Appendix J: Curriculum developers’ interviews transcripts
Interview with Curriculum Developer 1

Re: E nate [Mr] [name withheld] as you know I am Maisiah Phakisi from Wits. I am doing my study on factors that could affect teachers implementing learner-centered, activity-based learning in schools. So as a curriculum developer I am sure you can help me, and I thank very much for agreeing to talk to me. Eh ...

Re: Were you involved in the development of the new syllabus?

CD1: Very much so.

Re: How so? What exactly did you do?

CD1: Eh… I was in the … eh … in Lesotho we do science in secondary schools and that science has got three disciplines, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. I was heavily involved in the Physics group that was working on the curriculum.

Re: That was working on the curriculum? So when did you start working with this?

CD1: We started in 1998.

Re: 1998? That means that was when the whole thing started changing?

CD1: Yes, revising the curriculum.

Re: Who decided that the syllabus needed changing?

CD1: Eh … there was a … in 1990 there was a conference on the clarification of … no 1995 … on the … I think it was 1990 … on the clarification of goals of basic education in Lesotho, and after that clarification of goals of basic education there was a proposal to revise the curriculum, and it started in primary.

Re: Who proposed that?

CD1: Like I said, there was a national conference and it had a number of stakeholders in education, so these were the participants to that national conference.

Re: Do you have any document that has people that were participating, or any documents that have to do with that conference?

CD1: There is a document report on that conference. Probably eh … it might have the names of the participants in that workshop. I cannot remember, but I know there is a report.

Re: Can I have a copy of that report?

CD1: My pleasure. When I am in my office. (I could not get it even though I followed up)

Re: So what were their reasons? Why did they feel they needed to change? What were the compelling reasons?

CD1: Eh … One … in fact the big reason … was that eh … there have been certain developments globally that would affect the education that was being provided in our schools, especially this one coming after the 1990 Jomtien conference that was held in Thailand. Probably … I may be wrong when I say we had this in 1990. It was probably in 1992, but we will check the document. So after the Education for All conference in Jomtien, then it was also felt that Lesotho should also look at the education it was providing. That was another motive to that conference.

Re: So you decided then to revise what you had?

CD1: Yes, revise what we had

Re: So what changes would you say were made in the new syllabus that were not necessarily there in the old one?

CD1: Okay> Eh … the old syllabus was meant … tailor-made to fit into the COSC¹ curriculum then. But the revised [syllabus] was meant to take learners to university, as the entry qualification which never worked out … we stopped somewhere in the middle of secondary education … the first three years. We couldn’t go to the last two. That was another main factor.

Re: Which means you were originally intending to change from the Form A to C, and you stopped?

CD1: Yes for now. I think to go … because, in fact up to now, because I think to go into Junior … to get into the last two years of secondary education it needed policy decision. I think because that was a qualification, after those two years. That’s where we normally have university entry qualification. Now the intention is to localize that. But now we need some accreditation. Currently we are working with the University of Cambridge. Now we have to look for a local accreditation body and we never got one. That is what is keeping us.

Re: So my interest is actually on the part where you made changes … that is Form A-C.

CD1: In fact the changes … to be precise, the changes here started in primary … for the first ten years of schooling.

¹ 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 (Form D and E).
Re: What are these changes? What are teachers expected to do that they were not doing in the old … or in the past years?

CD1: Okay, the expectation was that there should … there was more emphasis on learners taking (an) active role in their learning, and also … that the instructional material should be relevant, because previously the materials that were developed were very much foreign. That was another thing.

Re: So you are actually saying … as the syllabus says, you were actually intending the syllabus to be more learner-centered. It recommends a learner-centered approach. But eh … the syllabus document is not giving a definition or explanation of “learner-centered”. So how would you expect teachers to get the meaning of learner-centered … or where do they get the meaning of learner-centered?

CD1: Eh … in fact, there were a number of in-service training in the learner-centredness … eh … of which … as it was a new thing, there were … okay … people got it and our understanding of learner-centered has differed. In fact, even the way we practice it is very much different. Probably one of the factors is the resources we have.

Re: If you are saying the idea of learner-centeredness is different, are you saying it is different from curriculum developer to teachers, or from curriculum developer to another?

CD1: In fact, our understanding … curriculum developers, inspectors, examiners, teachers … we don’t really … our understanding and perspectives are quite different when it comes to learner-centred

Re: So do you think … if you as curriculum developers are not sure or see it differently, is it possible for teachers to understand what is expected, if the curriculum developers and inspectors are all saying different things about learner-centered?

