

Teaching Mathematics in Foundation Phase Multilingual Classrooms: Teachers' Challenges and Innovations

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ABSTRACT The reality in South Africa is that teachers are required to work in multilingual classrooms where the language of instruction often differs from the home language of all or the majority of learners. The research on which this paper is based focused on problems teachers experience and the innovative strategies that could constitute best practice for teaching mathematics in multilingual classrooms. The question that was addressed is how teachers can teach learners representing a variety of home languages. In some cases the teachers are not familiar with the home language of the learners. Focus group interviews, involving Foundation Phase teachers in three independent schools, were conducted. The language of teaching and learning in the schools is English. Most of the teachers are English second language speakers. Components for effective mathematics teaching in multilingual classrooms are committed, well-trained teachers, well-resourced classrooms, a variety of teaching strategies, use of concrete media, encouragement of oral rehearsal, enough response time and motivation. Multilingualism should be seen as an asset rather than a barrier in the classroom.