

An Investigation into Teacher Engagement in Pedagogy: Selected
cases in Foundation Phase classes in KwaZulu-Natal

Submitted by

Jugatheesan Govender

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Supervisor: Professor R. Sookrajh

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DECLARATION

I declare that the research material presented is my own work and that all the sources that I have consulted or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of completed referencing.

Mr J. Govender
(Student)

Date

Prof. R. Sookrajh
(Supervisor)

Date

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my adorable children

Aneurin and Nadine.

May you be inspired by this work to achieve greater accomplishments
of your own.

Love you

Dad

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ACRONYMS

CAPS -	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
DoE -	Department of Education
FLP -	Foundations for Learning Programme
KZN -	KwaZulu-Natal
LTSM -	Learner and teacher support material
NCS -	National Curriculum Statement
NLS -	New Literacy Studies
OBE -	Outcomes-based education
PIRLS -	Progress in Reading Literacy Studies
TIMSS -	Third International Mathematics and Science Study
ZPD -	Zone of Proximal Development

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ABSTRACT

This research study is an examination of teacher engagement in pedagogy in the foundation phase, within the context of a literacy learning programme. The study explores what teachers know and do in foundation phase classrooms and how this impacts on learner performance. The study aims to identify areas of pedagogy that need to be strengthened so that all South African learners can compete with others, not only at national level (systemic evaluations), but also at international level in tests such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) and Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The critical question of the study was: *How do teachers' engagements in pedagogy influence their practice in the literacy learning programmes of selected foundation phase classes in KwaZulu-Natal?* It is expected that the findings of my study will stimulate discussions on teacher development and classroom practices for improved learner performance.

The research was conducted in three schools in urban KwaZulu-Natal. For purposes of confidentiality and anonymity, the exact location and names of the schools have not been indicated. These schools were selected on the basis of convenience sampling and are within close proximity of each other. Since teachers were the unit of study, learners were only involved as far as their participation in normal classroom lessons was concerned and where samples of their work were examined.

This study is located in the interpretive paradigm. An interpretive approach allows me the flexibility to describe, make sense of and interpret teacher engagement in pedagogy within the literacy learning programme. A qualitative research method has been employed and involves the use of case studies as a means to gather information. First, individual face-to-face interviews were held with teachers; then literacy lessons in progress were observed, and finally, documents that the teachers used in planning, preparation and delivery of lessons were examined. Samples of learners' work were also examined.

Results of the studies on teacher engagement in pedagogy revealed that teachers had followed the Foundations for Learning documents so religiously that they had neglected the essential components of pedagogy, namely the use of appropriate teaching strategies, creating of appropriate learning environments, establishing conducive learning climates, monitoring learners' achievements and giving feedback, and use of learner and teacher support materials. Arising from these findings, recommendations are made for these essential components to be

considered when engaging in pedagogy for Foundation Phase learners. This study concludes with the recommendation of a teacher engagement model labeled *The Teacher Engagement for Learner Improvement Model*. This model focuses on improving learner performance and is built around the six interconnected components of pedagogy. The model suggests that the level of learners' achievements will improve as the level of teachers' engagement with these components increases.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the study

In 1998 the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, introduced the Outcomes-based Education (OBE) approach to education in South African schools. The OBE curriculum emphasized learner-centredness and activity-based learning. Due to difficulties experienced by teachers in implementing the curriculum, it was revised and reintroduced in 2001 as the revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). The RNCS policy document (Department of Education (DoE), 2002, p. 11) describes the curriculum as follows: “Outcomes-based education considers the process of learning as important as the content. Both the process and the content of education are emphasized by spelling out the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the process.” However, the document did not specify core knowledge and concepts in relation to the content. It failed to show conceptual progression, and no advice was given on how teachers may achieve the outcomes. Teachers were given flexibility to design their own learning programmes, work schedules and lesson plans based on their own understanding of the documents. Core knowledge and concepts and planning of assessments became the teachers’ responsibility. Donnelly (2005, p. 8) argues that the main criterion for considering a curriculum is the extent to which it makes available to teachers statements which are “clear, succinct, unambiguous, measurable, and based on essential learning as represented by subject disciplines.” Absence of a clear, logical and sequential curriculum for South African learners would result in their poor performance in terms of literacy and numeracy.

Primary school education in South Africa and particularly early education in the Foundation Phase has been described as a crisis (Fleisch, 2008). According to Bloch (2010), consecutive results from the Department of Education (DoE) systemic evaluation scores, which look at how Grade 3 learners perform at the end of the Foundation Phase, as well as results from international scores (Third International Mathematics and Science study (TIMMS) and Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)), have shown that many South African learners lack age-appropriate skills and knowledge in literacy and numeracy. Bloch found that South African learners were not able to read, write and count at expected levels, and were unable to execute tasks that demonstrate key skills in literacy and numeracy. According to Faller,

Christie Excell and Linington (2009), learners would experience great difficulty in managing higher-level cognitive skills in later years of their schooling if the basic skills in literacy, numeracy and life skills are not effectively learned in the Foundation Phase.

The Foundations for Learning campaign that was launched in 2008, had been in response to the crisis in the performance of the youngest learners in the schooling system. In a strategy for reform, teachers are given intensive scaffolding in the form of exemplars of lesson plans and assessment to guide their performance. These curriculum documents provide highly stipulated guidelines regarding the content to be taught and assessed per term in literacy and numeracy for each of the grades in the Foundation Phase. Amongst other things, it is assumed that these documents will be helpful in shaping quality education for all young learners in South Africa. The Foundations for Learning campaign was an interim strategy to ensure that teaching and learning carried on while the new curriculum was being developed. The new curriculum, called the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS), will be introduced to Foundation Phase learners in 2012.

The CAPS produced by the Department of Basic Education (DoBE, 2012) provides teachers with content, concepts and skills that should be taught per term in literacy, numeracy and life skills in each grade. It also provides the requirements for both formal and informal assessments. Based on this CAPS document publishers have produced teacher resources that have been approved by the DoBE. These resources include lesson preparations, workbooks and assessments that make assumptions about teachers' engagement in pedagogy, how it influences their practice and the context of teaching and learning in South Africa.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This study on teacher engagement in pedagogy explores what teachers know and do in Foundation Phase classrooms. In scanning the literature for early education pedagogy (Siraj-Blatchford, 2002; Mortimer, 1999), it is evident that the term *pedagogy* concerns teacher and learner interactions, the learning environment and the context provided by the family and community. My study involves an in-depth examination of teacher engagement in pedagogy for Foundation Phase learners within the context of a literacy learning programme, and its impact on learner performances.

1.3 Focus of the study

The central focus of the study was to investigate teacher engagement in pedagogy in the Foundation Phase within the context of a literacy learning programme. Whilst I am aware of Grade R as part of the Foundation Phase, I do not include this grade in this study, since I believe that the present climate and tensions around pedagogy for Grades 1-3 is worthy of a full study of its own.

1.4 Rationale for the study

The rationale for this study derives from two imperatives. Firstly, a personal one where my experiences as a Foundation Phase teacher have sparked interest in me regarding the poor performance of South African learners. In the 24 years' of my teaching experience in the Foundation Phase, I have always had classes of mixed abilities and learners with diverse education needs. It was always a struggle to get every single learner to perform at the expected norm of their grade. However, I believe that every learner can succeed and that learners with barriers to learning should not be rushed but allowed to develop at their own pace. My study hopes to reveal classroom practices in which high-quality teacher engagement results in every learner achieving success.

I teach at a school where many of our learners are second-language learners. Also, the average class sizes are large, with a teacher-pupil ration of 1: 45. It is often argued that these large classes, coupled with learners experiencing learning difficulties, have resulted in poor performances amongst learners. My study seeks to shed light on good classroom practices that would minimize the effects of large classes and strategies to assist slow learners in achieving success in learning.

Secondly, policy and contextual factors also motivated me to conduct this study. In an attempt to improve the results of learners in literacy and numeracy, the DoE launched the Foundations for Learning Programme (FLP) in 2008. *Government Gazette* 30880 defines the FLP, spelling out the daily activities, amount of time to spend on activities, and teaching resources that should be used in lessons. Amongst others, the Gazette states that the FLP sought to provide energy as well as direction and inspiration across all levels of the education system, as well as in homes and the public domain, to ensure that by 2011 all learners are able to demonstrate age-appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy. All primary schools will be expected to increase average learner performance in literacy/language and

numeracy/mathematics to no less than 50% - indicating an improvement of between 15% - 20% in the four years of the campaign (DoE, 2008, p. 4). It was expected that this intervention strategy would scaffold learners' achievements in literacy and numeracy. This study examines teachers' engagement with this FLP and hopes to identify good practices that could be used in South African schools.

I believe that this study and its findings will be useful to teachers who want to understand their practice in their current context, the Provincial and National DoE in terms of curriculum implementation and identification of good practice, and curriculum and higher education officials tasked with training teachers. Researchers in the Foundation Phase will also benefit from my study, which will stimulate discussion on pedagogy in Foundation Phase classrooms. Such discourse could centre on the themes that emerged from this study. These themes relate to the following:

- teachers' engagement with sources of content;
- teachers' appropriate use of teaching and learning strategies;
- teachers as facilitators of classroom interaction;
- teachers' role in monitoring learning; teachers' ability to create appropriate learning environments; and
- teachers' use of learner and teacher support materials (LTSM).

This has the potential to lead to further research and add to the contributions of other studies conducted, for example the contributions/recommendations of that conducted by Faller, Christie, Excell and Linington (2009) on implementation of the NCS in the Foundation Phase. They argued for more structured curriculum support for teachers, provision of professional development for teachers, aligning the roles and functions of District Office Foundation Phase curriculum facilitators with their capacity, enhancing the status of Foundation Phase heads of department, reviewing the relationship between school language policy and practice, support for the inclusion policy, addressing the need for classroom and LTSM resources, reviewing assessment policy and practice, promoting the explicit teaching of NCS values, and establishing effective approaches to communication with the parents of learners.

My study adds to these contributions in that it raises an awareness of how teachers' engagement with pedagogy for the Foundation Phase influence their practice in the literacy learning programme and its impact on learner performance. The main research question is: *How do teachers' engagements in pedagogy influence their practice in the literacy learning programme of the selected Foundation Phase schools?*

1.5 Literature review

The literature review examines what researchers have contributed to the body of knowledge on the teacher as one of the key elements in pedagogy. It includes some reviews of studies conducted on pedagogy, both in South Africa and in countries such as Australia, Canada, England and the United States of America (USA), and is by no means exhaustive. Given the limited scope of the study, the works of the following writers, amongst others, are included: Hoadley, Murray, Drew and Setati (2010); Wang, Haertal and Walberg (1993); Bloch (2009); Sadowski (2006); Brophy (1986); De Witt (2007); Berliner (1986); Hattie (2003); Hayes, Mills, Christie and Linaard (2006); Martlew, Ellis and Stephen (2010); Browne (2009); Adams, Alexander, Drummond and Moyles (2004); and Dickinson and Tabors (2002). Aspects covered by these researchers include the Foundation Phase curriculum, the importance of teachers, productive pedagogy, effective teachers, social engagement, and developing language and literacy skills.

1.6 Conceptual framework

The definition of pedagogy provided by Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Mutlock, Gidden and Bell (2002) forms the conceptual framework of my study. Their work offers insights into the components of pedagogy that teachers should engage in for successful learning to take place. My study reflected on this definition of pedagogy as I investigated teacher engagement in pedagogy in Foundation Phase classrooms. Deriving from the definition provided by Siraj-Blatchford et al., the aspects of pedagogy examined include teaching strategies, classroom climates, learning environments, providing corrective feedback, and use of LTSM.

1.7 Theoretical framework

The principles of cognitive development and learning, as developed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, inform the theoretical framework of my study. He argued for a cognitive theory of learning that epistemises social constructivism as the grounds for acquisition of

language. My study draws from his work and suggests implications for teacher engagement in pedagogy. Vygotsky advocated use of cultural tools such as music, play and poems and social interaction to help young learners develop their language usage and literacy skills.

1.8 Methodology

A qualitative approach to the research was employed and was helpful in ascertaining the subjective content of pedagogy in Foundation Phase classrooms. In terms of design, case studies were used to conduct the research. Schools selected as sites for the research by convenience sampling were each treated as a case. The purpose of the case study was to assist me in obtaining an in-depth understanding of how teachers engage in pedagogy in order to ensure that every learner succeeds. The data were unpacked in four steps, as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2001):

Step 1 – Interim analysis: Once all the data had been obtained from teacher interviews, classroom observations and documentary reviews, they were read carefully to get a sense of the whole.

Step 2 – Generating topics: Topics were established from descriptions that recurred throughout the data.

Step 3 – Comparison and clustering: Topics that were repeated or overlapped across the sets of data were clustered together to form the themes of the study.

Step 4 – Patterns and abstractions: The relationship between themes was established to give an understanding of the teachers' engagement in pedagogy and how it impacts on learner performance. Themes that emerged were: teachers' engagement with sources of content, teachers' appropriate use of teaching and learning strategies, teachers as facilitators of classroom interaction, teachers' role in monitoring learning, teachers' ability to create appropriate learning environments, and teachers' use of LTSM.

1.9 Limitations of the study

This study is limited to three classes in the Foundation Phase, and the results may not be generalizable to all Foundation Phase classes. Further, it does not include Grade R due to the nature of pedagogy that exists in this Grade.

1.10 Structure of the study

The study is organized into six chapters as follows:

Chapter One offers a background to the study and explains the purpose, its focus and the rationale for the study. The conceptual as well as the theoretical framework of the study are indicated. The chapter gives a synopsis of the literature review and highlights a few of the authors. The methodology employed is briefly discussed, as are limitations of the study.

Chapter Two outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. The conceptual framework draws on the work of Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002) and outlines the areas of pedagogy that are essential to learning. A balanced literacy model (the turning-points model) is included and forms part of the conceptual framing. The theoretical framework draws on the work of Lev Vygotsky, whose theory of cognitive development and language acquisition is explained. The implications that his theory has for classroom practice are discussed.

Chapter Three provides a literature review that covers studies which have been conducted in the field of pedagogy in South Africa and also in Australia, Canada, England and the USA. Areas of pedagogy that are emphasized include teaching strategies, teaching and learning environments, classroom climate, monitoring learners' achievements and providing feedback, and LTSM.

Chapter Four explains the methodology used to conduct the research, the research design, as well as the data collection and data processing techniques employed. The study follows a qualitative approach and makes use of case studies. The sampling process in selecting the schools for this study is been clarified. The chapter concludes by addressing some ethical issues.

Chapter Five begins with a discussion of the findings of the research that emerged from the teacher interviews, classroom observations and documentary reviews. In response to the critical question asked in this study, the six themes that emerged from the findings included teachers' engagement with the sources of content; teachers' appropriate use of teaching and learning strategies; teachers as facilitators of classroom interaction; teachers' role in monitoring learners' achievements and providing feedback; teachers' ability to create appropriate learning environments, and teachers' use of LTSM.

Chapter Six offers some recommendations that arise from the findings of this study to improve classroom practices in literacy. It concludes with a teacher engagement model that I have developed for South African teachers, which focuses on improving learner performances.

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the structure of my research and introduced some of the researchers who have contributed to the body of knowledge on pedagogy. In Chapter Two I describe the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study, which clarify the principles and philosophy that underpins teacher engagement in pedagogy.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

It is imperative that the teachers understand the principles, values or philosophy underpinning the school curriculum if their engagement in pedagogy is to be effective in ensuring that learning takes place. This chapter offers insights into the components of pedagogy that teachers must bear in mind as they engage in classroom practices. A balanced literacy teaching model (the Turning Points model) which forms part of the conceptual framing of this study is included. This is followed by the theoretical framework of this study, which draws on the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky advocates the view of social constructivism theorists on language and cognitive development. I used his theory to inform the theoretical framework of this study because he holds similar views as that of researchers in the field of pedagogy and, in particular, literacy teaching. These researchers believe that social interaction between the learner and knowledgeable adults and peers influences the learners' language acquisition and cognitive development.

2.2 Conceptual framework

Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002, p. 28) define pedagogy as follows:

that set of instructional techniques and strategies which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context. It refers to the interactive processes between teacher and learner and to the learning environment (which includes the concrete learning environment, the family and community).

In this conceptual framework it is argued that the act of teaching and learning involves developing and organizing age-appropriate subject matter; selecting suitable teaching methods; classroom management; and assessing learner performance in order to facilitate and support the child's understanding and learning.

The work of Mortimore (1999, p. 39) supports the definition of pedagogy as provided by Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002). Mortimore identified three areas of pedagogy that are important to learning: instructional techniques; encouraging involvement; and fostering engagement.

First, instructional techniques must involve creating learning environments (organizing materials, resources, providing relevant and interesting experiences, providing opportunities for active exploration and questioning); direct instruction (demonstrating, describing, answering questions, directing the child's attention, constructive criticism and reinforcement); and scaffolding (directing attention to a new aspect of a situation, helping the child to sequence activities, and managing complex tasks by breaking them down into manageable components).

Second, encouraging involvement must aim to instill in learners a high degree of intrinsic motivation and to improve learning dispositions. Parent and community involvement is also encouraged. Researchers of new literacy studies (NLS) have shown that relations between, in and out of school should be one of the principles that underpins the development of literacy amongst our learners (Street, 2003, pp. 77 - 85). NLS posits the view that the teacher should draw from the child's experience out of school in creating meaningful contexts for literacy learning in school, and to be able to apply in his daily life what he learns in school. NLS, as described by Street (2003, p. 77), "takes nothing for granted with respect to literacy and the social practices with which it becomes associated, problematizing what counts as literacy at any time and place." Teachers must see learners as equal partners in the learning process, and believe that all learners can achieve.

