past when we were forced strictly to go into the lab in order to come … and to do our work there.

Re: So in one word what would you say this new syllabus requires you to do? What is different from the old one?

T3: The new syllabus requires somebody who is diverse in that the requirements of the new syllabus are such that the teacher has to be able to relate the topics and rearrange them in such a way that that there is going to be a link to allow him to use this improvisation that I talked about.

Re: Uhmm. Okay. So do you have a syllabus document with you?

T3: Eh … it is there … but not here.

Re: But you have it? Do you have other documents, maybe, that are helping you understand what the new syllabus wants?

T3: No.

Re: You don’t?

T3: Sometimes we are given … some report on the examinations that have been written and we try to use them in conjunction with the syllabus. That is what helps us actually see what is needed in the syllabus.

Re: Which means that the syllabus does not give you that much, itself?

T3: Ummm. Sometimes you have to rely on information from some other teachers.

Re: Did you attend any workshop?

T3: So far we have not attended a workshop … for some.

Re: You haven’t been given any the workshop that helps you understand the syllabus?

T3: No.

Re: So this syllabus … when I look at it … says that you have to use a learner-centred approach. Are you aware of that?

T3: Yes. That is very true.

Re: And to your understanding … what do you say “learner-centred” is?

T3: When you talk of this learner-centred approach, there is a problem and you just introduce the student to the problem … and then he is going to try to dig into the problem … find solutions to what the problem is all about …

Re: Themselves?

T3: Yes.

Re: Any other thing that you can say that is … maybe that I need this and I need that in order to do that? If you are saying you are in a classroom how would you say “I am making my classroom to be learner-centred”? How do you put it into practice… this learner-centred thing?
T3: This learner-centred approach … normally when you go to class, you are going to … try to give out probing questions to see if there is anybody who has an idea of the concept at hand … and that you have to talk about. From there you are going to … actually you are brain storming them. Then after brainstorming you are going to give them questions which are going to guide them also into coming to concept itself.

Re: Which means you try to start with what they know?

T3: With what they know and then we built up on what they already know.

Re: Do you think that you are using that learner-centred approach when you are teaching?

T3: Most of the time … when it comes to class … with the kind of students that we have … that is what we have actually adopted, and we see … that it is working with them.

Re: What kind of students do you have … that you think that method helps them?

T3: They are average students. They are average students. So in actual fact … they rely on us for information, but we try to make them get the information themselves. They are using text books but we try to make them aware of what is around them which can be used in trying to understand what we are trying to teach them.

Re: Okay. The other thing that I see is that … in the syllabus there is not “activity-based”, but the textbook covers themselves indicate that lessons should be activity-based. Have you ever seen that?

T3: Yes.

Re: Yes? And what is your understanding of “activity-based”?

T3: Actually, when you look at the textbooks that we are using, each and every concept that we got … most of the concepts that we are talking about … there are some activities, which … if you are going to … say for a lesson I am going to do certain activities … these will help you achieve the … the goal at the end of the day.

Re: The goal? And how do you … in those activities, how … yes, how … do you use them? Are they made in such a way … eh … how are those activities arranged, if I may ask?

T3: You merge them with … giving instructions … or you merge them with introducing a topic … and then once you want to … take out a certain … activity that is going to be taken out. So, during the process of teaching there is going to be that time for clarifying a concept, and that when there is need for an activity to be done there and then, and has been discussed, and then you continue with the concept.

Re: Meaning that, in this activity-based, activities are used to build the concept or at times just verify the concept?

T3: Most of the time they are there to verify the concepts, because you are going to … when you introduce this you are going to explain what it is all about … having in mind what they already know. And maybe the activity is based on what they already know and then is going to build up on what has been put forward to them.

Re: So would you say “activity-based” and “learner-centred” are one and same thing?

T3: Activity-based and learner-centred?

Re: Uhmm. (affirmative)

T3: Actually they to me they are one and same thing, because when you talk of learner-centredness it means the pupil has to be involved. You are not demonstrating, the pupils themselves are involved in the activity … in the learning process.