CD1: It is actually a mess …if you look at it that way… if the curriculum developers’ understanding is different from inspectors, teachers and examiners. So this is what we normally call strange loops. So the confusion is there

Re: The confusion is there? How are you intending to mend or to bring it up … because my feeling is if there is confusion up there amongst the top people … the curriculum developers do not understand it … teachers are interpreting it the way they understand it … then and at the end of the day we are saying “we are implementing the intended syllabus” but each teacher implements what she understands to be learner-centered, which could be different from what is intended.

CD1: In fact this is always the problem, I think, from the design and the implementation. There are always gaps, and in fact the best we can do is to try close those gaps. Those will need a lot of in-service training.

Re: Are you preparing for these in-service training now?

CD1: No. We have … there is no plan for such things. In fact there is currently an idea of revising the curriculum. In fact, as part of the plan this should have long been changed. So currently in-service activities have been suspended pending the approval of the new policy.

Re: Okay. Meanwhile, could you say there are documents that teachers have that can help them get along in the …

CD1: In learner-centered?

Re: Yes.

CD1: Yes, there are such documents, and some have been given to them. Eh … but I cannot say for sure which documents they are, but I know we a quite a number from different sources.

Re: Different sources?

CD1: There is no uniform material given to all teachers on learner-centered.

Re: May I have a copy of materials that you have … that has learner-centered to it? (I could not get them even though I followed up)

CD1: I might have to check.

Re: So, you said you had in-service training workshops for the existing teachers implementing the syllabus. What about the incoming teachers? Are they given new continuous training or how are they helped?

CD1: The expectation is that teacher educators are doing that, because they had been, and are, part of curriculum development. They know the process, so the understanding and expectation is that learner-centered is being delivered from that side.

Re: Again, when I look at the recommended textbooks, these Lesotho Junior Secondary Science textbooks, of which you were a co-author, it says that “the course is activity-based and useful for promoting learner-centered”. Again I see “activity-based” not being mentioned in the syllabus. Why was that the case maybe?

CD1: Yes. As we develop these things … and sometimes you have the feeling that … okay, the certain issue must be addressed … maybe in a pupil textbook or maybe in the syllabus … maybe during the in-service through workshops. Some of these things get left out in the process of development.

Re: But would you say there is a difference between learner-centered and activity-based?
CD1: Ja², there is a big difference … because you can have activities that do not involve learners … that are 
teacher-centered, but they are activities. Learners can do them, but they may not learn anything from those 
activities. But you can have learner-centered activities.

Re: What can you say is meant by “activity-based” … when you say “this activity is activity-based”?

CD1: That’s where learners do activities … whether from the teacher or on their own.

Re: Okay! There are times when I can go … let’s say, for an example, when teaching photosynthesis. I want to 
show that light is needed for photosynthesis. Yes. How would you see activity-based in that case? How would 
you expect teachers to teach that, for it to be activity-based?

CD1: Activity-based or teacher centered activity?

Re: Let’s just talk about activity-based.

CD1: They can do activities… They can collect plants … you want me to … ?

Re: No, no. I don’t want you to explain what the experiment entails, but how they would develop the activity to 
make it activity-based. Or you can use a physics concept which you feel confident with.

CD1: Okay … normally what they would do would be the teacher to set up the apparatus and ask the learner to do 
the activity. Another way … here to take it probably more teachers’ ideas being imposed on learners. In 
another setting, where I consider it (to be a) more learner-centered approach, would be the learners to come 
up with apparatus which could demonstrate that themselves. This is how, maybe, I would consider it to be 
activity-based but learner centered. The other one is activity-based but teacher-centered. Because they can do 
the activities but may not learn anything, but if the idea is probably from them, then there could be something 
that is learned in the process. Or they are doing certain things, but if a teacher tells them to do a certain 
activity they may not even have good understanding of why they are doing whatever they have been 
instructed to do.

Re: There are cases where learners do activities … maybe to verify what they learned in class … do you agree 
with that?

CD1: Or what they learned?

Re: Would you call that “activity-based”?

CD1: Where they confirm? Ja, that is an activity … it is an activity. It could … like I have already said, they can … 
the idea of verification can come from learners or it can come from the teacher, so it will be an activity.