Third, fostering engagement requires the teacher to have knowledge about the child's current development and tailor activities so that they are developmentally appropriate. The teacher must create a positive classroom atmosphere; give encouragement, praise and recognition to learners on their achievements, and maintain a high level of communication between them. The work of Mortimore on pedagogy suggests that a high level of teacher engagement in the interrelated components of pedagogy is necessary in order for effective teaching and learning to occur. To this intent, I turn to a conceptual framing of teacher engagement in pedagogy.

The term 'teacher engagement' suggests an active, deliberate, conscious, purposeful and influential involvement in the child's learning. Kennedy (1998, p. 1) describes teacher engagement as "a parallel process in which the teacher is consciously aware of his or her role

in the learning process; when a teacher is on task, he or she is aware of and responding to student experiences in the classroom”. She argued that “effective teachers consciously work to become fully engaged in the learning process and know they can improve their skill as teachers over time” (1998, p. 2). Lesko (1986, pp. 3-16), on conceptualizing teacher engagement, says that engaged teachers are likely to:

- have relations with students that are respectful and in some way treat students as equals;
- endeavour to know students and have classmates know each other in order to promote reciprocal learning in class;
- have a complex view of students, including socio-economic background, motivation, interests, self-confidence, academic achievement level, and social developments;
- have good relations with students;
- be concerned with the needs of students;
- be personally involved with students in learning and not remove himself from active participation as a human being with students. A teacher will not hide behind the subject matter nor assume an authoritarian distance or some other ploy that minimizes human interactions with students;
- demonstrate thoughtfulness about his/her work and be concerned with students’ thinking;
- be sensitive to and plan for up and down times of the school year;
- intensely believe in and want certain goals for students;
- (those with many years of experience) have changed schools, courses, or positions in order to remain fresh;
- (those with relevant and extensive enough experience) be involved in educational policy discussions or implementation at the school or district level; and
- within the classroom, express some creativity in teaching content and/or pedagogy.

On reflecting on the South African National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which is based on the principles of learner-centredness and the theory of constructivism and integration (DoE, 2002), I believe that the policy calls for a high degree of teacher engagement in every child's learning in schools. This would be evident in the development and implementation of learning programmes in all three learning areas, viz. literacy, numeracy and life skills.

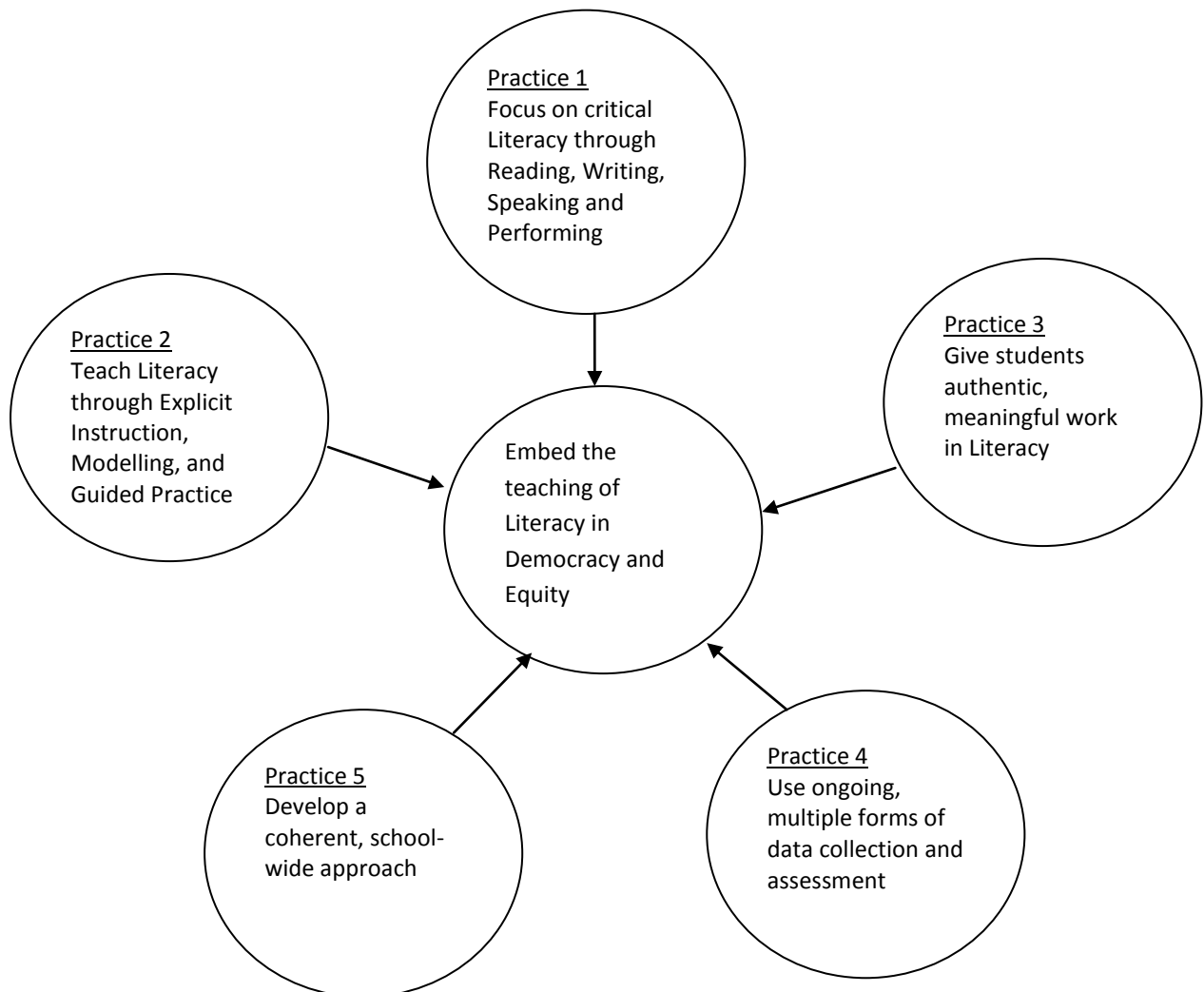
The work of Sujen-man (2011) on the Teacher Engagement Project emphasizes the importance of teacher engagement on student performance. Findings of this project were that “teachers support of students’ autonomy influences student motivation and outcomes, and that students’ perceptions of autonomy support lead to satisfaction of their psychological needs and productive and satisfying learning experiences” (Sujen-man, 2011, p. 1).

At this point it is worth examining the turning points model for teaching literacy, a conceptual framing of effective and balanced teaching of literacy.

2.3 The Turning Points Literacy Teaching Model

Researchers at the Centre for Collaborative Education in Boston, USA, developed a comprehensive education reform model that focuses on improving student learning. This model is called the Turning Points Literacy Teaching Model. It is built upon five interconnected practices which together form the backbone of literacy teaching that is embedded in democracy and equity. The model begins with the approach to teaching and learning, and ends with the school-wide structures that will support such an approach in every classroom. Practices two, three and four outline the specific content of a strong literacy curriculum, the way to connect such a curriculum to the world in meaningful ways, and an approach to assessment that will continually inform the teaching and learning of literacy. The Turning Points model is used across the USA in State public schools which accommodate learners of mixed abilities, races, cultures and languages (Centre for Collaborative Education, 2011, pp. 6-10).

Figure 2.1: The Turning Points Literacy Model (adapted from the Centre for Collaborative Education, 2011, p. 6)



The Turning Points design (Centre for Collaborative Education, 2011, pp. 6-17) emphasizes student engagement, connecting with families and the community, and building a collaborative culture for learning. Literacy is seen as a social act. Turning Points teachers describe literacy as a process of thinking, questioning, problem probing, and problem solving. They argue that in order to teach literacy, schools must recognize that all students have the capability to make meaning, and must ensure that they are held to high expectations and given equal opportunities to develop their literacy capacity. They contend that engaging students in becoming literate requires school and classroom structures and instructional strategies that actively engage students in things they care about, explicitly teach skills, and take into account the different backgrounds and experiences that students bring with them.

In the Turning Points Literacy Model there is a strong link between literacy and democracy. As students learn to be active readers, writers, listeners, and speakers, teachers prepare them to be entrepreneurial, creative and independent thinkers. Researchers at the Centre for Collaborative Education argue that if schools are to be places where students become highly literate, they must also be places where students are encouraged to be strong citizens, which means participating in healthy debate. The Centre envisages that Turning Points schools are laboratories for democracy where issues important to students' lives are actively debated, different viewpoints are articulated and considered, and every voice is encouraged. It is within this culture of democracy that literacy flourishes as students work to hone their skills and become better readers and writers, speakers and listeners.

2.4 Theoretical framework

My study draws from the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) as well as of researchers on NLS. Vygotsky and researchers of NLS contend that literacy and language development are embedded within a social and cultural context. According to Street (2003, p. 78), one of the researchers of NLS, engaging in literacy is always a social act and literacy in itself will have effects on other social and cognitive practices. He points out that from the perspective of the autonomous model of literacy:

introducing literacy to poor, illiterate people, villages, and urban youth will have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their illiteracy in the first place. (Street, 2003, p. 77)

This view is consistent with that of Vygotsky, who argued that the social environment of the child has a significant influence on his/her cognitive development; children learn from people around them. These people are the source that shapes their attitude and informs their ideas, concepts, knowledge and skills. Vygotsky proposed a cognitive theory of learning based on social constructivism. Social constructivists believe that social interaction, cultural tools and activity influence one's development and learning. By participating in a broad range of activities with peers, adults and teachers, the learner internalizes the outcomes produced by working together. As Woolfolk (2001, p. 332) pointed out: "Knowledge grows through the interactions of the internal (cognitive) and external (environmental and social) factors."

Hence, teacher engagement was regarded as playing an important role in the child's development and motivation of 'higher mental functions' such as voluntary attention, voluntary memory, and rational, volitional, goal-directed thought. Vygotsky argued that the higher voluntary forms of human behaviour had their roots in social interaction, in the individual's participation in social behaviours that are mediated by speech:

Any higher mental function was external (and social) before it was internal. It was once a social relationship between two people. We can formulate the general genetic law of cultural development in the following way: Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice or on two planes... It appears first between people as an intermental category, and then within the child as an intramental category. This is equally true of voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of the will. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

Vygotsky saw the higher mental functions as 'social' in two senses: first, like other aspects of culture, their development is part of the development of the socio-cultural system and their existence is dependent on transmission from one generation to the next through learning; and second, they are nothing other than the organization and means of actual social behaviour that has been taken over by the individual and 'internalized'. He therefore advocated that the 'higher mental functions' and their development was a social and cultural process. The child participates in cultural events and comes to internalize certain aspects of the world; cognitive development thus has its origins in interacting among people in a culture. In the teaching-learning situation, interaction with the teacher leads to cognitive development.

Another significant contribution by Vygotsky to the theory of cognitive development is the concept of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). He described the ZPD as follows:

the distance between the [child's] actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

According to Vygotsky, instruction must awaken and bring to life those functions that are in the process of maturing, that is, those functions in the ZPD. In this way direct teaching and other forms of instruction influence the cognitive development of the child.

In Vygotsky's view, to help a child develop from primitive knowledge (remembering) to maturation of higher mental functions, the adult must determine two things: first, the child's actual developmental level, by learning about the child's problem-solving capabilities as he/she works without any help; and second, what the child can do with adult guidance. When a child is working independently, we see the actual developmental level of the child. When a child is working with an adult, we see the potential development of the children, learning with a competent, nurturing mediator. The difference between these two levels of functioning is called the ZPD.

As teachers begin to engage in the selection of teaching strategies, play should also be given serious thought. Vygotsky also viewed play as a leading factor in child development, and asserted that "In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior, in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself" (1978, p. 129).

The contribution of Vygotsky to cognitive theories of learning is significant and is applicable to the South African NCS since it is based on principles that emphasize active learning, teacher-learner interaction and constructivism. In terms of their engagement in pedagogy, teachers are required to assist learners as they participate in classroom activities by giving information, prompts, reminders, and encouragement when needed, and then gradually allowing the student to work on their own. It is expected that teachers would adapt lessons to suit the learners' current abilities, allow them to demonstrate skills or thought processes, guide students through the steps of a complicated problem, give detailed feedback and allow revisions or asking of questions that refocus students' attention. In this regard Vygotsky's principle of ZPD is of significance. To help the child in his/her cognitive development the teacher must correctly diagnose the zone within which the child is working. This may be done through interviews, observations and questions. Once the teacher understands the individual child's abilities, he or she needs to engage in the different areas of pedagogy by selecting appropriate tasks, using appropriate teaching strategies, creating appropriate learning environments and climates for maximum interaction, and providing appropriate assistance to learners.

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development has implications for teachers' engagement in pedagogy, which becomes evident when we involve learners as active participants in the lesson and not passive recipients of knowledge. His theory suggests that teachers gather what

they already know and then build on that existing knowledge by gradually introducing the new. We adjust what we know to fit the new learning and the old learning together in a balanced way. Teaching must be viewed as an act of helping learners to move from where they are into a place of new knowledge. The learning process should not be rushed. Learners develop at their own pace, some requiring more time and space than others. Learning programmes are designed to accommodate the varying intellectual abilities of children.

Social and cultural events play a vital role in the child's cognitive development and should therefore form an integral part of the curriculum. Learning programmes include music lessons, art work, drama, and playing with apparatus. The value of play in education must not be undermined. Work by Street (2003, pp. 77-83) shows that researchers of NLS posit that the concept of literacy practices is linked to cultural and social events. In his research of NLS Street indicated that literacy practices focus on social practices and conceptions of reading and writing. He argued that literacy practices "refers to the broader cultural conceptions of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts" (Street, 2003, p. 79). Insights from NLS on educational practice and policy reveal that researchers

want to use the understandings of children's emerging experiences with literacy in their own cultural milieus to address broader educational questions about learning of literacy and of switching between the literacy practices required in different contexts (Street, 2003, p. 83).

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development has also been met with some criticism. While researchers have commended the constructivist approach for its emphasis on learners' active participation and acknowledgement of the learners' social environment as a contributor to learning, the approach failed to reflect either the active role of the learning agent or the influence of the social interactive contexts in everyday educational settings (Liu & Matthews, 2005, pp. 386-387). Also, Fox (2001) noticed that in emphasizing learners' active participation, proponents of constructivist theories dismiss the role of passive perceptions, memorization, and all the mechanical learning methods of traditional didactics lecturing. According to Liu and Matthews (2005, p. 389):

researchers have noted that "while constructivism teaching methods, including

one-to-one or small group classroom interactions, do not always guarantee teaching effectiveness, traditional didactic lecturing in large classes of 50 to 70 students has not always meant the doom of teaching efforts.

In response to Vygotsky's statement that "any higher mental function was external (and social) before it was internal. It was once a social relationship between two people" (1978: 86), Liu and Matthews (2005, p. 392) suggest that it points to the belief that education must not only be content with children's enculturation, but must also promote individual consciousness as a consequence of enculturation. According to Liu & Matthews (2005), this is in contrast to the philosophy of situated learning theory. They argue that the philosophy underpinning situative theory is that individuals as non-initiative beings receive one-sided external forces from the social. In Vygotsky's theory the development of intellect and rationality beyond situations is the central aim of education. Fox contended that:

another variant of this extreme socialization theory is to argue that all knowledge is based on language and on linguistic representation, or perhaps on semiotic systems more generally. This form of experience excludes other forms such as perceptual experience, practical trial and error and non-verbal emotion. If held literally, this view denies any knowledge to infants in their pre-linguistic phase, and tends to imply that animals cannot know anything. It also ignores all the implicit knowledge we have of the world which we have never put into words. (Fox, 2001, pp. 29-30)

Despite the criticisms against the constructivist approach, I would argue that the philosophy underpinning this approach, when applied correctly, would enhance teachers' engagement in language development and acquisition of literacy skills for young learners.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the interrelated components of pedagogy as defined by Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002) were discussed. I suggested that the philosophy of social constructivism, as advocated by Vygotsky, forms the underpinning principles for teacher engagement in literacy learning programmes for Foundation Phase learners. The Turning Points Literacy Model that has been used effectively in the USA provides a conceptual framing for effective classroom practice and teacher engagement in balanced literacy programmes.

The next chapter examines contributions that researchers in the field of pedagogy have made to the literature, that stimulate discussion on teacher engagement and its impact on learner performance.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This literature review examines what researchers have contributed to the body of knowledge on the teacher as one of the key elements in pedagogy. It includes reviews of studies conducted on pedagogy both in South Africa and internationally such as in Australia, England, Canada and the USA. These studies cover work done as early as 1986 and up until 2010, and includes researchers such as Hoadley et al. (2010), Wang et al. (1993), Bloch (2009), Sadowski (2006), Brophy (1986); De Witt (2007), Berliner (1986), Hattie (2003), Hayes et al. (2006), Martlew et al. (2010), Browne (2009), Adams et al., and Dickinson and Tabors (2002). In examining the work of these researchers I aim to explore teachers' engagement in pedagogy in the Foundation Phase. My review focuses on aspects which are essential for effective pedagogy to occur, including instructional techniques, social interaction, the creation of learning environments, age-appropriate subject matter, use of resources and technologies, monitoring learning and providing corrective feedback, classroom management, and teachers' attitudes and expectations.

The review presented here reveals the impact of teacher engagement in pedagogy on learner performances. It begins with a description of the Foundation Phase curriculum and then examines the importance of teachers, productive pedagogy, teachers making a difference, social engagement and developing language and literacy skills.