Re: And … do you think the syllabus is really … maybe the documents that you have are helping you to see the difference between the two, or the similarities? Are they making it clear to you … that the syllabus … when you say “use learner-centred” it means I have to do this and I have to do that?

T3: Hmm (Laughing uncertainly).

Re: … or you are not sure?

T3: Actually, I have not yet compared them up to that extent … but since I have adopted this one … which is learner-centred, it means I … also have the feeling that this is what is going to help me achieve my target.

Re: Okay. You never really asked questions of the syllabus?

T3: I never questioned that much.

Re: Have you ever taught this topic on breathing and respiration?

T3: Breathing and respiration?

Re: Yes.

T3: (Long pause). I am using this at the lower level …

Re: Not JC?

T3: I … actually so far I have only gone up to Form B. I haven’t gone to Form Cs.

Re: So you haven’t really taught this topic, because I would have liked you … okay … because if you are a biology teacher … if you were to teach it, what kind of activities would you do?

T3: Breathing and respiration?

Re: Uhmm (affirmative).
T3: When it comes to breathing ... so that they ... actually understand this ... that will be demonstrated by ... saying when you breath in or out you just see some ... there are some physical changes that you see in an individual. But when you talk of respiration, that is a chemical reaction which is taking place inside the body ... inside the cells.

Re: So you can’t see that? So ...

T3: I actually think it is going to be easy for me to see the ... to make them see the difference between the two. Just like when you are talking about diseases you try to differentiate between the signs and the symptoms.

Re: But if you were ... let’s say you want learners to see the change in pressure and volume about ... what could you do? How would you do that?

T3: Pressure and volume?

Re: Yes

T3: It could be demonstrated using the bottle or bell jar.

Re: Bell jar, which makes that lung model?

T3: Yes, the lung model.

Re: So, you are saying that some of the activities come from the book ... according to you you are saying that some ... the books already have the activities ... but where else can the other activities come from?

T3: Sometimes the activities can be ... within the class ... that is, they can be prepared by the teacher, because ... let’s say there are some activities that are put up in the textbook and you feel that I should also try to extend this to ... this much. There are some exercises that we know which, when they are done, they are going to be interesting to the pupils so that they try to relate them to the concept that is being taught. You only ... there are few exercises that are in the textbook ... just say for interest sake ... then you just add this one to make them a little like it. Because they are not going to be put down all in the textbooks.

Re: Is there a chance that learners can also bring up activities? Do you allow them to bring out activities?

T3: Well ... since we are trying to make them part of this learning circle ... we allow them to say “is this possible?”; “is this going to happen in relation to this particular concept?”

Re: You are saying that your learners here are average students. How do you cater for learners different backgrounds, maybe?

T3: (Pause). I am trying to say they are average in the sense that, when you look at them, some of them are exposed to him ... a wider ... that they are exposed to ... say the internet. Some of them are exposed to the TV and so many things, such that when you teach you are going to start ... this person remembers something from a certain angle. So we try to bring them together. If there are some pupils who never have a chance of seeing certain things. So we try to bring them in slowly into this. As a result we are not going to say we have bright students or that we have ... because we have a mixture. Mm ... so that there is uniformity amongst the pupils.

Re: So according to you, if you are saying that this learner-centred approach thing ... you are comfortable with it ... you see it helping you. That means you feel you are coping with the new syllabus? Do you think you are coping with it?

T3: Actually, we are coping with the new syllabus, because it involves pupils more, and once they are involved more they are ... happen even much better and this is going to be displayed in the ... when they write reports. Basically we ... at the end ... we use the reports so that ...

Re: From the examinations council?

T3: No ... no. From the activities that are done in the class. Once the activity has been done we have devised a way of making them report what has happened in such activities ... so that you see those pupils who were actually involved or those that were just idling.

Re: So, if say, for example, you wanted something the curriculum developers could do, what kind of things ... what kind of help would you say that will make you understand this new syllabus even better. If hono ka ba le ntho (there was a chance for you to voice) “for me to understand this syllabus much, much better I wish this could happen”, what are those things you would ... need ... that would be ... if they were there, they could help you understand or teach more effectively?