RE: Okay. Another thing is that the syllabus says that learners should acquire skills and attitudes. Eh … how 
would you expect teachers to teach those?

CD1: Teaching about skills and attitudes? Eh … skills is not bad. It is easy to see when somebody has acquired the 
skills. But values and attitudes, it is very difficult. One of them … you would not even see them until they 
leave schools. You will only see values and attitudes when they are adults … that they managed to acquire 
them. So it is actually … in fact, as it is, even the way we … even examinations … when they try to find out 
how much … they always mess up. So those are the things we normally see when people have gone beyond 
high school level. But there are some instances where you can readily see.

Re: As a curriculum developer, as someone who is taking charge of things, would you consider, maybe, finding 
some means of guiding teachers through teaching about skills? Do you really think teachers are teaching 
those skills and attitudes?

CD1: In fact the biggest problem … you need to motivate teachers, once you talk about such things. So in fact in 
any system, if you have those good things on paper and you don’t have teachers that are motivated, those 
changes will just remain on paper. They will never get to the classroom. But if our examination will have 
such things our teachers will always look at what is in the examinations.

RE: Meaning they teach for the examination?

CD1: Yes. They know that if you are emphasizing values and attitudes, and they are not asked in the examination, 
they don’t bother. So actually … when you talk about values and attitudes … actually it goes to the 
motivation of teachers. It’s quite a complex thing.

Re: So you think, maybe, I can go to teacher-educators I might get their side of what is meant by “learner-
centered”?

CD1: Yes, they can tell you better than me how they are preparing teachers.

RE: Meaning you haven’t had time to evaluate what they are giving, so you can bring it closer to what you want 
as curriculum developers?

CD1: No, we haven’t done anything. But our assumption is that since in the curriculum development panel we have 
teacher educators they know what is expected.

² “Ja” is the Afrikaans word for “yes”. In addition to being commonly used in South Africa, the word has spread to 
surrounding countries.
RE: Is there a chance that when you go out to visit teachers that you go along with a teacher-educator, maybe to see? Or are there workshops where you sit … you as curriculum developers … and teacher-educators, to see if teachers are implementing the new curriculum?

CD1: No, that one we have not done. Yes.

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**Interview with Curriculum Developer 2**

Re: Good afternoon, ntate (Mister) [name withheld]

CD2: E ea me (yes)

Re: I am Maisiaah Phakisi, from Wits. I am currently doing my study on factors affecting teachers implementing “learner-centered” or “activity-based” or “activity-orientated” learning. (CD2: Hm) So I am happy that you agreed to see me and I know you are busy but you are going to spare your time. I am really grateful for that and, like I said, my experience as a teacher and maybe as a head of department in my school or maybe as member of committees that were running in the district, I could see that teachers really do not do, have some problems with the implementation of the new syllabus.

I am looking at what could cause that kind of confusion. For me to be able to find … I base myself on the things that I looked up in the syllabus, that I think and I feel if they are made clear I would be able to understand and maybe even teachers could understand. I don’t know if my study will be so successful that when you are doing … you are revising the syllabus … you might feel like you may look at it.

And …. I would like to know, ntate, if you were in any way involved in the development of this new syllabus?

CD2: Hm…m for me I came at a late stage. I did not start if from scratch. I came too late … that my … my views and approaches in terms of their effectiveness were not … it was too late.

Re: It was too late?

CD2: It was too late, yes. So basically I am not saying I had any influence.

Re: You did not have any influence, but you worked with the implementation and development. You did not just stand back and watch?

CD2: No, the last bits of implementation … that is dissemination … that is where I came in. In terms of the design I wasn’t there.

Re: You weren’t there? Who would you say decided that the syllabus needed to be changed?

CD2: I think it is the government.

Re: The government?

CD2: In the preparation for the localization of the COSC, whereby they were saying they had to review the Junior Certificate because it was not in line with the COSC … that is O-level. Can…. when they localized it they had to review the JC to be … to prepare for the localization.

Re: Uhum. Why did they find it necessary to change the syllabus? Okay, I think you have answered that, if you are saying it was in preparation for localization.

CD2: Yes. Why did they choose learner-centred … among other approaches?

CD2: Learner-centred is the move of the….the new 2000 century throughout the world … globally … not only in Lesotho. The evidence is given by examples of different curriculum studies found in different countries. You talk about Botswana … they are going learner-centred. You talk about Swaziland … they are going learner-centred. You talk about South Africa … they are talking about learner-centred. Even Namibia. So Lesotho could not stay behind

Re: So they are just following the trend?