3.2 Foundation Phase curriculum

In scanning literature on the teaching and learning of literacy it is necessary to reflect on what the Language Policy of the South African education system suggests about teacher engagement in the literacy learning programme. The RNCS document states that learners have developed a high level of proficiency in their home language through a variety of interactions with others in their home environment in the context of care, nurturing and play. The policy declares that the literacy curriculum is such that language development begins with the children's emergent literacy and involves a gradual process of improving. It claims that mistakes are a natural part of that process, and with support, learners' language will become increasingly more accurate as they have more opportunities to use and develop their

language knowledge and skills. Teachers should take cognizance of what learners already know and create a learning environment that celebrates, respects and builds on this prior knowledge (DoE, 2003, pp. 43-50). From these statements it is evident that the South African curriculum calls upon the Foundation Phase teachers to engage in the various components of pedagogy to bring out the innate ability of learners to learn.

The teacher's engagement with aspects of pedagogy is essential in order for high- quality learner performances to occur. We examine this statement within a South African context by referring to the work of Hoadley et al. (2010), which compares learning bases and gives an evaluation of Foundation Phase curricula in South Africa, Canada (British Columbia), Singapore and Kenya. The study reveals that the South African curriculum as it is currently configured in the NCS lacks a sufficiently coherent and systematic theory of curriculum (how knowledge should be organized for learning), underpinned by a suggested pedagogical approach:

A direct link between student performance and curriculum is not claimed, but the findings do alert us to the fact that the suitability of a particular curriculum design cannot be considered independent of its content of implementation, as well as a historical and social view of pedagogy as it occurs in schools. (Hoadley et al., 2010, p. 63)

The study also reveals that there is a wide spread of documentation for the curriculum, and this has resulted in lengthy, contradictory and inconsistent accounts of what teachers are expected to teach and how they are supposed to teach it. The documents have become an obstacle to teachers gaining a clear understanding and depth of knowledge of curricula, resulting in poor teaching practice and poor learner performance. The report recommends that South Africa develop a curriculum for South African teachers that they can understand, access, and relate to, while at the same time protecting the need for students to learn internationally recognized content in a way that is optimal for their development.

3.3 Importance of teachers

In examining teacher engagement in pedagogy it is valuable to focus on studies that shed light on the importance of teachers in enhancing children's performance. Wang et al. (1993, p. 276) claim that State, district and school level policy and demographics have little influence on school learning:

simply instituting new policies, whether state, district, or school level, will not necessarily enhance student learning. Implementing a policy of maximized learning time, for example, does not guarantee that children in a given classroom will receive instruction from a teacher who plans lessons with special attention to eliminating poor management practices and inefficient use of time.

They argue that school learning is influenced by proximal variables, including psychological variables, instructional variables such as classroom management, and home environment variables which include parental involvement in their child's learning. Wang et al. (1993, p. 280) concluded their review by stating that State, district and school policies that received the most attention in the last decade of educational reform appear to have been the least influential on learning. They came to the conclusion that changing policies (even if they were well intentioned and well founded) must focus on proximal variables in order for improved practice in classrooms and homes. From this argument it is evident that the Foundations for Learning documents alone are inadequate in improving learner performance. It is the ability of the teachers to engage in the different areas of pedagogy that determines the extent to which learners would be able to compete against children of the same age from international communities.

Graeme Bloch (2009), in his book *The Toxic Mix: What's wrong with South Africa's schools and how to fix it*, identifies possible reasons for the poor performance of South African learners and makes some recommendations. He argues that in order to improve the quality of education in our schools the teachers themselves must come on board. They need to know exactly what is expected of them. He emphasizes that interaction between teacher and learner in the classroom is the starting-point for all else that happens in education. Some of the reasons he cited for learners' underachievement were, amongst others, that:

- teachers had low content knowledge;
- teachers lacked the vital skills and understanding in planning, phasing the work they have to teach, and deciding how to get through the important and core aspects of the year's work;
- the basics of pedagogy were absent, such as reading aloud, continuous writing practice by learners and use of techniques that would ensure that the foundations for literacy and numeracy can be put in place;
- teachers lacked the core abilities to teach, even when the will was there; and

- many students are not ready for formal schooling due to a lack of support from home, unemployment and poverty, and so on.

As a way forward in attempting to solve the crisis in education, he formulated a plan called the Ten-Point Programme of the Education Roadmap. In it he places the classroom teacher at the forefront of change, commenting on the teacher's responsibility, his/her performance and teacher quality, followed by comments on support to school and societal issues.

In the next section aspects of supportive classrooms and teacher engagement as essential constituents for improving learner performances are explored.

3.4 Productive pedagogy

Hayes et al. (2006) offer inputs as to what contributes to productive pedagogy. They conducted a study in Australia that focused on improving learning outcomes for all students. They identified four dimensions of classroom practice that made a difference to student's learning: intellectual quality, supportive classroom environments, engagement with difference, and connectedness to the world beyond the classroom. In the first dimension lessons that are high in intellectual quality are characterized by active student learning and problem-solving approaches. Important concepts and processes are learnt in depth rather than recited, and opportunities for healthy discussions are provided. In the second dimension supportive classroom environments see students and teachers respecting each other, and the learner feels brave enough to explore knowledge; he/she is not afraid of making mistakes in pursuit of knowledge. The third dimension deals with engagement with difference, where educators encourage participation by all learners and lessons reflect the diverse beliefs, languages and cultures of its students. In the fourth dimension connectedness to the world beyond the classroom influences the pedagogic practice to adopt an integrative approach where knowledge and events are linked to real-life contexts. The contribution by Hayes et al. (2006) is significant in that it emphasizes the importance of social engagement between the teacher and learner in the construction of learning and knowledge.

Sadowski (2006, pp. 1-6) offers the following insight into productive or effective pedagogy: high-quality early education can accomplish the task of laying the groundwork for more complex reading, writing, and mathematical tasks, narrowing early socio-economic gaps in school performance and fostering interpersonal skills that serve as a foundation not only for

later schooling but for success later in life. He contends that pre-kindergarten to Grade 3 students are a special segment of the school population, whose learning needs can only be met by highly trained professionals with a broad knowledge base about early childhood development and a rich repertoire of specialized strategies and subject matter teaching skills. He identifies 10 components of effective instruction that Foundation Phase teachers must know and carry out: knowledge of child development, methods for teaching diverse children, use of multiple forms of assessment, organization of learning environments, curriculum design that helps children make connections, strategic use of resources and technologies, parental and family outreach, professional collaboration and development, reflection for enhanced teaching, and vertical alignment. Teachers can develop these competencies by improved access to professional development, facilitating teacher collaboration towards vertical alignment, and supporting the use of developmentally appropriate curriculum, assessment and other classroom practices.

It is proposed that teacher engagement is influenced by proximal variables, teacher knowledge and understanding and classroom organization. In this regard, it is argued that teachers can make a difference.

3.5 Teachers make a difference

Hattie (2003) conducted a study in New Zealand on the difference that teachers make on student achievements and its quality, examining the difference between expert and experienced teachers. His study revealed that experienced teachers do not guarantee optimum performance by learners. He identified five dimensions of teacher expertise: identifying essential representations of subject; guiding learning through classroom interactions; monitoring learning and providing feedback; attending to affective attributes; and influencing student outcomes. He concluded that students that were taught by expert teachers displayed understanding of concepts that were more integrated, more coherent, and at a higher level of abstraction than understanding achieved by other students. Based on his findings I would argue that, more than experience, it is the teachers' engagement in the different areas of pedagogy that influences learner performance.

The work of Brophy (1986) on teacher effects suggests that the extent of teacher engagement in pedagogy influences student performances. Brophy (1986, p. 1076) found that “achievement is influenced by the amount of time that students spend engaged in appropriate academic tasks”. According to Brophy, children learn more efficiently when their teachers first structure new information for them and help relate it to what they already know, and then monitor their performance and provide corrective feedback during recitation, drill, practice and application activities. He argued that

the attainment of higher level learning objectives will not be achieved with relative ease through discovery learning; instead, it will require considerable instruction by a skilled teacher, following thorough mastery of basic knowledge and skills that must be integrated and applied in the process of higher level performance. (Brophy, 1986, p. 1076)

In his study of pedagogy in American schools, Brophy showed that well-managed classrooms with minimal disruptions, structured lessons with appropriate tasks, and a range of different kinds of questioning, homework that serves to reinforce skills learnt, and a positive classroom climate, all had positive effects on student achievement. Brophy’s work suggests that a high level of teacher engagement in the various aspects of pedagogy will enhance learners’ performance. He argued that teachers who can successfully organize their classrooms, articulate achievement expectations and objectives, select and design academic tasks, and instruct their students, are those who are energetic, motivated, and possess good knowledge of subject matter as well as pedagogical skills. Given the poor results of South African learners in systemic evaluation, my study explores teacher engagement and its influence on learner performances in literacy.

De Witt (2007, p. 9) emphasizes the point that teachers play a pivotal role in raising the standard of literacy in schools. She conducted her research in five provinces in South Africa - Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. Her concluding remarks were that intervention programmes needed to be put in place to address the teachers’ lack of understanding of children in the Foundation Phase. These intervention programmes were to focus on enhancing the teachers’ knowledge and understandings of young children and their specific needs, as well as knowledge and understandings of the relevant methodical approaches and implications thereof for teaching. It is expected that teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the essential components of pedagogy would lead to an improvement in the quality of teacher engagement - and hence of student achievement.

To this intent it is worth examining the work of Berliner (1986). In his work *In Pursuit of the Expert Pedagogue* he attempted to explain what constitutes good teaching, and focused on the nature of expertise in teaching, comparing novice and expert or experienced teachers. He found that there were important differences between them. Experts used higher-order systems of categorization to solve problems; they are fast and accurate in recognizing patterns; sensitive to the context in which they work; and self-disciplined and skillful in planning and managing time. He believes that extensive practice and training make the expert's skills automatic, and that they could be maintained with very little practice or thought (Berliner, 1986, p. 7). He concluded that expert educators rely on two domains of knowledge, namely knowledge of subject matter, and knowledge of classroom management and organization. In working towards pedagogic expertise, educators had to learn to deal with such problems as discipline, varied paces at which children learn, sustaining the interest of poorly motivated children, managing resources and classroom requirements.

3.6 Social engagement

Social engagement is crucial for the development of literacy skills in children. Such social engagement offers opportunities for the creation of learning environments that are conducive to the cultivation of skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Martlew et al. (2010, p. 12) agree that learning environments are important to language and literacy acquisition, and the learning environment of the classroom affects both what children do and how they do it. Amongst other factors, the learning environment should be enriched with teacher-to-child and child-to-child interactions. According to Martlew et al. (2010, p. 12), oral language skills underpin much of development in literacy. They argue that oral language skills contribute to the development of children's skills in narrative, reading, comprehension and writing. Apart from helping children to organize their understanding of the world and to develop their reasoning skills, talk also fosters social development and emotional well-being. Hence the teacher has a pivotal role to play in ensuring a high-quality literacy programme with ample opportunities for purposeful social interaction. The teacher remains a valuable resource in providing the specific ideas and suggestions around which discussions would centre, thereby enabling language development.

According to Hendrik (2004, p. 379), “Literacy doesn’t just happen. It depends on learning a huge repertoire of subskills usually referred to as emergent literacy skills.” Gordon and Browne (2004, p. 206) assert that teachers should encourage children to be actively involved in a variety of activities and have frequent, positive interactions with educators. They also agree that teachers should listen to children attentively, ask open-ended questions, extend children’s actions and verbalization with complex ideas, interact with children individually, use positive guidance techniques and encourage appropriate independence. Adams et al. (2004), in their study of a small sample of reception classes in England, identified three areas as essential for the development of literacy skills in children: sustained, shared, purposeful talk; complex, imaginary experiences; and authentic, engaging, first-hand experience. They claim that these factors provided children with a valuable source to draw from in their talk, drawing, creative work and play, facilitated by the teacher.

3.7 Developing language and literacy skills

Researchers agree that literacy development does not simply happen in the absence of carefully planned strategies and supportive environments. The teacher’s engagement in using appropriate strategies and creation of appropriate learning environments is essential. With this in mind, I examine the work of Browne (2009), who asserts that understanding the way children develop their skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing provides teachers with an understanding of the conditions that support learning and strategies which help children to learn. As children are exposed to a full range of language in which adults interpret, repeat, extend and provide models of speech as well as providing support to children in their production of language, they become increasingly proficient in their language use. She argues that learning to read and write is founded upon children’s oral language competence. As they learn to speak, they discover that language contains meaning, follows a particular structure and consists of sentences, words and parts of words. They can apply this knowledge about language as they learn to read and write. Browne (2009) says that the teacher’s willingness to explore topics collaboratively, allowing children to negotiate meaning and extend their understanding through talk, is the key to developing children’s learning.

A high degree of teacher engagement is also characterized by the teacher's ability to create literacy environments that are rich in language. Browne's (2009) work also suggests that the Foundation Phase classrooms should be rich and dynamic literacy environments, providing children with opportunities to read, write and learn more about the nature and purpose of literacy. They should have a writing area, a listening area and a library area. Everyone in the class should contribute to displays of writing which illustrate the nature, variety and uses of print. Children should be immersed in the sounds of written language as stories, poems, rhymes and information books. Any way that written language can be integrated into the surroundings would be helpful in creating an environment that is conducive to literacy development. There should be frequent story-telling and story-reading sessions, with opportunities for children to listen to and read known stories and rhymes for themselves. Children should have access to books to read in class and at home, as well as ready resources for writing. There should be an expectation that every child will read and write. In a well-organized and productive environment children are meaningfully engaged in learning activities which they see as interesting and relevant. Children must be met by a positive expectation about their ability to listen, speak, read and write. Thoughtful planning and careful classroom management combined with an understanding of how young children learn are likely to lead to successful teaching and learning.

In their article *Fostering Language and Literacy in Classrooms and Homes*, Dickinson and Tabors (2002) assert that staff at all levels must have a basic understanding of what early literacy is, and an awareness of the experiences that support its development. Without such understanding there is a danger that programmes will be mandated to address literacy skills in ways that neglect what we know about how young children construct literacy. They argue that even well-meaning teachers may be tempted to return to heavy-handed, didactic instructional methods that have been discouraged for years. Their research revealed that teacher-child conversations in which children play an active part have an important role in the development of children's language and literacy skills. These conversations included personal narratives, explanations, pretend play, talk about past and present events, and discussions of ideas around specific topics.

Dickinson and Tabors (2002) propose three dimensions of children's experiences during the preschool and kindergarten years that are related to later literacy success: exposure to varied vocabulary; opportunities to be part of conversations that use extended discourse; and home

and classroom environments that are cognitively and linguistically stimulating. Based on their findings, Dickinson and Tabors (2002) recommend that attention must be given to building early foundations in oral language, and that teachers must constantly deepen their knowledge to constantly extend children's oral language while also encouraging phonemic awareness and writing skills. Teachers must work collaboratively to provide a socially supportive atmosphere that encourages children to share ideas and strategies, exchange writings and challenge each other's thinking. They must also actively reach out to families, building on their strengths while guiding them toward the kinds of home language and literacy activities that will help their children achieve the educational success that families desire for their children. Dickinson and Tabors (2002) claim that with these early language experiences, children will be far more likely to acquire the specific reading and writing skills needed for school success.

3.8 Conclusion

A synthesis of studies by Wang et al. (2009), Sadowski (2006), Brophy (1986), Berliner (1986), Hattie (2003), Hayes et al. (2006), Martlew et al. (2010), Browne (2009), Adams et al. (2004), Hendrik (2004), De Witt (2007) and Dickinson and Tabor (2002) reveal that they hold similar views on the importance of appropriate teacher engagement in the different areas of pedagogy in order for successful learning to occur. The studies suggest that teacher engagement in pedagogy involves knowing about child development and what to teach, with high-quality interaction between the teacher and student and amongst the students themselves. It also involves creation of appropriate learning environments, knowing and selecting appropriate teaching strategies, establishing links with the students' home, and managing classrooms, strategic use of resources, reflection for enhanced teaching, monitoring learners and providing feedback.

The best education policies alone are not enough to ensure that successful pedagogy takes place. It would seem that effective pedagogy is the result of teachers who are motivated, possess good knowledge of subject matter and have the ability to use a variety of pedagogical approaches and resources to influence teaching. They are mindful of the socio-economic backgrounds of learners, knowledgeable and understanding of their needs and interests, and able to develop learning programmes accordingly. These teachers display skill in creating appropriate learning environments, managing classrooms, involving learners in the lesson,

monitoring learners' work and providing corrective feedback. The literature also reveals that close links between the home and school contributes to the effectiveness of pedagogy.

The next chapter outlines the location of the study, its methodology and design, and addresses some ethical concerns.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the approach to the study and the research design. In addition, it explains the sampling process and offers some background information on the schools selected for the study. This is followed by an in-depth explanation of the methods of data collection and data analysis. The chapter concludes by addressing some ethical concerns.

4.2. Paradigm and approach

This study is located in the interpretive paradigm. According to Leedy and Ormond (2010, p. 136), an interpretive approach will enable the researcher to gain new insights about a particular phenomenon; develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon; and discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon. The aim of this approach is to understand how individuals in everyday settings construct meaning and explain their events, actions and experiences of their world (Creswell, 2009, p. 21). An interpretive lens will allow me the flexibility to describe, make sense of, understand and interpret teachers' knowledge and understandings about their engagement in pedagogy for Foundation Phase learners. Since the teacher is the unit of study, the interpretive approach is appropriate for this research. With this approach the primary sources of data are the teachers and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings of teacher engagement. I am interested in what teachers as a source reveal about their engagement in pedagogy. Following this approach will enable me to discover possible problems that teachers may be experiencing as they engage in pedagogy. The findings will be able to assist in developing concepts to enhance teacher engagement in pedagogy so that South African learners can achieve adequately.

Mason (2010) draws our attention to the major challenge of an interpretive approach, which centres on the question of how you can be sure that you are not simply inventing data, or misrepresenting your research participant's perspective. To overcome this problem I have

captured teachers' responses to the interview questions in their own words. Notes from classroom observations and documentary reviews were recorded fully and explicitly.