T3: I should think that it should be revised regularly. It shouldn’t take more than five years to revise this, because there are certain changes which do occur during the process. There should be an annual review of this ... so that we report “when I was doing this activity this one was a little bit low ... that is the standard ... was a little bit low for some people” ... so they can try to change those. Or even if the book is not going to change, but we give each other some of the things that we do, as a way of piling or increasing the content in the textbooks.

Re: Thank you very much, ’me (Mrs.), for your time. I know you are very busy, so we will stop here.

Interview with Teacher 4

Re: Yes, ’me (Mrs.). Thank for agreeing to see me. I know you are very busy and that you agreed to talk to me. This means a lot. Eh ... like I said, I am doing my Masters at the University of the Witwatersrand and I am looking
at the factors that could affect the implementation of this new syllabus. So I want you to answer some questions
that will help me understand teachers’ side of things.

So my first question to you will be whether you taught while the old syllabus was in place.

T4: Yes I did.

Re: You did? Looking at the old syllabus, and this new one, would you say they are different? Would you say there
are new things that were not there in that old syllabus?

T4: They are different in a way. They are different in that the new syllabus has got more pupil activities than the old
one. That is the difference that I would like you to see.

Re: Yes, but if you were to give … in general … the requirements of the new syllabus, what would you say are the
requirements? What would you say it requires you to do?

T4: This new syllabus requires that the pupil:teacher ratio has to be reduced. The ratio may be 20 … not as is the
case now. We have one teacher to 40 (students) and it is not easy for a teacher to contact each and every pupil
to see their participation (a few words inaudible).

Re: Why do you think is important that the ratio should go down?

T4: So that … to ensure full participation of the learners.

Re: Okay, what are other requirements other than this one?

T4: The other requirements? It needs, especially in the rural areas where I taught, lab equipment. Most schools do
not have enough lab equipment, and teachers have to improvise. And some of the things that we use to
improvise are not our choice … and as such … so it means the school has to have apparatus … apparatus for
use.

Re: Other than that you don’t remember any other …?

T4: Another thing … I think another thing that … which is required … is just to workshop teachers in that …
because in our case … I don’t remember … I think I went once

Re: To a workshop? For a workshop? Do you have a copy of the syllabus?

T4: The new … old one?

Re: Of the new syllabus?

T4: Yes, I do.

Re: And any other document that helps you …?

T4: We have teacher guides. We have the scope (one word inaudible) for that. Otherwise there is nothing else.

Re: Nothing else. So how many workshops would you say you have attended?

T4: I went once.

Re: And there has never been one where you are going to see whether you have done things well? You are just left
…?

T4: We are just left alone.

Re: Okay. In the syllabus … when I look at it … it says that teachers should use a learner-centred approach. Are
you aware of that?

T4: That is why I am saying if you are using the learner-centred approach you … you need (to have) few students in
the classroom, so that you are able to … to … I mean, to assess each and every one who participates … to
ensure full participation. Because we have large classes … I just stand there and lecture. It is not easy to go in
between.

Re: Now, you answering this other question … that, much as you want to use it, you are not finding it easy?

T4: Ja. It is not easy, because of the class sizes that we have.

Re: Because of the size of class that you have

T4: If the class was accommodating. One other thing, I think it’s too long. Another thing, the syllabus itself is too
long and covering that means you have to give them more information … and if you … I mean if you make
them do it on their own pace, so that you center the thing, it takes time, hence you end up lecturing.

Re: If you say, for example, learners were just that necessary number, that is learners were just 20 or 30 maybe,
how would you make it more learner-centred?

T4: It would be easier, in that case. Because it would be easier to … develop worksheets. But as the case is now it is
not easy because the worksheets … they require money and the parents … they do not pay. So if they were, few
maybe we could help.

Re: Another thing is that if you look at the cover of this Lesotho Junior Secondary Science … do you still use that?

T4: Yes.

Re: It says that learning should be activity-based

T4: Mm.
Re: Are you aware of that also?
T4: Yes I am.

Re: According to your understanding, what would you say “activity-based” means?
T4: When it’s activity-based it means learners have to do activities. They have to be guided to do the activities themselves. They should learn by doing activities.