CD2: Yes, they are only following the trend.

Re: Okay. So what changes … what is different? What is been done that is different from what was done in the past?

CD2: In terms of learner-centred approach I do not want to … I reserve my comments, because my view is that the syllabus move that has been made has not moved actually to learner-centred as it was anticipated. Because in my study … I will refer to my study … there is a competition between the syllabus coverage and being learner-centred. The two things compete, and it says to you “are we sure what we produced as a syllabus is actually facilitating (a) learner-centred (approach). So there are stages whereby we need to investigate certain things that I think they are not actually covered.

Re: What you are saying is that teachers are mostly teaching for the syllabus / examination?

CD2: Uhum. To cover the syllabus.

Re: But like you are saying, the new syllabus says that classes should be learner-centred. According to your understanding, what is “learner-centred”?
CD2: Okay, I will refer you to Cliff Malcolm and Moyra Keane, *kea kholoa* (I think) … I am sure *ke* (it is) Keane. And you can look at what I think myself is the model of learner-centred education. There they quote, one, they quote about the relationship and caring at the first level. The second level being the pedagogy for right topic at the right time, you see. And the third one is about allowing the learners to select their own outcomes. That implies you are not saying they have to go their own way, but they are selecting … sorry … they are selecting a topic to learn in their own way. For instance, if you were talking about forces, some of the students will prefer to learn about forces using tug-of-war, you see. Some of them will prefer using sliding down the steep hill themselves using something. Some of them can prefer learning about them in different ways. Some will prefer to be lectured about a certain topic. So basically there are three levels that I consider which I say is learner-centred.

Re: So as a … let me call you a curriculum developer … you have that angle of a learner-centred approach whereby the learner is involved wholly, learning abilities, the way they learn is put …. Do you think the other curriculum developers, NCDC officers, and other stakeholders who were involved in the development of the new syllabus, see it that way?

CD2: No.

Re: Have you ever been in contact with them? Have you ever discussed this with them? Did they discuss their views?

CD2: They do not want to discuss it with me.

Re: But your view is that they do not understand it?

CD2: Not my view, my observation is that they do not understand it.

Re: What about teachers?

CD2: Even teachers … they do not understand. Even that study that I am talking about (Khoboli and Malcolm) it is published and you can have access to it and refer to it. What they do is they have a limited understanding of learner-centred, they think learner-centred is “hands-on” … that is, when you put practical that is descriptive in terms of the … as a recipe type of practical, whereby you say “mix one, add two, then look at the colour, what is the colour? and then do that”. They believe that is learner-centred … as long as learners are doing something.

Re: As long as the learner is doing something, whether they are constructing something or not, is not an important matter?

CD2: The level of interaction or engagement … they don’t care about it. Whether there is critical inquiry within the process they don’t care.

Re: The other thing is that in that syllabus … curriculum … they say that the learning should be learner-centred but there is nowhere where they give the definition of learner-centred.

CD2: Correct.

Re: Don’t you think that is creating … giving teachers problems in terms of interpreting the syllabus?

CD2: That is what I also said. I have also specified in my study that *e bokolokoto* (it is not clear). You see you say it is not that only … you say you are advocating for constructivism and there is another one for primary where they are saying you are advocating for constructivism and in secondary they are saying we advocate for learner-centred. They don’t bring (forward) what their understanding of learner-centred (is) or their understanding of constructivism … and how do they meet … how do they expect teachers to do it. And in that study I have brought them together in terms of I am saying how is one related to the other.

Re: Okay. I don’t know if you will be able to answer this one. Do you think that there are documents that teachers have access to that maybe will give them that definition?

CD2: No. They are not there.

Re: They are not there?

CD2: No.

Re: There are no documents that give them guidance …that guide them on how to implement learner-centred approaches?

CD2: No.

Re: Were there workshops held?