The research involved a qualitative study within an interpretative paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, pp. 268-269) assert that in qualitative research we find that questions are often broadly outlined with the purpose of letting the data generate questions and challenge the assumptions upon which original ideas were built. A qualitative approach will allow me to probe the issues raised by questioning to obtain clarity and/or to challenge the assumptions on which their first ideas or responses were constructed. Where responses are contentious or open to interpretation, the entire response can be captured. A qualitative approach is thus helpful in ascertaining the subjective content of pedagogy in Foundation Phase classrooms. Leedy and Ormond (2010, p. 135) describe qualitative research as encompassing several approaches to research that are in some respects quite different from one another. However, of all the approaches have two things in common: first, they focus on phenomena that occur in their natural settings, and second, they involve studying phenomena in all their complexity. The qualitative approach was therefore appropriate for this study as it allowed me the opportunity to gather data about teacher engagement in pedagogy while teachers were engaged in classroom practice. Interview questions were based on their engagement with lessons in the classroom, and documents reviewed were those that teachers were using to inform their engagement in pedagogy.

Within a qualitative approach a case study design was appropriate for this study. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2006), a case study design involves comprehensive and systematic investigation of a few cases. Case studies are a useful means of gathering information. Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 164) state that "case studies rely on historical and document analysis, interviewing, and typically, some forms of observation for data collection." My research relies on these three methods for data collection. Leedy and Ormond (2010, p. 108) describe a case study as a type of qualitative research in which in-depth data are gathered relative to a single individual, programme or event, for the purpose of learning more about an unknown or poorly understood situation:

case studies may also be useful for investigating how an individual or program changes over time, perhaps as the result of certain circumstances or interventions. In a case study, the

researcher collects extensive data on the individual, program or event on which the investigation is focused.

According to Leedy and Ormond (2010, p 137) the investigative data could be obtained from observations, interviews, document reviews and past records.

Data collection for my study involved the three methods used in case studies of document analysis, interviewing and observation. I treated each school in my sample as a case. The general objective was to develop a full understanding of teacher engagement in pedagogy in its natural setting of the classroom.

4.3 Context and sampling

Since I am interested in obtaining depth of understanding, three Foundation Phase classes were chosen in which to conduct the study and teachers from Grades 1 to 3 were included in the study. Given the limited scope of this study, only one teacher per grade was included. I selected the schools for the study by means of convenience sampling. Leedy and Ormond (2010, p. 212) state that convenience sampling makes no pretense of identifying a representative subset of a population. It takes people or other units that are readily available. I used schools that were in close proximity (within 3 km) of each other, two in Shallcross and one in Queensburgh in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. These schools fall into the ward 119 cluster in the Chatsworth East district.

I visited each school and spoke to the Principals about my study. I explained the purpose of my visit, which was to seek permission to conduct research at their school. The Principals then consulted their teachers and School Governing Body about my request and permission was then granted for me to conduct the research at their schools. The first three schools to grant me permission to conduct my research were Parklane Primary; Everite Primary and Model Primary School (these names are pseudonyms). The next section offers some information about each of the schools used in the study. Anecdotal evidence (conversations, walkabouts, colleagues' cluster meetings) as well as documentary analysis (newsletters, magazines and newspaper articles) were used to gain information data about the schools.

4.3.1 Parklane Primary School

This school has a population of approximately 663 learners, with an average of 43 learners per class. Although the school is situated at Shallcross in Queensburgh, Durban, the learner population includes children of all four predominant races, i.e. Indian, coloured, African (black) and White children. The children that attend this school come not only from Shallcross but from other areas as well such as Chatsworth, Escombe, Burlington, Mariannhill, Hammarsdale, Cliffdale and Shongweni. The children that come from these areas travel by train and chose to attend this school because it is situated close to the train station. The children that travel by train to the school are black children whose mother tongue is not English; however, the medium of instruction is English. African children account for about 46% of the school learner population. There are also immigrant learners from Zimbabwe.

This school is situated in a suburb of flat dwellers whose socio-economic status is below average. Many of the children come from single-parent homes and homes where there is substance abuse. Many of the African learners are living with their grandparents while their parents are working and living somewhere else. The school relies heavily on fundraising activities to meet its financial obligations, because about 70% of the children come from disadvantaged backgrounds and their parents do not pay school fees. Most of the parents of learners at this school are not actively involved in the life of the school, and show little or no interest in their children's learning.

There are six Foundation Phase teachers at the school, five permanent and one temporary teacher. Four of the permanent teachers have more than 20 years' teaching experience each and the other has 7 years' teaching experience. The temporary teacher has two years of teaching experience. Although the learner populations are largely from disadvantaged communities, the school has a quintile ranking of 5, which means that the school receives minimal funding from the State. Pam (pseudonym), a Grade 2 teacher from this school, took part in the study.

4.3.2 Everite Primary School

This school is located in Shallcross in Durban and has a population of approximately 450 learners with an average of 32 learners per class. The learners come from homes of average socio-economic status, and live in free-standing homes as opposed to flats. Approximately 90% of the learners are of Indian descent. In many cases both parents are working and the learners stay with grandparents, neighbours or relatives until the parents come home from work. The families are close-knit and spend quality time during weekends. The learners have a reasonable degree of exposure to books and other experiences such as going on holiday. The children are well fed and cared for. The school has four permanent Foundation Phase teachers, each with more than 20 years of teaching experience. The school has a quintile ranking of 5. Jen (pseudonym), a Grade 3 teacher from this school, took part in the study.

4.3.3 Model Primary School

This school is situated in Queensburgh in Durban and has a population of approximately 650 learners, with an average of 26 learners per class. The school is an ex-model C school, and learners come from homes of above-average socio-economic status. Many of the parents are professionals such as teachers, accountants or medical practitioners. The children come from very stable homes. Most of the children spend their afternoons in childcare centres while their parents are at work. Parents display great interest in their children's schooling, and the children are exposed to an array of books, computers, movies and holidays. There is extensive communication and interaction amongst family members. The activities of the school are well supported by the parents (e.g. concert evenings). This school also has a quintile ranking of 5. Sue (pseudonym), a Grade 1 teacher from this school, took part in the study.

4.4 Data collection

Three methods of data collection were used for this study: first, individual face-to-face interviews were held with teachers; second, lessons in progress were observed; and third, learners' workbooks, educator files, teacher-support material and assessment documents were examined. This strategy is described as triangulation. Cohen et al. (2007, p. 112) define

triangulation as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior.” Leedy and Ormond (2010, p. 99), on the other hand, describe triangulation as where “multiple sources of data are collected with the hope that they will all converge to support a particular hypothesis or theory.” According to Leedy and Ormond (2010, p. 99) this approach is especially common in qualitative research, because in many instances a researcher may engage in field observations and conduct in-depth interviews that look for common themes that appear in data gleaned from both methods.

From the different categories of triangulation I have selected methodological triangulation for my study, which facilitates the drawing of comparisons amongst the data derived from the three data collection methods. Data for the study were obtained from teacher interviews, classroom observations and documentary reviews. Each of the three methods should yield substantially the same results, thereby ensuring reliability, trustworthiness and validity. A table indicating the data collection schedule is included at the end of this section (Figure 4.2).

4.4.1 Interviews

The interview schedule was divided into five sub-sections: sources of content, teaching and learning strategies, classroom interactions, creation of learning environments, and general questions. Each sub-section had a list of questions that was asked in the face-to-face interviews, focusing on teacher engagement in pedagogy. Neuman (2006, p. 305) notes that an interview is a short-term, secondary social interaction between two people with the explicit purpose of one person obtaining information that is explicit from the other person. Leedy and Ormond (2010, p. 188) argue that the benefit of face-to-face interviews is that they allow the researcher to gain the participants’ co-operation by establishing a relationship with them, which helps to achieve high response rates. They are also highly adaptable. Questions and responses that are unclear can be explained and rectified on the spot; verbal and non-verbal behaviour can be observed. They are therefore suitable for in-depth studies. Through face-to-face interviews I was able to get close to teachers, form relationships with them, and elicit authentic responses. The actual responses of teachers in the interview sessions were captured. Their responses were captured immediately onto the interview instrument as they spoke.

The interview included an appreciative inquiry as a data gathering strategy, as Mikkelson (2005) suggests that it is important to let people articulate their dreams, visions and possibilities. The ‘4D’ model that he suggests was used to glean ideas on good classroom practice through: discovery (appreciating the best of what is), dreams (what might be), design/destiny (co-constructing the future), and delivery (sustaining change).

Appendix 3 provides a sample of the interview questions asked. The questions included aspects such as teachers’ knowledge about pedagogy, teachers’ understandings about pedagogy, teaching and learning strategies, classroom interactions, and creation of learning environments.

4.4.2 Classroom observations

Observations of classroom practice were undertaken to collect data on the nature of pedagogy. Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 99) note that “observation is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry”. Cohen et al. (2007, p. 396) contend that the distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers the investigator an opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from naturally occurring social situations. This means that I would be able to secure first-hand data through observation. Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 98) state that “observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for a study.” I observed one lesson in each learning programme in each grade. The observation tool was developed by adapting an instrument used by the University of the Witwatersrand School of Education (2009). The observation instrument has two components, a set of Yes/No statements followed by observer notes (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Sample of observation instrument

1.	The content shows progression – builds on prior knowledge and is leading to further learning (the principle of ZPD in cognitive development as described by Vygotsky).	Yes/No
2.	The teacher engages with students in ways that promote their sense of success (social constructivism as a means to acquire knowledge).	
Notes:		

The observation schedule focused on interactions, lesson structure and management, content, methodologies, monitoring of learning, use of LTSM and creation of a learning environment. Extensive notes were taken and lessons were recorded. This enabled verification of the notes. (See Appendix 4

4.4.3 Review of documents

Documents that the teacher had consulted in planning, preparation and delivery of the lesson were examined. Examples of learners' work were also examined. As Hopkins (2008, p. 122) points out, documents surrounding a curriculum or other educational concern can illuminate rationale and purpose in interesting ways. He added that the main use of documents in classroom research is that they provide a context for understanding a particular curriculum or teaching method, and also provide an easy way of obtaining other people's perceptions.

According to Silverman (2004), a documentary analysis involves an examination of documents and incorporates a clear understanding of how documents are produced, circulated, read, stored and used for a wide variety of purposes. A document review, on the other hand, involves an examination of the contents of the document, but from an interpretive paradigm. As is the case with literature reviews, a document review would enable the researchers to place their work in context and to learn from earlier endeavours. I employed the document review approach in my study. Document reviews are valuable to note what is expected of teachers in terms of their engagement in the different areas of pedagogy.

Data obtained from the lesson observations and teacher interviews were compared to data from document reviews to determine the extent of teacher engagement in pedagogy. Documents that were reviewed included the RNCS Teachers Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes, Foundations for Learning Assessment Framework, Foundations for Learning Lesson Plans, *Government Gazette* 30880, Department of Basic Education Learner Literacy Workbooks and samples of learners' work.

4.5 Data analysis

Marshall and Rossman (2006) note that data analysis helps to bring order, structure and meaning to the mass of data that a researcher handles. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) suggest steps that are helpful in analyzing qualitative data, and these proved to be useful to me in organizing the data that I had collected. The data collection schedule is indicated in Figure 4.2, with McMillan and Schumacher's steps for data analysis outlined below that.

Figure 4.2 Data collection schedule

SCHOOL	EDUCATOR	DATE	METHOD	DURATION
Model	Teacher: Sue	08/06/2011	Interview	1 hour 15 minutes
Primary	Grade 1	17/05/2011	Observation lesson (discussion, reading, writing)	1 hour 45 minutes
		24/05/2011	Document review	45 minutes
		21/06/2011	Interview	1 hour 15 minutes
Parklane	Teacher: Pam	19/04/2011	Observation lesson (discussion, reading, writing)	1 hour 10 minutes
		31/05/2011	Document review	45 minutes
		17/05/2011	Interview	1 hour
Everite	Teacher: Jen	10/05/2011	Observation lesson (discussion, reading, writing)	1 hour 30 minutes
		09/06/2011	Document review	45 minutes

4.5.1 Step 1: Interim analysis

An interim analysis of the data was conducted once significant data sets were received. This helps to obtain a sense of what is emerging and also gives the researcher a chance to refocus the inquiry should the need arise. Once all the data were in, they were read carefully in order to get a sense of the whole. My study involved the reading of transcripts from teacher interviews, notes from classroom observations and documentary reviews. The documents that were reviewed included the FLP (*Government Gazette* 30880) and the RNCS.

4.5.2 Step 2: Generating topics

The next step was to generate the topics related to the research questions. This was facilitated by asking questions such as 'What is this about?', 'What are teachers talking

about/doing?', and 'What is important in this in relation to teacher engagement in pedagogy?' Topics were established from descriptions that recurred.

4.5.3 Step 3: Comparison and clustering

The next step was comparison of topics across the data set to establish what was duplicated or overlapping. Similar topics were clustered together. For example, the use of play, use of audiovisual media and group teaching are separate topics which I had clustered together to form the theme 'teaching strategies'. This is followed by category formation, which includes predetermined categories emanating from the research questions and literature. Predetermined topics were teachers' engagement in teaching strategies, the creation of appropriate learning environments, monitoring of learners' achievements, conducive classroom climates, social interactions, and LTSM.

4.5.4 Step 4: Patterns and abstractions

The last step was the discovery of patterns to inform abstractions. The relationship among categories was established. The patterns formed the thematic analysis as they had emerged; themes were as follows: teachers' engagement with sources of content; teachers' appropriate use of teaching and learning strategies; teachers' as facilitators of classroom interaction; teachers' role in monitoring learning; teachers' ability to create appropriate learning environments; and teachers' use of LTSM.

4.6 Ethical issues

According to Neuman (2006, p. 129) ethical issues refer to the concerns, dilemmas and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained via the university procedures prior to commencement of the study (Appendix 1). Permission to conduct the study using the mainstream public schools was obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal DoE. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and their consent was obtained. Participation was voluntary. All information obtained was treated in the strictest of confidence, and pseudonyms were used for the schools as well as the teachers. The time-table and routine of the school were respected. A report will be given to the participants when the study is completed. Teachers were made aware of the interview schedule and the observation instrument to be used. Participants were assured of their anonymity and privacy, as well as of respect for their views and the information provided (Appendix 2).

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter identified the approach to the study and the research design and methodology. The research involved a qualitative study and adopted the interpretive approach, making use of case studies. The method of triangulation was employed to collect and validate the data. The chapter provided clear explanations of the terms interpretive, qualitative, case studies and triangulation. It also outlined the sampling process and offered a profile of the research sites. Ethical issues were addressed.

The next chapter organizes the data collected and presents the findings of the study according to themes that emerged.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: TEACHER ENGAGEMENT IN PEDAGOGY

5.1 Introduction

The central focus of my study was to investigate teacher engagement with pedagogy in the Foundation Phase within the context of a literacy learning programme. This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings from teacher interviews, document reviews and classroom observations. Six themes emerged from the data collected and respond to the critical question asked in the study, which is:

How do teachers' engagements in pedagogy influence their practice in the literacy learning programme of the selected Foundation Phase classes in KwaZulu-Natal?

In general, pedagogy refers to the art of teaching and learning and covers specific aspects, namely content, teaching strategies, classroom environment, classroom interaction, assessments and use of LTSM. The themes that emerged from my findings address these specific areas of pedagogy.

5.2 Findings

Data from the teacher interviews, lesson observations and document reviews are discussed together in order to avoid repetition and overlapping of data. I had also taken copious notes during the interviews as well as the observations, which created the context within which to examine teacher engagement in pedagogy. Similar topics that emerged from the interview sessions, classroom observations and document review were clustered together to form themes. The following six themes emerged from the study:

- ❖ Teachers' engagement with the sources of content;
- ❖ Teachers' appropriate use of teaching and learning strategies;
- ❖ Teachers as facilitators of classroom interaction;
- ❖ Teachers' role in monitoring learning;
- ❖ Teachers' ability to create appropriate learning environments; and
- ❖ Teachers' use of LTSM.

This chapter begins with the first theme, teachers' engagement with the sources of content, and thereafter the subsequent themes are presented. Finally, significant insights from the literature which support the finding of this study are presented.

5.2.1 Teachers' engagement with sources of content

The sources of content to be taught in the Foundations Phase can be found in the RNCS policy document (DoE: 2003), the Foundations for Learning Assessment Framework (DoE: 2008) and Foundations for Learning Lesson plans (DoE: 2010)). Interview sessions with Sue, Pam and Jen (Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers respectively) revealed that they relied on the Foundations for Learning documents as well as the NCS to derive their content for literacy lessons. Sue said: *"I have been workshopped on the Foundations for Learning Programme. It seems to be working well. I also speak to other teachers that have experience"*. Pam, however, argued that *"While the lesson plans in the Foundations for Learning documents help in planning lessons, they did not accommodate second-language learners very well. Also, the milestones were reached at different stages by learners. Slow learners were left further behind."* She added that *"it is the learners' abilities and readiness which helps to determine the programme to be followed, for example, to teach single sounds or blends."* Jen, on the other hand, said: *"I always start with the basic source, i.e. the policy documents. It gives direction. I also rely on my experience."*

The teachers' responses indicate that they knew what sources to consult in planning and preparation of lessons. Although policy documents were available, valuable lessons were gained from their teaching experience and that of others. However, to rely solely on the Foundations for Learning documents and NCS documents would mean adopting a very clinical and stereotyped approach to teaching and learning. From an analysis of the NCS, the learning outcomes and assessment standards that must be achieved by learners at the end of each grade are gained. Core knowledge and concepts that learners are expected to acquire by the end of the grade are clearly indicated. The DoE (2008) also published the Foundations for Learning Assessment Framework, which identifies milestones per term for Grades 1 - 3 and also provides the teacher with assessment tasks that should be used to assess learners on achievement of the milestones. These milestones are directly linked to the learning outcomes and assessment standards as outlined in the NCS document (DoE, 2003, pp. 41- 49).