Re: What is the purpose of those of those activities when they are learning?
T4: Hm ... the purpose, I think, is to retain knowledge. Because when you do something the knowledge is retained.

Re: Would you say “activity-based” and “learner-centred” are the same thing?
T4: (Long pause). They are more-or-less the same. “Activity-based” means “I am doing”, right?

Re: Uhm (affirmative).
T4: And if I am doing ... it means I am learning myself ... in the activities, I am learning. I would say they are the same thing.

Re: The other thing that the syllabus says is that there should be teaching of skills and attitudes. Are you aware of that also?
T4: I am aware of that, because what you are saying is right in ... is the mission statement of our syllabus (Re: Mm) ... to ensure ...what? (asks herself) ... good attitude (Re: Mm) and skills and technology thing. Ja.

Re: So are you doing that? Are you teaching that?
T4: In most cases we don’t even look into that. We just teach the syllabus. As much as we are aware of that, but we just teach the syllabus. Because all you are doing is ... they are going to be asked here and there ... we are focussing on the examinations ...

Re: On the content and what the examiners want and not on the attitude or the ...?
T4: Not whether the attitudes are changing or whether skills are developing ... okay?

Re: Did you teach the topic on breathing and respiration?
T4: Yes I did.

Re: Do you remember some of the activities that you were teaching there?
T4: Of breathing? Yes, I remember, especially on breathing, whereby we use the lung model.

Re: A lung model? What did you use it for?
T4: For breathing ... whereby you are trying to show the contraction of the diaphragm and the rise of it.

Re: So you are using it to impart ...?
T4: Just to demonstrate how it happens. When you say the volume increases ... what ...

Re: So, most of the time, where do you get these activities that you are doing?
T4: The activities? Most of the time they are in the learners' books, some of them. Some of them we use references books ... other books.

Re: The other books ... Is there a chance that learners can bring up their own activities?
T4: Yeeesss (drawn out and unsure) ... sometimes they do.

Re: Sometimes you do allow them? So, you are saying that you have learners from different backgrounds? Let’s say, for example, you are talking of learners from rural and learners from urban, who have different cultural backgrounds, how do you compare them?
T4: I think one thing is ... when you are teaching in the rural areas, you will teach eh ... learners of rural backgrounds and when you are here (urban) it is not common to have those different ... Normally they are separated ... the rural are in the rural areas and here we have ...these are rare cases whereby we have somebody from rural areas ... and it is difficult to identify that this one is from the rural. So I think their performance ... is that one.

Re: You don’t believe, then, that these others are advantaged while others are disadvantaged?
T4: I don’t think that, because I, for one, I am from the rural areas.

Re: Okay. So, all in all, would you say you are coping with this new syllabus? Would you say you are comfortable teaching it?
T4: I think I like the new syllabus.

Re: Why do you say that?
T4: I like it because ... it makes the work easier for the teachers. If you plan accordingly, and do your things, and kids do their things and you will see where they have problems. You are not just telling them ... like that ... So

I think I like it.

Re: You like it?

T4: Yes, I like it. You don’t do much of the talking.
Re: It is reducing the work of the teacher? If, say, you were to be able to meet the curriculum developers, what things would you say you need? What kind of support would you say you need from the curriculum developers that would make the teaching of this more effective?

T4: If I were to meet them? If I were to meet them I don’t know if I will say the curriculum developers as such, but what I have in mind may be basing myself with the problem that I have. I would say the external examinations should not be based only on the examiners point of view. It should also be based on the attitude change and the skills that the kid has after he has gone through the learning. But it is not the case. As much as they say we should change the attitudes … develop skills … but when they are being examined I don’t see that. So hence why we have forgotten about developing them.

Re: So in a way you think the examiners are contributors towards … ?

T4: The examiners, together with the curriculum developers. Because I don’t see where the change of attitude is catered for at the end of the day … at the end of it all.

Re: It’s a nice suggestion. So, apart from that, you are still okay with the syllabus?

T4: I am okay.

Re: That is all I wanted from you. Thank you very much for your time.