CD2: Yes, there workshops held. But the issue is the … the workshop is an ideal situation … where they are saying we train you on an ideal situation. But when you go to the real situation, the real world, there are competing demands in your school, and those competing demands will cause you do something different. How do I do learner-centred, when I have 40 to 45 minutes to teach and get out of the class. With the class and 40 minutes … even if the process of learning has not reached the level that I would like to say “stop”; there is the next teacher waiting in my door saying “I want to come in. It’s my turn now”. So you see there are competing

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3 NCDC is how people in Lesotho refer to the National Curriculum Development Centre.
demands at school level that do not permit the teachers to actually implement whatever we are saying in the workshops. This is evident from my study, whereby the teachers will be discussing thoroughly on what they have taught and how they have taught … saying “we need to change this”, but when they arrive at school level they change to a certain level, and that level is saying they are not going beyond that level because they are looking at the competing demands also, and the competing demands are you can’t go beyond this level, otherwise you will be rendered ineffective (as a teacher).

Re: You mean that even if they could understand what learner-centred is they will be prevented from implementing it by the situation?

CD2: Competing demands. They did … within two years … that workshop … only action research … we were meeting weekly, discussing, reflecting, planning lessons for a few weeks. But learner-centred were implemented to a certain level … they could not go beyond that. When you go beyond that we will ask you … you will have to finish … cover the syllabus … you have to meet the demands of the exams … you have to do that … so they could not go beyond certain level.

Re: What about the incoming teachers? Do they get the training that other teachers got?

CD2: They do

Re: They do?

CD2: I don’t know how far, but they still go through what I was taught during my days.

Re: Which is what?

CD2: Which is theory here and pedagogy here and both of them they are not learner-centred.

Re: They still go to class … they teach facts and go to the lab to verify facts, they are not using activities.

CD2: Thank you. You know better than I can say.

Re: Okay, state, I want to preserve your time. I will move on. Again what I realized is that the cover books of the Lesotho Junior Secondary Science book series … books 1, 2 and 3 … all of them say that the course is activity-based and is useful for promoting learner-centred teaching. But there is nowhere in the syllabus the word “activity-based” comes out.

CD2: Yes. I will tell you why.

Re: Yes?

CD2: It is because they were competing to make money and they were not competing for the right thing. The book was competing, the authors were competing with all other authors, for their books to be bought by all schools and they got that.

Re: So that was just an advertisement, which they wrote outside the book?

CD2: Thank you.

Re: But then, if you read the syllabus, it says a learner-centred approach should be used, but methods should include inquiry through investigation, and from that one would think they are using learner-centred and activity-based synonymously.

CD2: That is an issue. They use “learner-centred education” synonymously with “learner-centred approach”, synonymously with “learner-centred methods”, so basically it says that if we had a policy this issue would have been clarified within that policy document.

Re: So there is no policy?

CD2: There is no policy.

Re: There is nothing?

CD2: That’s why I normally become scared to call it the “curriculum” in Lesotho.

Re: Because it is the teaching syllabus, so call it a teaching document. But, according to your understanding, is there a difference between “activity-based” and “learner-centred”?

CD2: To me … I am not sure what I can say to explain myself clearly, but what I can think of is one is a bigger set and the other is a sub-set.

Re: Which one would you say is a sub-set?

CD2: “Activity-based” is a method of being “learner-centred”. While “learner-centred education” is a bigger umbrella of different methods, one of them which could be activity-based. One of them can be another thing. One of them can be research. So they are all falling under a big umbrella of “learner-centred education”.

Re: Okay. That’s how you understand it?

Okay, there is also this part which says that learners should acquire skills and attitudes, but there is nowhere where it is indicated as to how these teachers should teach those skills. How are teachers expected to teach those skills if there is nothing that says “you should teach this” and I don’t see?
CD2: That’s what I said to you. We were after making money not making a book that is relevant or (section inaudible) for our kids. And the people who were assessing the book were assessing it on the given (word inaudible – could be “standards”) that were given, and remember the people who give those standards some of them are the authors.

Re: They were given … I mean who were given the standards?

CD2: The evaluators of the standards … and some of the evaluators were the authors, so their books were also competing in this particular situation and we can’t (word inaudible) ourselves from the fact that you are my friend. As long as we are under the same ministry we work together. I don’t want to see you being beaten by someone from outside. It’s a clear fact, until we have a clear margin (directive) “government officials are not authors”, they can only write and publish in journals, not within books that are going to compete with your own organization … Just like in a competition, my family, if I am for the organization. But here it is different issue. They compete despite the fact that they are working for the same organization.

Re: But nate (Mister) … eh … at your capacity, when do you think things will get better? When do you think …?

CD2: I cannot answer that one.

Re: Ache (Okay) nate. I think I will leave you at this stage. Thank you very much for giving me your time.

CD2: 16 minutes and 21 seconds! (checking his watch).