The DoE also published the Foundations for Learning Lesson Plans (DoE: 2010) for each grade, and the learning outcomes, assessment standards and milestones are built into these lesson plans. A strict adherence to these time-frames for all learners in the class will mean that the learning gap between the fast and slow learners would only widen over the years. The main purpose of a literacy learning programme, as reflected by the learning outcomes in the NCS document (DoE, 2003, p. 41), is to enable learners to communicate effectively either in spoken or written format. The teachers' lessons were observed in order to ascertain the extent to which their engagement with the sources of content influenced their practice.

Table 5.1: Engagement in content

The teacher demonstrates engagement with content by:		YES	NO
1.	Presenting planned and structured lessons to scaffold learners' achievements of outcomes in literacy.	SJ	P
2.	Adapting the lesson to their suit the needs and abilities of all learners.		SPJ
3.	Building on what the child already knows and gradually introducing the new information.	SPJ	
4.	Integrating the lesson with other aspects of the curriculum.	SPJ	

KEY: S = Sue; P = Pam; J = Jen.

In terms of presenting planned and structured lessons to scaffold learners' achievements of outcomes in literacy (category 1 in Table 5.1), Sue and Jen were able to engage adequately with the content. During the discussion lesson Sue had given her learners turns to relate their news to the class. One of the learner's news was selected for writing (*Tom's dad has a new blue car.*). After a quick discussion, the sentence was constructed on the board as learners called out the words that should be written. Upon completion, learners had to read, write and illustrate the sentence in their news books. During the reading lesson, Sue focused the learners on pictures to help them predict the text and create meaning.

Jen had screened the movie 'Finding Nemo' before writing a story on the adventures of an underwater creature. During the discussion Jen pointed out Nemo's adventures. Learners had to write down what they feel and think happens to sea creatures and then build on that to write an imaginative story about a sea creature. The teacher had provided adequate information as a rich resource from which to draw in developing their story.

Pam, on the other hand, did not have a carefully planned and structured lesson to scaffold learners' achievements of outcomes. She held a discussion on elephants: their habits and habitation as well as wild and tame elephants. Learners were then asked to write a story on elephants. It was unclear whether the story should be factual or imaginative. Learners were not guided and the teacher's expectations with regard to the structure of the writing were not clear.

Notes from classroom observations indicate that as far as adapting the lesson to suit the needs and abilities of all learners (category 2 in Table 5.1) were concerned, none of the teachers had made any attempts to accommodate the needs and varying abilities of the children. The same work was given to all the learners in the class; weak and struggling learners were forced to do the same tasks. Guided writing to assist weak learners, such as completion of sentences or question prompts, was not provided.

In terms of building on what the children already know and gradually introducing the new information (category 3 in Table 5.1), all of the teachers were able to link the new information to what learners already knew. Sue had introduced the use of capital letters and full stops when constructing their news sentence. Pam had developed a word bank for learners to draw from when writing their story. Jen, on the other hand, built on learners' prior knowledge of sea creatures by showing them a movie and then requiring the learners to write a story on the underwater world. Learners were asked to make their sentences interesting by adding adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions.

When integrating the lesson with other aspects of the curriculum (category 4 in Table 5.1) Sue, Pam and Jen were able to engage in content across the curriculum. Sue had integrated the news discussion with numeracy. She discussed parts of the car and the number of wheels (4). Jen had integrated her lesson on the underwater world with a life-skills lesson on the dangers out at sea. Pam integrated her creative writing lesson with phonics. The NCS document (DoE, 2003, p. 51) states that a literacy learning programme should help learners discover and use techniques and strategies to comprehend written words or symbols, such as the development of various word recognition and comprehension skills, sensitivity to the sounds of a language (phonemic awareness), knowledge of letter-sound correspondences

(phonics), knowledge of blends (putting together two or three letters to make a sound), and semantics and syntactics.

5.2.2 Teachers' appropriate use of teaching and learning strategies

From interviews held with teachers it was found that they understood that the development of learners' literacy skills would require as much exposure to the language as possible. Teachers were asked to share from their understandings about teaching and developing learners' literacy skills, or to explain from their understandings how Foundation Phase learners became literate. Sue held the view that *“practice, reinforcement or drill work is necessary. They tend to remember with these methods. Through discussion lessons, participation in nursery rhymes and show and tell, learners become literate. They also learn from each other.”* She indicated that in her class *“sometimes the learners sit at their places and work independently. Every learner has his/her own chalkboard on which they work quietly.”* She added that teachers should *“give learners exposure to not just books, but also television and magazines.”* She claimed that in order to develop learners' literacy skills, the teacher must *“teach sounds and words and must work one-on-one with second-language learners.”* She also stated that learners that have learning difficulties should be sent to the occupational therapist for assessment.

Pam also indicated that participation in discussions, play, songs and rhymes helped to develop learners' literacy skills and added that *“the teacher should create a language-rich environment. Discussions allow learners to talk about their experiences. Others who are not exposed to these experiences stand to benefit. The child gets a chance to talk.”* She was of the strong opinion that social interaction was important to develop reading and writing and that the *“role of churches, temples and similar institutions was important in this regard.”* She described the development of the learners' literacy skills in the early years thus: *“initially, learning is informal. Then they move into formal lessons where they learn phonemes and word recognition methods to read. They break up the words to read.”*

Jen, on the other hand, viewed the teacher's role as critical in developing learners' literacy skills. She stated that *“the teacher must guide the learners, and expose learners to various sources (radio, television, newspaper) and types of writing (poems, letters and stories). Such exposure helps learners to build vocabulary and develops their writing skills.”* She also mentioned the importance of teaching the core breakthrough words to assist learners in

becoming literate, and stated that *“through discussion we get learners to speak and this develops their listening and speaking skills. The use of oral drill enhances their reading and writing skills. Those who don’t know listen to the others and catch up.”*

The teachers’ engagement in teaching strategies to ensure that Foundation Phase learners become literate is found to be consistent with the teachers’ guide for development of learning programmes. The document offers the following brief explanation of how young learners learn language and literacy:

Learners develop their home language or additional language spontaneously, by listening to and interacting with others in their environment. They practice, develop and perfect their language skills through play, stories, and varied opportunities to interact with the world. They begin their literacy development from their first interactions with reading, writing, print and audio-visual media in the environment in which they grow up. The principle guiding the teaching and learning of literacy is that, literacy development involves a gradual process of improving various language related skills. Mistakes should be viewed as a natural part of the learning process. Learners’ literacy skills will become increasingly accomplished when they are given the opportunities to use and develop them. (DoE, 2003, p. 50)

It is evident that exposure to language is paramount in developing literacy skills. Data from classroom observations reveal that teachers engage differently with such knowledge in their classroom practice.

Table 5.2: Engagement in teaching strategies

The teacher demonstrates appropriate use of pedagogic strategies by		YES	NO
1.	Working from a solid knowledge base around barriers to learning.	J	SP
2.	Using different strategies for working with learners of various abilities.	P	SJ
3.	Encouraging active learner participation.	PJ	S
4.	Establishing a balance between teacher-directed and learner-directed activity.		SPJ
5.	Using a variety of instructional strategies including music, poems and play as cultural tools to learn about language.		SPJ

KEY: S = Sue; P = Pam; J = Jen.

In respect of working from a solid knowledge base around barriers to learning (category 1 in Table 5.2), Sue did not consider learning barriers that her learners may be experiencing. From my notes, it was found that one of her learners could not identify a word during the reading lesson and Sue remarked: *“You haven’t practiced your words. Please go home and learn your words.”* Pam also displayed a lack of consideration for learning difficulties that her learners may be experiencing. A learner had failed to read many of the words on the list and she asked: *“How do you expect to read if you do not know your words?”* No guidance was given on possible strategies that could be employed, such as looking at the initial, end or middle sounds in the word, as suggested in the NCS document (DoE, 2003, p. 51).

When reading from their readers, learners took turns to read as the teacher listened. Their only concern in the reading lesson was word recognition. Jen, on the other hand, worked from a solid knowledge base around the barriers to learning. She had shown her learners some pictures of the royal wedding, and held a discussion to focus learners’ attention on the outfits, transport, people and buildings. Having given the learners a point of reference, they were asked to write about the royal wedding.

Notes from classroom observations indicate that in terms of using different strategies for working with learners of various abilities (category 2 in Table 5.2), teachers did not vary their strategies. They relied on the discussion method, story-telling, the chalk and talk method and the use of pictures to present lessons. All written exercises given were the same for all learners.

In terms of encouraging active learner participation (category 3 in Table 5.2), notes from classroom observations suggest that the learners in Pam and Jen’s classes displayed confidence in participating in lessons because their teachers were very encouraging. They had encouraged their learners to participate in the discussions by constantly referring them to the pictures and report. During the reading lesson they had encouraged learners to use their phonic knowledge to read new words. Sue, on the other hand, was not supportive and encouraging to the slower learners. A learner had struggled to read in the reading lesson, and she remarked: *“I am very disappointed with your reading.”* From my notes it was found that another child who was very pleased with his achievement walked up to the teacher and gleefully said: *“Miss, look I’m finished.”* The teacher did not praise the child but said: *“It*

took you very long to complete your work.” The little boy walked right back to his place and sat very quietly and did not want to be noticed.

With regard to establishing a balance between teacher-directed and learner-directed activity (category 4 in Table 5.2), all of the teachers dominated their lessons. The discussion lessons were structured such that the teacher asked questions, to which learners provided answers. Learners were not given opportunities to challenge each others’ responses, to ask their peers questions for clarity, or to seek further information. Group discussions were not held to allow learners the opportunity to interact amongst themselves on specific topics.

In terms of using a variety of instructional strategies, including music, poems and play as cultural tools to learn about language (category 5 in Table 5.2), none of the teachers used poems, music and plays in their lessons. At the interview session teachers were asked about their perceptions of using music, poems and play in their lessons; they had made some very encouraging remarks. Sue said: *“I love it. Lots of oral lessons can be assessed. Speech and Drama builds children’s confidence. Also, some children cannot or don’t do written work. They battle with it, but excel in dance. Dance can be part of the Physical Education lesson. I think it is very important. Every child gets to dance on stage. The children’s faces light up.”* Although this teacher showed an appreciation for poems, music and play in the presentation of lessons, her response indicates that she is of the opinion that songs, poems and play are for those learners who are not inclined to achieve academically, so just let them perform on stage, where they can excel. Contrary to this belief, poems, music and play can provide immense possibilities for children to develop the necessary literacy skills that would equip them to achieve far more success academically, not only in literacy but in all learning areas. Pam’s perceptions on the use of poems, music and play were more favourable: *“I think it is a wonderful idea. If we could spend half an hour a day just for that ... It must be structured to achieve a learning outcome.”* Jen also seemed to appreciate poetry, music and play in her lessons, but said that *“...the volume of work is so great that there is very little time for these activities”*. It is quite clear that teachers understood the value of play, poems and music but did not include them in their literacy learning programme.

Data from the teacher interviews showed that teachers seemed to be stereotyped in their selection of teaching strategies. When asked about pedagogic principles that inform the way they taught literacy, the responses were quite diverse. Sue explained her teaching practice as

follows: *“For reading, start with the flash words, then picture books, and then practice reading books and finally the proper readers. Learners must be exposed to class reading, shared reading, group reading and individual reading”*. Pam, on the other hand, said that her *“teaching was influenced by Vygotsky’s views on developing critical thinkers. For example, after reading a story, learners are encouraged to give their own interpretation. I also use a combination of the old breakthrough method and Thrass [teaching handwriting, reading and spelling skills]”*. Jen said that she had *“no preference for any particular approach to my lessons. Teach word recognition. Be practical. Use visual aids. Pictorial studies are used in my lessons”*.

From these responses it is evident that the teachers did not give much thought to their teaching practice. Consideration was not given to, amongst other factors, the cognitive principles of learning, such as Vygotsky’s principle on the ZPD, the need for social interaction and the use of music, poems and play as cultural tools to develop literacy skills. Also, in any literacy lesson it is necessary to correlate the spoken with the written word. Learners must be taught to associate the phonic aspects of the language to its print. None of the teachers mentioned the teaching of phonics - building on what children know from listening (sounds) and then moving to the unknown, which the printed word, as suggested in the NCS document (2003, p. 44).

From my personal experience, choosing a method that benefits all learners, where learners’ abilities are diverse and the gap between fast and slow learners is ever widening, can be quite a daunting task. The Foundations for Learning assessment framework and lesson plans have set targets that the teachers are expected to reach within a specific term (DoE, 2008, pp. 20-27). The teachers were asked how they decide on a strategy that benefits all children, and the following responses were recorded. Sue said: *“I test children for their abilities. For example, test children on a set of words. The reading lesson would be geared towards that. The strategy would depend on what children can or cannot do. Don’t frustrate the child or yourself.”* According to Pam, *“It depends on the circumstances. Some need direct teaching, especially those who are struggling. It also depends on the teacher – what they feel comfortable with. If you feel you can cover more ground then direct teaching is most suitable. For creative writing, use discussions. For giving information, then direct teaching should be used”*. Jen’s response was that *“it depends on the learner’s performance. I may revisit a section if the children do not understand.”*

These responses indicate that teachers had considered the weak learners. However, they did not indicate that the assessment standards, as contained in the NCS documents, could be used as a guide to teachers in selecting a teaching method that would help to achieve the learning outcomes. From my notes it was found that although teachers had knowledge of the various teaching strategies that may be employed, they were very stereotyped in their selection of teaching strategies for delivering lessons.

5.2.3 Teachers as facilitators of classroom interaction

The heart of classroom practice is the interaction between the teacher and the learner. Interviews with teachers regarding their perceptions of social interaction between the learners and themselves revealed the following information:

Sue said that *“an open relationship is good. The children can’t be afraid of you, but they can’t have this all the time. They must do work as well. Be friendly but they are not your friend. Learners must know that they can come to you for help”*. Pam, on the other hand, said that *“social interaction is very important. If the teacher is always talking to them, the learners will feel comfortable talking to them. The teacher can step back from the authority figure.”* Jen held the view that through social interaction *“bonding develops between the teacher and learners and this is important for effective teaching”*.

Sue’s response indicates that she does not understand the value of social interaction in the class. Social interaction does not mean that learners are free to do whatever they wish. On the contrary, interaction between the teacher and learner or amongst peers must be intended to develop learners’ skills in literacy. The policy documents state that *“literacy is linked to personal empowerment and is essential for social and cultural interaction. Learners develop their home language or additional languages spontaneously, by listening to and interacting with others in their environment”* (DoE, 2003, pp. 49-50). Pam’s response meant that the teacher must give up her authority in class. At no point should the teacher ever give up his/her position of authority in the classroom. Social interaction should nurture respect for each other in the classroom. According to Jen, bonding is necessary for effective teaching and learning to take place and helps to build confidence and trust in the teacher, vital components in the pedagogic relationship.

During the interview I also asked teachers how they would create opportunities for positive classroom interaction to take place. Sue said that the teacher must “*call children one-on-one. Explain that it is your job to help. Don’t just assume that if you talk to the child, it is easy going. Communication is important*”. Pam suggested that we “*have smaller classes so that there is more time to interact; otherwise the teacher is forced to take the direct or explicit teaching mode. Group teaching is sometimes difficult with the large classes. Group teaching in large classes leads to a lot of discipline problems*”. Jen said that “*the teacher must be caring and sympathetic. Show learners that you love them*”.

From documentary analysis it was found that the NCS policy document (2003, p. 50) requires teachers to use the knowledge that children bring with them to school in their language development. This is central to their personal growth, their interactions with others, and their access to learning and the world around them. From my interviews it would seem that teachers downplayed the importance of teacher engagement in the classroom for effective teaching and learning. Notes from classroom observations also revealed that interaction was very limited and mostly teacher-dominated.

Table 5.3: Engagement in classroom interaction

The teacher demonstrates her role as facilitator of classroom interaction by		YES	NO
1.	Interacting with learners in a sensitive manner, and encouraging responses from the learners.	PJ	S
2.	Communicating to their learners what is expected.	SJ	P
3.	Using communication as a tool to develop the learners’ language skills.	SPJ	

KEY: S = Sue; P = Pam; J = Jen.

In terms of interacting with learners in a sensitive manner, and encouraging responses from the learners (category 1 of Table 5.3), data from lesson observations revealed that Sue was often insensitive in her engagement with learners. One of the learners was slow, so she remarked: “*Hey mister, complete your work.*” Pam, on the other hand, praised learners for their efforts. She also encouraged her learners to share their experiences, describe the pictures and give their views on elephants. Jen was also polite to her learners. She had promised her learners custard and jelly for good behaviour.

In terms of communicating to learners what is expected (category 2 of Table 5.3), Sue and Jen gave clear instructions to their learners and they knew what to do. Sue had told her learners to write the date, copy the news sentence and draw a picture about the news. Her learners were able to carry out the instructions. Jen had told her learners to look at the picture, plan a sentence in their head, and then report that sentence to the entire class, and this was followed explicitly. She was able to correct the sentences before they could be written in their books. Some of the learners were told not to start their sentence with “because”. Pam, however, was not clear on the type of story she had expected her learners to write. After a discussion on elephants she gave the learners two sentences to start off their story, and they were expected to write a story on elephants from this.

Regarding the use of communication as a tool to develop learners’ language skills (category 3 in Table 5.3), from my notes it was found that all the teachers I observed used communication adequately as a tool to develop their learners’ language skills. Sue was patient and tolerant and gave as many learners as time permitted chance to relate their news to the class. Learners were encouraged to speak one at a time, and enjoyed the freedom to tell their news. Pam also encouraged her learners to share their experiences. Jen, too, listened attentively as learners spoke and also encouraged others to listen while learners spoke.

Notes from the document reviews reveal that “in order to develop cognitively, learners need to develop the ability to use language to communicate their thinking, ideas, feelings and experiences, and to use a variety of communication forms to do this, including the use of audio-visual media and technology” (DoE, 2003, p. 49). From my lesson observations it was noted that Jen made good use of movies and pictures as visual and audiovisual media to help learners in the achievement of literacy goals.

5.2.4 Teachers’ role in monitoring learning

The NCS documents (DoE, 2003, p. 32) record that, to support learner development, “teachers must have a good sense of what can reasonably be expected of learners at different ages and levels in the Foundation Phase. Teachers must constantly observe learners to assess their understanding and progress. They watch closely as the learners participate in individual, paired and group activities and listen to their conversations and discussions. It is

important that learners who might experience barriers to learning and development are identified early, assessed, and provided with learning support.”

Against this backdrop, teachers were asked to give their perceptions on the monitoring of learners’ work, giving corrective feedback as well as reflection on their teaching practice. Sue said that *“books must be marked to see what learners have done. Explain to them why it is wrong. Learners can see where they need to do corrections. For class work, I give learners stars or a smiley face as encouragement if a child does well. Peer assessment is also good because children learn quickly when friends tell them it is wrong. After reflection the teacher can re-programme work.”* Pam said that *“it benefits the children. If the teacher understands how far the children are, they can plan lessons accordingly. We can only get to know them when we mark their work.”* Jen said that *“it must be done almost immediately. The teacher must do constant supervision.”*

The responses of the teachers reveal that monitoring and giving corrective feedback was done incidentally, i.e. as the books are marked, errors are pointed out and corrections must be done. All the marking seemed to be done in the presence of the child. However, from my teaching experience, I have noticed that it is not always possible to monitor children in this way. Monitoring of learners’ performance involves much more than the cursory marking of their work; it involves observing learners as they interact with their peers and teachers, comparing the results of a series of learners’ work, and listening to and communicating with these learners. Corrective feedback would often form a whole lesson and not just a minute or two to inform learners of their errors and the corrections that should be done. Teachers did not review their teaching strategies to improve learner performance. From classroom observations it was found that that monitoring of learners was exercised diligently.

Table 5.4: Engagement in monitoring learning

The teacher demonstrates her role in monitoring learners work by:		YES	NO
1.	Ensuring that learners understand what is to be done.	SJ	P
2.	Providing corrective feedback from the application activities.	S	PJ
3.	Reflecting on and evaluating her teaching practice so as to enhance their professional knowledge and its effects on their future instructional planning.		SPJ

KEY: S = Sue; P = Pam; J= Jen.

In terms of ensuring that learners understood what is to be done (category 1 in Table 5.4), lesson observations revealed that Sue and Jen took the necessary steps to ensure that learners understood what was to be done. Sue took quick walks around the class in between the group reading lesson to check on learners' work. Jen asked her learners to make an oral presentation of their creative writing before the actual writing in their exercise books to ensure that learners were along the correct lines. She also took a quick walk around the class to check on learners' work once they began writing their story in the books. Pam, however, did not check on her learners while they were engaged in creative writing to ascertain whether they were doing what was expected.

In terms of providing corrective feedback from the application activities (category 2 in Table 5.4), it was found from observation notes that Sue had corrected some learners on the spot as she walked around the class. For example, she had pointed out the use of capital letters to some of the learners who had omitted them. Jen corrected learners during their oral presentations. For example, learners were asked to leave out the preceding words "*I can see...*" from their sentences. They were also asked to make their sentences interesting by using appropriate adjectives. However, Jen did not do much to support struggling learners. One of the learners seemed a little confused about how to go about constructing her story, and when she asked the teacher for help, Jen remarked: "*just follow what you have been doing in your workbook*". Notes from my observation showed that the child was left unclear about what to do, as she also had not understood the exercise in the workbook. Pam did not give feedback to learners. During the course of her discussion no mention was made of the previous pieces of writing and common errors that learners had made.

In terms of reflecting on and evaluating their teaching practice so as to enhance their professional knowledge and its effects on their future instructional planning (category 3 in Table 5.4), none of the data sets showed any evidence of teachers reflecting on their work. Notes from lesson observations revealed that teachers monitored learners' progress by setting assessment tasks according to the milestones contained in the Foundations for Learning document. Classroom observations also showed that elbow marking (marking learners' work at their desks whilst they were busy on a task) was done, and the corrections were given immediately.

5.2.5 Teachers' ability to create appropriate learning environments

The most basic requirement to promote active learning is a safe, welcoming, stimulating and nurturing environment that focuses on learning for all children. Teachers were asked about their perceptions of an appropriate learning environment. Sue said that *“the classroom must be conducive. Bare walls don't add to teaching. Have phonic frieze, display their work, have bright and colourful charts. There should be a play area, reading corner, and activity area. Have appropriate media on walls. Learners must relate to it. Learners must be give opportunities to change the date and calendar.”* Pam said that *“the classroom must be spacious, bright, colourful and clean. There should be a nature corner”*. Jen said *“there should be enough space, a mat area for group work and resources on walls. Learners should have their stationery.”* From these responses it seems that teachers understood what constitutes an appropriate learning environment. The NCS document (DoE, 2003, p. 49) states that *“the classroom should be a ‘print rich’ environment and that teachers should create an environment that stimulates learners’ imagination and fosters enjoyment of all aspects of literacy.”* Notes from the document reviews also suggest establishment of a daily classroom routine. The policy document (DoE, 2003, p. 19) states that Foundation Phase learners *“have a need to feel safe and are easily intimidated by an unpleasant atmosphere, which will prevent them from learning effectively. They also feel safe when a daily routine of events is followed.”*

Teachers were asked to explain how they would ensure that all learners are actively engaged in literacy lessons. Sue said: *“Generally, I explain what is to be done. Call those who do not raise their hands, are too shy/afraid or don't know to answer. Sometimes the whole class may read together, pointing as they read.”* Pam said that the teacher must *“always check that all learners are participating. If child doesn't, ask that child a question. Also walk around to check that they are doing their work.”* Jen said that we must *“involve the learners in the lesson. There must constant supervision.”* Teachers seemed to be lacking in accommodating weak learners. They did not consider varying the tasks to suit learners' abilities, adjusting their expectations, using code-switching for second-language learners, giving clues, pairing learners to facilitate buddy helping, or providing models that learners could follow.

Findings from the classroom observations also revealed that while teachers were able to engage in creating appropriate learning environments for active learning to take place, they did not do much for the benefit of very weak learners.

Table 5.5: Engagement in creating appropriate learning environments

The teacher demonstrates ability to create appropriate learning environments by:		YES	NO
1.	Encouraging learners to be actively engaged in the lessons.	SPJ	
2.	Creating learning environments that address the broad range of children’s developmental needs.		SPJ
3.	Accommodating the varying intellectual abilities of children.		SPJ
4.	Encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning.	SPJ	

KEY: S = Sue; P = Pam; J = Jen.

From the observation notes it was found that, in terms of encouraging learners to be actively engaged in the lessons, Sue had given quite a few learners an opportunity to relate their news. From my notes it was found that shy learners were called out by name to answer questions during the reading lesson. Pam, on the other hand, had put up pictures and words to assist learners in their creative writing. Learners were encouraged to ask for help when they needed it. Jen also encouraged all learners, even the very quiet ones, to participate. The NCS document (DoE, 2003, p. 19) states that Foundation Phase learners “cannot concentrate on a task for too long and are easily distracted. They therefore find it difficult to be passive listeners in the learning process. They need to be actively involved”. From my observations it was also noted that teachers praised learners for their efforts. The document is clear that in order to build confidence, the learners need constant support, constructive praise and encouragement.

From my notes, it was found that in terms of creating learning environments that address the broad range of children’s developmental needs (category 2 in Table 5.5), teachers did not cater adequately for the broad range of children’s developmental needs and varying intellectual abilities. Sue and Pam had arranged the seating in the classroom according to ability groups - but all learners were given the same tasks. Although Pam, Sue and Jen had colourful, purposeful and user-friendly charts such as a phonic frieze, map of the world, and

reading sheets to assist learners with their work, it did not do much to help the weak learners. The policy document (DoE, 2003, p. 36) suggests a ‘print-rich’ environment for the foundation classrooms. However, notes from classroom observations revealed that nursery rhymes and songs were not displayed on the walls, learners’ efforts were not displayed as encouragement to others, and learners’ experiences and cultures were not reflected. The policy document (DoE, 2003, p. 49) states that “the learning experiences provided must encourage learners to understand and respect diversity. Learners need to be encouraged to link classroom experiences with languages and cultures in their homes.”

In terms of encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning (category 3 in Table 5.5), notes from classroom observations showed that teachers did speak to learners about being responsible for their own learning. Sue encouraged her learners to exercise care and not to rub out excessively in their books. Pam encouraged her class to ask for help when they got stuck. Jen asked her learners to read library books.

5.2.6 Teachers’ use of LTSM

LTSM materials form an important ingredient in the teaching, learning and assessment processes of the school curriculum. They are like a walking ring to an infant, in that they serves as a developing tool to help learners acquire the necessary skills for life-long learning. The NCS document (DoE, 2003, p. 38) states that “what is important in the teaching, learning and assessment process is to allow learners to develop from the concrete to the abstract paradigm. Learner and Teacher Support Materials should play a role in providing the concrete paradigm. The absence of Learner and Teacher Support Materials is a clear barrier to learning.”

Teachers were asked to indicate what resources they had used to teach literacy. Sue said “*I use phonic frieze, worksheets and the chalkboard. I use the Foundations for Learning Assessment Framework and the lesson plans as produced by the Department of Education*”. Pam, on the other hand, said “*I use charts, books for reading and flash cards,*” While Jen said that she used “*the Department of Education workbooks as well as worksheets are given to the learners.*” Teachers seemed to rely on readers supplied by the Department of Education, and published material for worksheets.

The NCS document encourages teachers to use a variety of LTSM to address the learning outcomes and assessment standards prescribed for the Foundation Phase. Teachers are encouraged to collect and develop their own resource banks from a range of sources. The range of LTSM for literacy could include story books, picture books, sound cards and word games, books with rhymes and verses, and readers. Children’s favourite television programmes could be viewed and pieces of writing could be developed. The success of such material is determined by the teacher’s ability to use it appropriately and effectively in the learning context. Classroom observations revealed that teachers were able to use the resources available effectively to help achieve their learning goals.

Table 5.6: Engagement in LTSM

The teacher demonstrates effective use of learner support materials by:		YES	NO
1.	Using the resources available effectively to help achieve their learning goals for their learners.	SPJ	
2.	Giving learners adequate exposure to books, reference charts and worksheets to promote learning.	SPJ	

KEY: S = Sue; P = Pam; J = Jen.

In terms of using the available resources effectively to help achieve their learning goals (category 1 in Table 5.6), Pam, Sue and Jen made adequate use of readers, pictures, DVDs, story books and concrete objects such as money in their lessons. Readers for children in the group were used for the reading lesson. Pam narrated a story, displayed pictures and vocabulary to assist learners in writing their story, while Jen used samples of money, maps of the world, pictures and a DVD in her lesson.

In terms of giving learners adequate exposure to books, reference charts and worksheets to promote learning (category 2 in Table 5.6), notes from classroom observations revealed that teachers engaged with the appropriate LTSM to support learning. Words on sheets were given to learners to learn at home and for reference in class. The teachers displayed phonic charts on the wall. They had also made a selection of library books pertaining to the lesson available to learners.

5.3 Insights and conclusion

The findings of my study have been categorized and presented in six themes as they had emerged during analysis of the data sets. From my notes, it is found that the themes are synonymous with the components of pedagogy as defined by Siraj-Blatchford (2002). What follows is a summary of the themes and some contributions made by researchers on these themes.

5.3.1 Teacher engagement with sources of content

An analysis of documents showed that the policy documents, such as the Foundations for Learning Programme and NCS, spelt out the core knowledge and concepts that learners are expected to acquire by the end of the grade. The documents also provide the teacher with assessment tasks that should be administered during the course of the year. From the transcripts of teacher interviews it was evident that teachers had consulted the relevant documents and were able to engage in these sources of content to plan and prepare lessons. Notes from classroom observations indicated that lessons were planned and structured according to the NCS requirements. However, teachers' engagement in pedagogy in terms of selecting appropriate teaching strategies, creating appropriate learning environments, establishing conducive classroom climates for effective interaction, monitoring learners' achievements and appropriate use of LTSM, need to improve.

Wang et al. (1993, p. 276) pointed out that State, district and school level policy and demographics have little influence on school learning:

Simply instituting new policies, whether state, district, or school level, will not necessarily enhance student learning. Implementing a policy of maximized learning time, for example, does not guarantee that children in a given classroom will receive instruction from a teacher who plans lessons with special attention to eliminating poor management practices and inefficient use of time.

The findings of my study reveal that it is the teachers' engagement in the different components of pedagogy that leads to an improvement in learner performances.

5.3.2 Teacher engagement in terms of appropriate use of teaching strategies

Transcripts of interviews showed that teachers understood the importance of their engagement in selecting appropriate teaching strategies that would maximize exposure to language. Notes from document reviews suggest that teacher engagement in selecting appropriate learning strategies must include cultural means such as music, play and poems. However, notes from classroom observations revealed that teachers relied mainly on discussions, group work and story-telling methods. While teachers understood the value of music, poems, and play, they did not include these in their lessons.

Maynard, Morgan, Waters and Williams (2010, pp. 1-2) agree that “foundation phase practitioners should be skilful in their choice and use of a repertoire of pedagogic strategies. They should ensure that assessment is closely aligned to children’s learning: it should both support learning and determine whether learning has occurred.” They suggest that “different pedagogic styles and strategies that have an impact on children’s learning include direct instruction and interactive dialogic teaching” (2010, p. 4). Maynard et al. (2010, p. 8) argue that “the ability of the practitioners to set high but achievable targets for learners and choose and use effective learning, teaching and assessment strategies is key to school improvement.”

5.3.3 Teacher engagement in terms of classroom interaction

In terms of teacher engagement in facilitating classroom interaction, notes from my observations showed that teachers were able to use communication as a tool to develop learners’ language skills. Reviews of policy documents revealed that by listening to and interacting with others in their environment, learners develop their language skills. The teachers’ engagement with learners is crucial in ensuring that such interaction takes place. Interview transcripts indicated that teachers possess knowledge of how teacher engagement in facilitating interaction amongst peers would benefit learners in developing language skills.

Ainley, Frydenberg and Russell (2011, p. 11) agree that “learning is an active process”. They assert that

meaning is generated from interactions with others and from exploration of things and ideas. Information is filtered and interpreted and thus meaning is constructed. The outcomes is

conceptual change, deeper understanding which can be manipulated, combined and applied in a range of situations. This approach fosters skills, attitudes, values, strategies, knowledge, capacities and qualities that are important for life-long learning. (Ainley et al., 2011, p. 11)

These authors add that “teachers are central to girls and boys engagement in learning and argue that the teachers’ influence operates through their relationships with students” (2011, p. 11). The study suggests that in terms of teacher engagement in classroom interaction, the teacher must establish a relationship with learners that foster a will and desire to learn.

5.3.4 Teacher engagement in terms of monitoring learners’ achievements and giving corrective feedback

Policy documents suggest that teachers must constantly engage with learners to assess their understanding and progress and to identify barriers to learning. This would help teachers to develop suitable learning and support programmes for weak learners. Notes from classroom observations revealed that teachers monitored learners’ achievements by marking their work, but corrective feedback was only given incidentally. However, transcripts from teacher interviews revealed that teachers understood the need for teachers to engage themselves in monitoring learners’ achievements and providing corrective feedback.

In their research Maynard et al. (2010, p. 4) found that

the ability of practitioners to reflect systematically on their pedagogic practice is directly connected to the successful implementation of new approaches to teaching and learning. Foundation phase practitioners should, for example, adjust their practice in the light of their observations (assessments); and provide children with effective feedback.

This is in keeping with the data from the study in respect of at least two teachers in the sample.

5.3.5 Teacher engagement in terms of creating appropriate learning environments

Transcripts of teacher interviews revealed that teachers understood what constitutes an appropriate learning environment and how their engagement in creating appropriate learning environments may support learning. Notes from document reviews showed that learners must

not be passive listeners but must be actively involved in the lesson. In terms of teacher engagement in creating appropriate learning environments, notes from classroom observations showed that teachers encouraged learners to be actively involved and to take responsibility for their learning. However, they experienced challenges in creating a learning environment that addresses the broad range of learners' developmental needs and varying intellectual abilities.

The Highland Council of Education, Culture and Sport Service (2010) published an article entitled *The Learning Environment: Learning and Teaching should be Inclusive and Enjoyable*, wherein the researchers state that:

for education in school to be effective, the environment needs to be conducive to learning, allowing the pupils space and time to interact with the learning and teaching process. They added that creating and maintaining stimulating learning environments can be achieved through effective classroom organization, interactive and whole school displays and a climate of innovations. (2011, p. 1)

The points that arise from this research include, amongst others, the following.

- The best learning environment is one of high challenge and low stress;
- Ritualized and patterned positive teacher behaviour influences performance;
- Constant and varied exposure to new material encourages quicker and deeper learning;
- Ensure resources are appropriate, accessible, identifiable and relevant to children's learning needs; and
- The environment should support pupils to become independent and active learners.

The data emerging from this study also demonstrated the importance of teachers in creating appropriate learning environments that would facilitate accelerated learner achievements.

5.3.6 Teacher engagement in terms of LTSM

Notes from document reviews indicated the absence of LTSM is a barrier to learning. Data from teacher interviews and classroom observations revealed that teachers had the tendency to rely on DoE-produced workbooks and worksheets. These support materials were not

adjusted or tailored to suit the need of learners in their class. However, they were able to use reference charts such as a phonic frieze and reading charts effectively to promote language learning in class.