Interview with Curriculum Developer 3

Re: I am Maisaih Phakisi and I am grateful that you could all me to talk to you. Eh … like I said to you, I need to find out or to get your input into this implementation of the new syllabus. I know that you have been involved in the new syllabus, but I want to hear you saying it … that that you were involved in the development of the new syllabus … the development or implementation.

CD3: Yes, I have been involved.

Re: Yes?. What exactly did you do in the development?

CD3: At the beginning we studied … this content … that could be needed in the syllabus, and thereafter of learning outcomes as well … and even implementing at classroom level.

Re: According to you, who would you say suggested or decided that the syllabus needed to be changed?

CD3: Well, I think that the syllabus itself … first said it (the syllabus itself seemed to indicate change was needed) because there was a lot of repetition from the primary science and to this high school one. And seemingly the high school one did not lay foundations for the high school syllabus,. But then somebody else had to say “yes” to that … like … eh … yes, the Ministry of Education, with the authority it had, had to say “yes” to the suggested changes, and NCDC.

Re: So it was NCDC that decided that the syllabus ….

CD3: Ja, after some discussions with panel members, subject …

Re: Made of what? Of which subjects? Only science?

CD3: Yes, it was science.

Re: So you decided to change the syllabus?

CD3: It was … eh … the environment. I mean there was no choice.

Re: Okay. Why did you choose to make it learner-centred?

CD3: Because learner-centred … as it is … the way we understood … moved away from a nature of … or the approach in the old syllabus, which to a great deal encouraged teachers talking to students rather than teaching them … and that (referring to a learner-centred approach) so much developed the acquisition of real science concepts, approaches and skills.

Re: Okay. So what could you say is new now … that teachers are doing now that they were not doing in the old time? What could say “these are new things”?

CD3: Actually, from my own observation from class visits, there is not that much change. But what pleases me is the change in the teachers … because most of them in my area use this syllabus … they use the learning outcomes. I know that they are using it partially because even the learning outcomes (implemented) very little … I could see do influence even their assessment or even influence the nature of the lesson itself. But at least they know the syllabus, unlike before when they were teaching solely using the book. So, there is that move and interest in the syllabus. There is that move. Ja.
Re: They are now using the syllabus? In this new syllabus you have recommend learner-centred, and in that syllabus you are not giving definition … or there is no definition of learner-centred. Do you think teachers understand?

CD3: Yes. I think if they do, they have understood it from workshops, if they have.

Re: If they have? You do not know?

CD3: Because you walk into class you still find teacher-centred a great deal. Approaches can be mixed, even if it is learner-centred the teacher will have to intervene somewhere … but it is still now …

Re: Teacher dominated?

CD3: Ja … and they believe that it is learner-centred only when they are doing experiments … if at all. They really do … they do not do experiments that much.

Re: Okay. According to your understanding, what could you say “learner-centred” is?

CD3: He … eh … eh … learner-centred is the approach which starts and centres on where the learner is … going with the learner and challenging what is there and providing for that to be really explicit.

Re: The learner’s activity and everything?

CD3: Yes. I don’t have proper words for expressing that. It’s not something that can be defined, because it is a process. I don’t know … maybe some people will manage to do that.

Re: But do you think teachers are … really understand … if the syllabus says “learning should be learner-centred”?

CD3: I think so. Like I have said, whether they talk about this learner-centred in the manner which you would think they probably understand it, if the approach in the classroom is still not that, ke hore (it means) … there is a discrepancy between what they say and what they do … if at all they do … they do have an understanding to a certain extent about this.

Re: But apart from those workshops, could … are there some documents that they have that they use that have the definition of learner-centred … that kind of guides them towards …?

CD3: Well, not that I know … except if they follow some of the activities in the books, because they start by asking the activities. Start by asking students some questions and so. But I don’t think hona le (there is) any documents.

Re: You did say that there were some workshops. Would you remember what those workshops were consisting of?

CD3: Hm … I don’t want to do that, because some of the concepts there I didn’t agree with, so …

Re: You wouldn’t give me the documents even if …

CD3: I don’t think there was a document … and also from the presenters …

Re: From presenters?

CD3: Well, I don’t think they really provided documents … more than words.

Re: They are just words?

CD3: Uhum.