Research by the Western Cape Education Department (2002, p. 1) remind the teachers about the importance of LTSM:

learning support materials are an integral part of curriculum development and a means of promoting both good teaching and learning. Although learning support material cannot replace an educator, successful learning depend to a great extent on the educator's ability to identify the relevant resources, then design, adapt or use them to produce effective learning support materials. Learning support materials are a means whereby resources are accessed for the purpose of learning.

This study reveals that teachers were clinical about their use of Department-produced workbooks and policy documents, and were heavily dependent on them - to the point where they became very rigid in their engagement in pedagogy.

5.4 Conclusion

This study is significant in that it provides teachers with an understanding of the concept *pedagogy* as defined by Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002). The themes that emerged from this study appear to be aligned with this definition of pedagogy. Knowledge of these themes - and hence of the components of pedagogy - enables teachers to engage in pedagogy in more meaningful and purposeful ways. The ultimate aim is to improve learner performances.

Findings of my study suggest that good teaching practice is characterized by a high level of teacher engagement in pedagogy in terms of the selection and use of appropriate teaching strategies, creation of appropriated learning environments, stimulating high levels of classroom interaction, creation of conducive learning climates, monitoring of learners' achievements and giving corrective feedback. The findings further suggest that high levels of teacher engagement results in improved learner performances. This is evident when we compare the practice of the Grade 3 teacher (Jen) to that of the Grade 1 (Sue) and 2 (Pam) teachers.

From classroom observations it was found that the Grade 3 teacher (Jen) had engaged quite intensely in the different components of pedagogy. She had made use of a wide repertoire of teaching strategies, and screened movies, narrated stories, displayed artifacts and pictures, held group discussions, and used current yet relevant issues from the media. She created appropriate learning environments using reference charts, books, maps and theme corners to stimulate healthy discussions. The classroom climate was characterized by freedom to speak, tolerance and mutual respect. Notes from my data collection reveal that her level of engagement in pedagogy was significantly higher than those of the Grade 1 and 2 teachers.

From my notes it was found that the Grade 1 (Sue) and 2 (Pam) teachers relied on discussion and group teaching methods only. Classroom interaction was very limited. While charts were displayed on the walls, they were not referred to in the lessons. There was no evidence of the teachers monitoring the learners as they worked on the task assigned to them.

The findings also indicated that the students of Grade 3 teacher Jen (who was very engaged) displayed greater confidence in the use of language and demonstrated greater skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking in relation to their age cohort, in comparison to students of the Grade 1 and 2 teachers.

The next chapter offers some recommendations that arose from the findings of this study.

CHAPTER SIX

INSIGHTS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

6.1 Introduction

With Foundation Phase education falling under the spotlight over the past few years because of low literacy levels amongst South Africa's learners, many teachers shifted their emphasis from teaching the learner, to teaching to the test. The annual national assessment intervention programme, coupled with a call by the DoE for greater accountability from teachers for their underachieving learners, turned teachers towards an over-reliance on the Foundations for Learning milestones and lesson plans. The major insight emerging from this study was that these documents were followed clinically, and that the teachers' heavy dependence on them led them to become very rigid in terms of their engagement in pedagogy. This had a negative impact on learner achievements. The study suggests that the low levels of learner performances may be ascribed to the following factors:

- Teachers' uses of teaching strategies were very limited.
- Classroom interaction was minimized.
- Creation of supportive learning environments was ignored.
- Teachers did not take time to foster a positive climate conducive to teaching and learning.
- Monitoring of learners' achievements was inadequate.
- Teachers relied solely on the DoE workbooks and publishers' worksheets.

This chapter offers some recommendations in the light of these findings, and concludes with a comprehensive literacy model which could be used in our schools to ensure effective literacy teaching and learning.

6.2 Recommendations

The recommendations offered in this chapter will be useful to Foundation Phase teachers who are serious about engaging themselves in pedagogy in ways that will result in notable improvement in their learners' performances. It will also be useful to teacher training institutions for the development of curriculum packages.

6.2.1 Teachers should be provided with teacher development courses targeting a repertoire of effective teaching strategies for Foundation Phase classrooms

Teachers need to add to their repertoire of teaching strategies and to adapt these to their unique needs and those of their learners. Courses should be designed to assist teachers in developing skills in adapting tasks in order to accommodate learners' readiness and capabilities. They need to develop expertise in presenting lessons to classes of mixed abilities and learners with learning barriers. Teachers lacked the ability and techniques to integrate explicit teaching with learner participation. Cultural tools such as music, rhymes and play, as advocated by Vygotsky, work well for Foundation Phase learners. Screening movies, embarking on field trips and inviting specialists to do presentations can be used effectively to integrate explicit teaching with learner participation.

Wray (1998, p. 5) in his article 'Teaching literacy: The foundations of good practice', provides the following insight into the nature of the learning process:

- Learning is a process of interaction between what is known and what is to be learnt. Any new information must be connected with prior knowledge for learning to take place, otherwise it is soon forgotten.
- Learning is a social process. The learner is seen as a social constructor of knowledge, learning in collaboration with others. Vygotsky describes the gap between what a learner can do in collaboration with others and what he/she can do alone as, the ZPD and suggests that all learning occurs twice in the learner: once on the social plane and once on the individual.
- Learning is a situated process. Everything is learnt within a context. For example, a child may spell all his/her words correctly in a spelling test, but spells them incorrectly when writing a story. The learning of the spelling was bound up within the context of learning, and could not be easily applied outside of that context.
- Learning is a metacognitive process. This means that the learner is aware of his/her thought processes and is consciously in control of his/her own cognitive actions.

The implication of these insights for teachers is that, despite the teaching strategy employed, he/she must ensure that learners have sufficient previous knowledge and understanding to enable them to learn new things and help them make explicit the links between what they

already know and what they are learning. Teachers must also make provision for group interaction and discussion as teaching strategies. They need to ensure meaningful contexts for learning and, finally, to promote learners' knowledge and awareness of their own thinking and learning.

6.2.2 Schools should reopen their media centres to accommodate Foundation Phase classes, where learners could view educational movies and SABC educational programmes as part of their literacy lesson

Showing learners movies and other educational programmes is an excellent teaching strategy to expose learners to the different components of literacy teaching. Movies provide an invaluable tool in motivating learners, maximising their participation and encouraging them to produce their best work. This was clearly evident in one of the lessons that I observed where the teacher used movies to maximise learner participation and to teach explicitly on writing an imaginative story, making use of adjectives and other parts of speech. Louw (2006, p. 1) argues that "movies present language in a way that is often more natural than that found in course books. The fantastic visual context aid understanding and boosts listening, and students simply love them." In *Using movies in the classroom*, Louw draws the teachers' attention to, amongst others, the following points:

- It is not time-out from teaching and learning; the teacher must have a clear purpose for screening a movie.
- Build up with a pre-viewing activity, have an activity for while viewing, and follow up with a post-viewing activity.
- Sometimes it may not be necessary to show the entire movie but snippets of it.

Teachers often avoid screening movies because of the disruptions that arise, but these can be overcome with prior planning. Watching educational programmes and movies should form part of the regular class schedule. Once learners are familiar with the regular routine disruptions would be minimised.

6.2.3 Teachers must provide greater opportunities for classroom interaction

Engaging learners in active classroom interaction exposes them to the language in ways beyond what any book, movie, or media would. Mistakes made during interaction are realised and self-corrected. More knowledgeable peers also model the desired literacy skills. As learners listen and observe the modelled language and learn from their mistakes, they become more and more competent in the use of the language. Bishop (2000, p. 1), in *Classroom Interaction*, supports this view, stating that “students develop competency and become critical thinkers in classrooms that provides opportunities for intensive, structured interaction among students.” He argues that the most direct way to create classroom interaction is to adopt the principles of collaborative learning, which serves to enhance learning and achievement by encouraging peer-to-peer interaction and co-operation. In collaborative learning, learners work in small groups on a set task, talk about the possible solutions to problems, rehearse ideas, listen to their peers’ views, and question and challenge each other’s views. Apart from learning about the task or topic for discussion, they pick up on the correct use of language in terms of its structure, parts of speech and pronunciation. Collaborative learning fosters positive attitudes towards literacy learning. When planning for collaborative learning, Bishop (2000, p. 1) draws the teachers’ attention to the following:

- Ideally, students should be given clear, explicit instructions in writing.
- The task or procedure should be modelled before the learners begin working in their groups.
- Once groups have begun work, the teacher should do no more than unobtrusively monitor the process. The group needs to resolve problems themselves.
- When groups are finished, it is important to spend some time processing the results. The focus should be on what the groups have discussed, not what the teacher knows or thinks.

6.2.4 Teachers should monitor learners’ achievements and provide feedback more frequently

Monitoring learners’ achievements helps teachers to get to know their learners well. Teachers are able to identify slow learners, those with learning barriers, learners that are

struggling with certain aspects of work, and those who are working well and may need enrichment exercises. Once the teacher diagnoses his/her learners' needs, he/she can make adjustments to lesson plans and teaching techniques in order to accommodate all learners in the class. This also helps to narrow the gap between under-achievers and high-flyers. Darn (2006, p. 2) describes monitoring as a classroom management technique that is used to check learners for their accuracy and to see whether activities are going according to plan, and that learners are on task. He states that monitoring offers the opportunity to assess the progress of individuals, and often provides an indication of what to re-teach or practice further, and cites the following as purposes of monitoring:

- Being aware of the whole class. The teacher should always be aware of how the class is getting on, whether the pace is too fast or too slow, and which students may need individual attention. There is often a tendency to teach to the lesson plan and materials at the expense of teaching the learners themselves.
- Listening for errors in the target language. Correction is required here, since these are accuracy-based activities.
- Listening to ensure that learners are on task. Some re-instruction, modelling of the activity or prompting may be required.
- Taking opportunities for micro-teaching to individuals or pairs who have clearly not grasped the target language.
- Assessing both individuals and the whole class. Monitoring provides clues to individual and group difficulties and progress. In this respect monitoring is a kind of ongoing needs analysis. All students should receive some attention, even if only a few words of encouragement.
- Assessing the task. Some activities work better with one class than another; others are being tried out for the first time. Monitoring offers the teacher the opportunity to assess the success of an activity and to get feedback from the learners.
- Planning. Monitoring facilitates decision-making in terms of what to do next, whether to modify the original lesson plan, planning future lessons and giving feedback to students on their performance.
- Maintaining discipline. Large groups may become restless and bored if some learners have finished a task before others. The teacher should have some short, back-up

activities for these learners, or could use the quicker learners as assistants to help slower groups.

6.2.5 Teachers should create supportive literate environments that scaffold learners' achievements

An enriched literacy environment is inviting, exciting and stimulating and encourages learners to take part in the planned literacy lessons. Supportive literate environments should be print-rich and should include, amongst others, wall charts based on children's favourite nursery rhymes and songs, stories and fables, an alphabet chart, charts on themes, vocabulary lists, a library corner as well as displays of learners' work. A section of the class could also be used to display the classroom rules, duty list and messages and news. As learners interact with displays of print, their skills in reading and writing are scaffolded to a higher level. The charts serve as reference material for independent work and also to review lessons. Learners are also motivated to write more when they see that what they wrote is valued and displayed for all to see.

Apart from ensuring that the environment is print-rich, the teacher must establish a daily classroom routine and have a set of class rules which must be enforced. Children feel relaxed, comfortable and confident when there is a fixed daily routine that they adhere to. They feel insecure and threatened in the absence of such a routine and are reluctant to confront challenges when they present. The teacher has the key role to play in creating supportive literate environments. He/she must establish a caring relationship with each learner, learn about their individual needs and strengths, and provide support and encouragement for each one to be a successful learner.

The Highland Council Education, Culture and Sport Service (2010) argues that "for education in school to be effective, the environment needs to be conducive to learning, allowing the pupils space and time to interact within the learning and teaching process". They suggest the following, amongst others, as key elements of an appropriate learning environment:

- Whole school display linked to theme, which supports a planned set of values of the whole school.

- Good learning and teaching displays in classrooms and corridors, reflecting a broad and balanced curriculum which is well matched to the needs of the pupils.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to interact with a culturally and socially diverse range of people.
- Use visual display around the room to highlight key topics, key words and key concepts.
- Use visual display to tell the story of the topic which is being studied.

6.2.6 Teachers must give careful thought to the planning and designing of a classroom climate that is conducive to learning

When learners feel safe and respected, they are more ready to accept learning challenges without the fear of making mistakes. Mistakes are looked at as a way of learning. According to Krishnan (2006, p. 2)

a positive classroom climate is one that is characterized by mutual respect and support for one another, where conflicts are resolved amicably, healthy and constructive interaction is encouraged, and one in which there is a sense of unity and common purpose of getting academic work done. Learning goals are accomplished with minimum disruptions when there is a positive learning climate. It also boosts learners' confidence and self-esteem since everyone's contributions are valued.

The role of the teacher is crucial in establishing a positive classroom climate. Krishnan suggests that the following help to create conducive learning climates:

- Be in class on time.
- Commence with tasks without unnecessary delays.
- Engage in talk with learners. If you are too busy on some other matters, advise learners to speak to you when you are available.
- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Do not attack or ridicule learners.
- Mediate when students attack each other.
- Seating arrangements should make learners feel comfortable.
- Be sensitive to individual differences.
- Be encouraging.

- Know your learners.

6.2.7 Teachers should use a variety of LTSM to scaffold learners' achievements

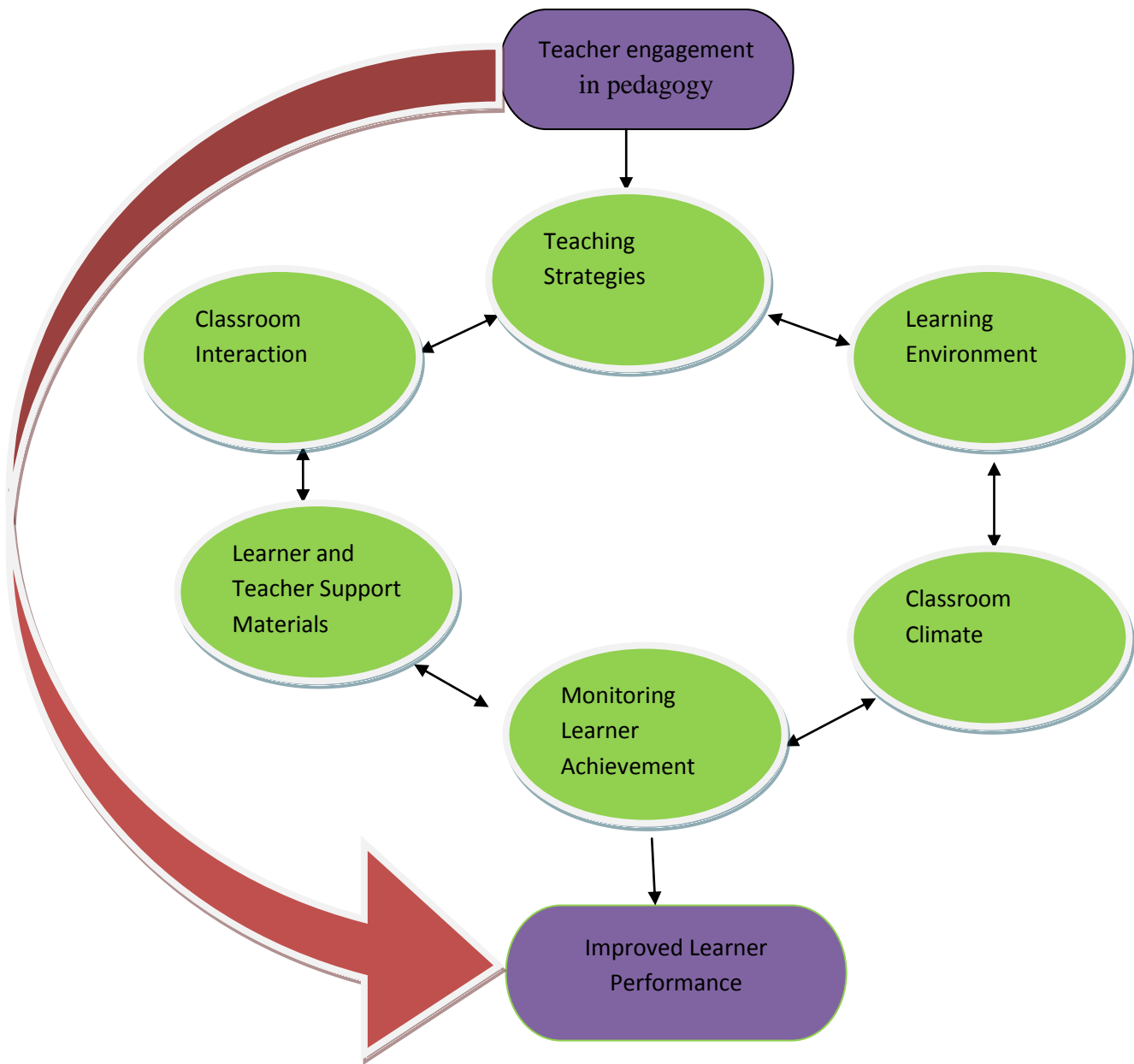
Teachers tend to rely heavily on worksheets and workbooks at the expense of other LTSM such as the radio, television, movies, newspapers and magazines. A balanced use of LTSM gives learners greater opportunities to master their literacy skills. LTSM are an integral part of the curriculum and a means of promoting both teaching and learning. Although LTSM cannot replace the teacher, successful learning depends to a great extent on the teachers' ability to identify the relevant resources, then design, adapt or use them to produce effective learning support materials. LTSM are a means whereby resources are accessed for the purpose of learning. The Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, stated that "LTSMs can play a central role in defining a more structured approach to what subject matter is taught and how it is taught" (DoE, 2011, p. 18).