Re: Okay. So again on the cover books of this Lesotho Junior Secondary Science … I am sorry, I am taking … there is this thing ea (about) “activity-based” on the books … that the course is activity-based and is useful for promoting learner-centred teaching. But again you don’t … that activity-based is only mentioned on the books, you don’t see it on the document. What can you say about that? What are the reasons?

CD3: What do you mean by “the document”?

Re: I mean on the syllabus document that teachers are using.

CD3: Hm.

Re: There is nowhere where they talk about activity-based.

CD3: You mean the syllabus?

Re: It only appears on the books.

CD3: Yes … because originally the belief was (that) through the discussion on the implementation, teachers would understand that anyway.

Re: Would understand “activity-based”?

CD3: Yes.

Re: So you are saying from workshops and discussion …

CD3: … they would (understand) because when these learning outcomes were interpreted … eh … they were made to develop some lessons plans based on that, that all.

Re: Based on?
On learning outcomes, the activities which would reflect *eona naho eno ea li* (that activity-based thing) activity …

Re: So is “activity-based” …

CD3: *Aa tloha* (hey, leave me alone).

Re: Would you say “learner-centred” is the same as “activity-based” or would you say they are different? According to your understanding?

CD3: *Kei le ka bolela kare na e* (I have already explained my point of view about) learner-centred. *na ke shebile joang* (the way I see it) and *ha ke kholoe hore* (and I don’t think) activity on its own can be that much learner-centred. Is just a little, the beginning I think …

Re: Again the syllabus talks of the development of skills and attitudes. How were the curriculum developers intending teachers to teach those skills and attitudes?

CD3: *He aa* (Hey, no) they have to teach them I don’t know because there is not that explicit. It is mentioned but …

Re: … is not made explicit?

CD3: *Uhum*

Re: Don’t you think if, maybe, they could be made more clear to teachers, or there could be definitions given to this … maybe things will be better for teachers? Because some … like your teachers (teachers in her district) have this continuous … I mean have continuous contact with you. They have things better. But there are those teachers out there who are left without someone supporting them. Don’t you think they are struggling?

CD3: *Uhum…. They have to think on their own* (laughing)

Re: Because, how do (section inaudible) if something is wrong … if each teacher uses his/her own understanding … do you think at the end of the day they would be implementing the syllabus that was intended?

CD3: If they are conversant with the syllabus, they would … they still carry out experiments … they still prepare students for the exam, the same way … through I don’t want to go much into the exam … but if they have a good grasp of that … of the syllabus and what it entails, particularly the eh …

Re: Which means if the syllabus could be made even more clearer and more explicit it would help?

CD3: Yes. Actually it is not only the Junior Certificate one … even the COSC one.

Re: It is still giving them problems?

CD3: *Ha! … because one would ask “how would they teach those skills which are in (the) high school syllabus?”* These skills are so distinct. you know. But we don’t know how they are going to teach them. One will have to think of how they should be taught, which I think is what they are trying to do *hana tjena* (now)

Re: But if teachers are left like that …?

CD3: No. Right, they are not. In my area they are not.

Re: In general, what you say about these teachers … you could see they need help as you are working with teachers … anything that you think “they need this so that they can understand” as you are dealing with them on daily basis.

CD3: *Matichere hle a hloka ntho tse ngata* (teachers need help on several aspects).

Re: Yes? Like what?

CD3: They need to develop lessons *tse rutang li* (that teach the skills) … not talking about the skill and saying read or hypothesise … (but) teach them how to organize a lesson that will help them hypothesise on (a) daily basis.

Re: But do you think the training that they get somehow helps them to be able to manage?

CD3: *Na o a atloa e tla ka ke critique* (It would appear as if I am critical) *feela* (but they), *ha ba fihla. joalo ka ha le rona re ne ntse re eta nho eno e sa bonahaleng* (when they come to teach they are as unclear as we were when we started teaching).

Re: And therefore it gives teachers problems?

CD3: *Hare li battle feela* (Not only do we need them) for … *ke hore* (that is) for teaching up to the point of examination,, this syllabus *batla e feela ha ba sena li* (teachers will fail to do what the syllabus requires of they don’t have the) skill and already that is happening. And *ke nho ena matichere a nahanang hore e thata ha e thata* (that’s why teachers see the syllabus as difficult) because… because … *e butsuboe* (what they are asked to do is) within their scope of thinking and even the scope of the syllabus.
Interview with Curriculum Developer 4

Re: 'Me (Mrs) [name withheld] were you in any way involved in the development of this new syllabus?
CD4: Yes, I was involved.

Re: How were you involved?
CD4: Eh ... first of all, we had to revise the old syllabus and then make some changes that we felt would help to relate the science that was used in the past to what we want the learners to learn now.

Re: So, according to you, who would you say decided the syllabus needed changing?
CD4: Well, I don't know. Because we were just told ... we were just asked ... to come and bring in some inputs on things that we feel should be revised in the syllabus. So really ... it was something that came from NCDC. We didn't even have time to ask.

Re: So you were just invited by NCDC? Okay.
CD4: Yes.

Re: So why did you find it necessary to change it? I mean yourself? You said it was to meet the needs ... or to make it relevant?
CD4: Okay. Eh ... you will realize that ... a lot of what has been happening in science was rote-learning (Re: Uhun) ... so what we wanted to do was a science that students could take from school to home ... that could apply in everyday life ... where they could use apparatus or resources that were readily available ... not necessarily the expensive, complicated ... eh ... eh ... equipment that is required by the science, as we know science. But we wanted to do something that could ... eh ... have some implications or applications in the lives of the children ... that they could take home.

Re: Okay, I think that is a good thing. But why did you decide it needed to be learner-centred ... because on the cover ... I mean in the syllabus it says you want ... you recommend that science should be learner-centred.
CD4: Well, we wanted a learner-centered ... we wanted science that could be relevant. Learners are supposed to own science, so that they can apply and use it. Science has been content driven, so they couldn't apply it in real life. So that even if they couldn't continue with schooling or science, they could be able to use what they learned in science ... use apparatus etc.

Re: What were the changes made in the new syllabus? What were teachers expected to do that was different ... or what practices would you expect teachers to show in “learner-centered”?
CD4: We want teachers to facilitate learning not to transfer knowledge ... so that they can help learners to discover things for themselves, as what you discover you know better and you develop interest on. Help learners understand that science does not belong in the classroom. They should see science everywhere, even the simple cooking of papa (porridge) ... there is so much science there.

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Re: The syllabus does not give a definition of “learner-centered”. How do you think this will affect teachers understanding of the new approach?
CD4: We expect the inspectorate will induct and workshop teachers, so that they can understand. Learner-centered can also be learned from institutions. We work collaboratively with inspectorate.

Re: What do you, as teacher-educators, offer teachers that can help them teach in a learner centered way? How are you helping teachers understand “learner-centered” in response to the needs of the new syllabus?
CD4: Yes ... we have programmes, for example, third year of teacher training we teach learner-centered approach and cooperative learning. The dilemma is we have many teachers whose classes are overpopulated ... 70 learners per teacher ... so it is not easy to apply learner-centered. But they are taught.

Re: Are there documents that teachers have that can help them determine the meaning of “learner-centered approach”?
CD4: No, not to my knowledge. Unless inspectorate is preparing something we don’t know (about).

Re: Did you hold workshops for existing teachers?
CD4: Yes.

Re: What was covered in the workshops?
CD4: Interpretations of learning outcomes and what is expected of teachers.

Re: How are new teachers trained?
CD4: No training is given. That is a big problem. Teaches complain of no longer having workshops. Teachers who were trained have to disseminate information to incoming teachers. Inspectorate does not see the impact of the workshops. They are going to outsource. Lesotho College of Education and National University of Lesotho will have to teach teachers.
Re: When I look at the Lesotho Junior Secondary Science textbooks, of which you were a co-author, it says that the course is activity-based, but activity-based is not mentioned in the syllabus. Why was that the case, maybe?

CD4: I don’t know.

Re: Could you explain what “activity-based” means?

CD4: Have to do activities that will show that they have grasped the concepts. When they do hands-on … manipulating apparatus … they learn manipulative skills, so they know … instead of rote-learning things.

Re: Why is (an) activity-based approach recommended?

CD4: It gives feedback to the teacher as to how much they understand.

Re: The new curriculum also indicates that learners should acquire skills and attitudes. What should teachers do to achieve this?

CD4: They could help learners acquire attitudes. For example, in environment where we talk of managing environment, if they have positive attitudes they could see science as something that can be applied in solving the problem of the environment. Teachers (should) let learners do things … get involved in activities that are interesting and motivating. We don’t know if teachers know how to interpret the syllabus, as there is no feedback … nobody is taking the responsibility of following teachers to find if they are really applying what they learned in institutions.