6.3 A model for teacher engagement in pedagogy

From the above findings and recommendations I have developed a model for teacher engagement in pedagogy which focuses on improving learners' performance. Hence the model is called the *teacher engagement for learner improvement model*. The model is built around the six components of pedagogy which are interconnected. Together these components give shape to a model of teacher engagement in pedagogy that is child-centred and based on the principles of social constructivism and proximal development.

The model begins with the teachers' engagement with teaching strategies. This involves the selection of a teaching strategy (explicit or implicit teaching) which is adapted and developed by incorporating each of the six interconnected components of pedagogy into its design. The greater the teacher's engagement in the components of pedagogy, the better the learners' performance.

Figure 6.1: The Teacher Engagement for Learner Improvement Model



The model is designed to actively engage learners in the lessons to ensure that learners are held to high expectations and to give them equal opportunities to develop their skills and capacity. The model suggests that the following be considered when implementing it in classrooms.

6.3.1 Teaching strategies

Adapt teaching strategies to suit the learners' readiness and capabilities. Provision must be made to include music, play, dance, rhymes, field trips, and television viewing.

6.3.2 Classroom interaction

There must be two-way communication between the teacher and learners, as well as amongst peers. Learners should be allowed to ask questions, probe, seek clarity, offer suggestions, give their views and challenge each other's opinions.

6.3.3 Monitoring learners' achievements

Teachers must get to know their learners' abilities and needs and build on them. Monitoring must be used with the aim of helping children to achieve and not to determine pass or failure.

6.3.4 Classroom environments

Ensure that it is inviting, exciting and stimulating. Learners must be given opportunities to interact with displays, charts on rhymes, songs stories, etc. Establish a daily class routine.

6.3.5 Classroom climate

The teacher must strive for mutual respect and support for one another. There must be a sense of unity that prevails. Give praise when it is due and acknowledge every learner's achievements.

6.3.6 LTSM

These should include, amongst others, the radio, television, newspapers, DVDs and slide-shows. LTSM are not meant to replace curriculum documents but to help scaffold learners' achievements.

6.4 Conclusion

Every child is unique, and every child can achieve. Whilst I agree that the teacher has no control over what the learner brings to the pedagogic table, the teachers' engagement in pedagogy can make a profound difference in their learning performances.

As Street (2003, p. 77) pointed out:

Introducing literacy to poor, illiterate people, villages, and urban youth will have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their illiteracy in the first place.

Teachers have the awesome responsibility of high-quality engagement in pedagogy that is vital in bringing about positive changes in learner dispositions and performances. Through well-developed pre-service and in-service training programmes, collegiality and mentoring among teachers and regular refresher courses and group meetings, teachers' competencies and quality of engagement in pedagogy will improve.

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APPENDIX 1: Ethical clearance certificate



Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN, 4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

22 March 2011

Mr J Govender (210551402)
School of Curriculum Development
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Govender

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0127/011M

PROJECT TITLE: The nature of pedagogy in three Foundation Phase classrooms in urban KwaZulu-Natal

In response to your application dated 18 March 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor: Prof R Sookrajh

Dr HB Ebrahim

cc. Mr N Memela/Ms T Mnisi

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APPENDIX 2:

Letter requesting consent from school Principals, School Governing Bodies and teachers, requesting permission to conduct research at the schools

23 March 2011

The Principal
Mr D. Modell
Model Primary School

Dear Sir

Request for consent to conduct research at your school

I am a Masters student in the school of education studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My study is entitled *The Nature of Pedagogy in the Foundation Phase in urban KwaZulu-Natal*. The purpose of this research is to understand the nature of pedagogy in the Foundation Phase through examining teachers' knowledge and understandings and their practices in the teaching of Literacy.

My research will involve teacher interviews, the observation of lessons in Literacy, and an examination of learners' work, teachers' files and documents that are used for planning, preparation and delivery of lessons and assessments. Results of the research will be useful to teachers who want to understand their practice in their current context; and to the Provincial and National Department in terms of curriculum implementation and identification of good practice. It is envisaged that the study will stimulate discussion on pedagogy in the Foundation Phase classrooms, gaps and what constitutes good practice.

I humbly request permission to conduct the study at your school. I assure you that all information gathered will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Pseudonyms would be used for the participating schools and teachers in the study. All data and documents will be shredded once the study has been completed and submitted. Results of the study will be made available to participating schools. Your participation in the study would be purely voluntary and you will be free to withdraw participation at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to yourself or the school. Should you have any concerns about the study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the contact details listed below.

Your participation in the study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Mr J. Govender

Researcher: Mr J. Govender (083 7850247/ 031-4092612)

Supervisor: Dr H.B. Ebrahim (031-2603483)

Co-supervisor: Professor R. Sookrajh (031-2607259)

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM THE PRINCIPAL/ TEACHER/SGB

I, _____, Principal of _____ do give consent to Mr J. Govender to conduct his research at my school, as explained in his letter of request. I have read the information contained in the letter and understand its contents.

Yours sincerely

PRINCIPAL/SGB/TEACHER

DATE

APPENDIX 3:

SEMI-STRUCTURED TEACHER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

SEMI-STRUCTURED TEACHER INTERVIEW (1)

Teacher: Sue (Grade 1 Teacher)

Date: 17/05/2011

School: Model Primary School

Time: 13h30

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

A. Teachers' knowledge about pedagogy:

1. What do you know about how Foundation Phase learners become literate?

Teach sounds and words. Practise and drill work is important. Discussion in class develops speaking. Through participation in nursery rhymes, show and tell they become literate. Working one-on-one with second-language learners helps. They need reinforcement at school and home. Give children exposure not just to books but also TV, magazines. Look for certain words and highlight it.

2. What would you consider as essentials for effective teaching and learning to take place in literacy in your grade?

Flash cards for the teacher and children for reading and sounds are essential. Also sounds homework to colour pictures and games – card games.

3. Where do you get the information to plan your Literacy lessons?

From experience. Depending on the type of learners in your class, adjust the level.

4. How do you know which sources of information to use for planning?

I have been workshopped on the Foundations for Learning Programme. It seems to be working quite well. I speak to others who have experience.

5. What pedagogic principles inform the way you teach literacy?

For reading, start with flash words, then picture books, then practice reading book and finally proper readers. Do class reading, shared reading, group reading and individual reading.

B. Teachers' understanding about pedagogy:

1. What are your views on the sources of information that you use to plan Literacy lessons?

The system we've been using has worked well, i.e. sounds (initial, end and middle sounds, three-letter blending), and sentence construction. The Department of Basic Education (DoBE) has sent less copies. Also there is no time to use.

2. What do you understand by the term pedagogy/teaching and learning?

It refers to the teacher's ability to put concepts effectively to children and their ability to understand what is being taught.

3. What are your understandings about teaching/developing learners' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking?

Learners need practice, reinforcement and continuity to develop their skills. Identify problem areas, e.g. sending learners with difficulties to the occupational therapist for assessment.

4. What were some of your experiences in teaching literacy to Foundation Phase learners that influence the way you teach reading, writing listening and speaking?

With brighter children I am able to extend their knowledge. With the weaker children, I have to spend extra time to teach basics.

5. How do you go about planning and preparing literacy lessons?

It comes from experience. Always start from discussion. There is place for oral and written work. I do not have detailed lesson prep.

C. Teaching and learning strategies:

1. What methods of teaching do you use the most to develop learners' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking?

I use discussions. Learners work on the chalkboard. Learners have their own chalkboard. I use sound puzzles. Sometimes the children sit at their places and work independently.

2. Why do you rely on these methods?

It reinforces what has been taught. Children learn in a fun way. They tend to remember in this way. They also learn from each other.

3. How do you cater for learners of various abilities and skills?

Ability groups are formed. Phonic groups are also formed. I use buddy helping. I set different work for the groups.

4. What sources informs your decision to employ certain learning strategies?

Test children for abilities, e.g. on a set of words. Reading would be geared towards that. The strategy depends on what children can or cannot do. Don't frustrate the child or yourself.

5. What are your perceptions on poetry, music, and play as a learning tool to develop learners' skills in Literacy?

I love it. Lots of oral lessons can be assessed. Speech and drama builds children's confidence. Also, some children cannot do written work. They battle with it, but excel in dance. It can be part of the P.E. lesson. I think it is very important. Every child gets to dance on stage. The children's faces light up.

6. What are your perceptions on the monitoring of learners' work, giving feedback, as well as reflection on your teaching practice?

Books must be marked to see what they have done. Explain why it is wrong. Learners can see where they need to do corrections. Homework is self-assessed. For class work, I give stars/smiley face to encourage children to work well. Peer assessment - children learn quickly when friends tell them it is wrong. After reflection, the teacher can reprogramme work.

D. Classroom interactions:

1. What are your perceptions of social interaction between you and your learners as a learning tool for developing Literacy skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking?

An open relationship is good. The children can't be afraid of you but can't have this all the time. They must do work as well. Be friendly but they are not your friend. Learners must know that they can come to you for help.

2. How can we create opportunities for positive interactions between the teacher and learners?

Call children one on one. Explain that it is your job to help. Don't just assume that if you talk to the child, it is easy going. Communication is important.

3. How can we create opportunities for positive interactions amongst learners?

Do group reading. When children get stuck, the rest of the children/group help, e.g. break up a word. Child initiated learning - sound the letters in a word. For poems, others help with missed lines.

E. Creation of Learning environments:

1. What are your perceptions of an appropriate learning environment?

The classroom must be conducive. Bare walls don't add to teaching. Have phonic frieze, display their work, have bright and colourful charts. There should be a play area, reading corner, activity area. Have appropriate media on the walls. Learners must relate to it. Learners must change the date and day for the calendar.

2. What do you do to ensure that all learners are actively engaged in Literacy lessons?

Generally I explain what is to be done. Call those who do not put their hands up/ too shy/ afraid/ don't know. Whole class may read together – pointing as they read.

3. What are the resources that you use to support literacy in your class?

I use phonic frieze, worksheets and the chalkboard. I use the Foundations for Learning Assessment Framework and the lesson plans.

4. Comment on their adequacy?

The school is well-stocked. Learners are fortunate. The school has facilities to make copies for all learners. Every child has what they need to learn. We do not rely on the Department of Basic Education workbooks.

5. What do you think would be supportive of an enriched literacy environment for the Foundation Phase?

Teacher assistants would be a great support. The Department of Education should address the language barriers. There are 8 Zulu-speaking children in my class, of which 4 are very weak.

6. How might we provide this?

The Department should provide teacher assistants, even if just twice a week. Third-year students and in-service teachers could be used.

F. General:

1. What are the factors that help Foundation Phase teachers to shape their pedagogy for early literacy?

The type of children, parental support and class size shapes pedagogy for early literacy. If the mum can't speak English, she won't be able to assist the child. When class sizes are too large, the teacher will not be able to do all the groups on one day.

2. What are the factors that impede teaching and learning of literacy in the Foundation Phase?

Language barriers – children do not understand what is said. We need a separate class for learners with Special Education Needs.

3. What are your views on curriculum changes and its effects on pedagogy for literacy?

Every time we get used to a system, it changes. Try a system for at least 10 years before changing. Change is frustrating. Too much record-keeping is required.

4. Is there anything that you would like to tell me about pedagogy in the Foundation Phase that I did not ask you about?

No. You've covered everything.

End of task. Thank you

SEMI-STRUCTURED TEACHER INTERVIEW (2)

Teacher: Pam (Grade 2 Teacher)

Date: 08/06/2011

School: Parklane Primary School

Time: 13h30

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

A. Teachers' knowledge about pedagogy:

1. What do you know about how Foundation Phase learners become literate?

Initially, learning is informal. They learn through play, songs and rhymes. Then they move into formal lessons where they learn phonemes and word recognition methods to read. They break up the words and read.

2. What would you consider as essentials for effective teaching and learning to take place in Literacy in your grade?

The medium of instruction is important. If they do not understand the language, then they don't understand the instructions. Secondly, there must be adequate resources, especially for shared reading, e.g. big books.

3. Where do you get the information to plan your Literacy lessons?

I get the information from the Foundations for Learning documents, i.e. Foundations for Learning lesson plans and assessment framework. I also use the THRASS document (teaching handwriting, reading, and spelling skills).

4. How do you know which sources of information to use for planning?

The lesson plan guidelines in the FFL documents help. The learners' abilities and readiness helps to determine the programme to be followed, e.g. single sounds or blends.

5. What pedagogic principles inform the way you teach Literacy?

I follow Vygotsky's views on developing critical thinkers. Example, after reading a story, learners are encouraged to give their own interpretation. I also use a combination of the old breakthrough method and Thrass.

B. Teachers' understanding about pedagogy:

1. What are your views on the sources of information that you use to plan Literacy lessons?

FFL document doesn't consider second-language learners. The milestones are reached at different stages by learners. Slow learners are not adequately accommodated. The phonics programme is not well structured. Different groups of sounds are mixed. This makes it difficult for learners to apply it in their reading and spelling.

2. What do you understand by the term pedagogy/teaching and learning?

Pedagogy is the way we impart information to learners. It refers to our method of teaching.

3. What are your understandings about teaching/developing learners' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking?

In order to develop learners in listening and speaking, the teacher should focus on discussions and creating a language-rich environment. Social interaction is important to develop reading and writing. The role of churches, temples and similar institutions is important.

4. What were some of your experiences in teaching Literacy to Foundation Phase learners that influence the way you teach reading, writing listening and speaking?

Thrass was good when teaching second-language learners, but only if we have all the resources. Slow learners need more time and attention and at times individual teaching. The learning styles of the children must be taken into account.

5. How do you go about planning and preparing Literacy lessons?

I use the Department of Basic Education workbooks and Foundations for Learning documents as a guide.

C. Teaching and learning strategies:

1. What methods of teaching do you use the most to develop learners' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking?

I use the discussion method and the direct teaching method the most.

2. Why do you rely on these methods?

Discussions allow learners to talk about their own experiences. Others who are not exposed to these experiences stand to benefit. The child gets a chance to talk.

3. How do you cater for learners of various abilities and skills?

Group teaching is done where learners of similar abilities and skills are grouped together.

4. What sources inform your decision to employ certain learning strategies?

It depends on the circumstances. Some need direct teaching, especially those who are struggling. It also depends on the teacher – what they feel comfortable with. If you feel you can cover more ground then direct teaching is most suitable. For creative writing, use discussions. For giving information, then direct teaching should be used.

5. What are your perceptions on poetry, music, and play as a learning tool to develop learners' skills in Literacy?

It is a wonderful idea. If we could spend half an hour a day just for that, it would be good. It must be structured to achieve a learning outcome.

6. What are your perceptions on the monitoring of learners' work, giving feedback, as well as reflection on your teaching practice?

It benefits the children. If the teacher understands how far the children are, they can plan lessons accordingly. We can only get to know them when we mark their work

D. Classroom interactions:

1. What are your perceptions of social interaction between you and your learners as a learning tool for developing Literacy skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking?

Social interaction plays a very important role. If the teacher is always talking to them, the learners will feel comfortable talking to them. The teacher can step back from the authority figure.

2. How can we create opportunities for positive interactions between the teacher and learners?

Have smaller classes so that there is more time to interact; otherwise the teacher is forced to take the direct or explicit teaching mode. Group teaching is sometimes difficult with large classes. Group teaching in large classes has a lot of discipline problems.

3. How can we create opportunities for positive interactions amongst learners?

Learners can work in groups. Set tasks on what they have already been taught. In a group, set one activity that is shared among four learners, e.g. One child counts, another keeps records, another can be group a leader, etc.

E. Creation of Learning environments:

1. What are your perceptions of an appropriate learning environment?

The classroom must be spacious, bright, colourful and clean. There should be a nature corner.

2. What do you do to ensure that all learners are actively engaged in Literacy lessons?

Always check that all learners are participating. If a child doesn't, ask that child a question. Also, walk around to check that they are doing their work.

3. What are the resources that you use to support literacy in your class?

I use charts, books for reading and flash cards.

4. Comment on their adequacy?

Books for reading are a problem. We have to share with the other class. We have to wait until they have finished or do something else until it becomes available. Also there are insufficient copies for all the children in the group. Some of these books have pages that are missing and this makes it difficult for learners to follow in their books.

5. What do you think would be supportive of an enriched literacy environment for the Foundation Phase?

There should be adequate resources and a good library where learners can go and borrow books to do more reading.

6. How might we provide this?

Each school should have its own library. Learners could be taken to the public library if the school does not have a library.

F. General:

1. What are the factors that help Foundation Phase teachers to shape their pedagogy for early literacy?

Embarking on university studies would help to shape their pedagogy for early literacy. The teacher should use different ways to teach and find the one that works in your class.

2. What are the factors that impede teaching and learning of literacy in the Foundation Phase?

While the Foundations for Learning documents give us structure, when it comes to Annual National Assessments, all learners are not on the same level. Learners that come on transfer from other schools are not on the same level.

3. What are your views on curriculum changes and its effects on pedagogy for literacy?

There are too many changes. When the curriculum keeps changing, the training is a waste of time.

4. Is there anything that you would like to tell me about pedagogy in the Foundation Phase that I did not ask you about?

None

End of task. Thank you

SEMI-STRUCTURED TEACHER INTERVIEW (3)

Teacher: Jen Grade 3

Date: 21/06/2011

School: Everite Primary School

Time: 13h30

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

A. Teachers' knowledge about pedagogy:

1. What do you know about how Foundation Phase learners become literate?

It is important to teach children the core breakthrough words. Expose learners to various sources (television, radio, newspaper). Expose learners to different types of writing (stories, poems, and letters). This helps learners to build vocabulary thereby becoming literate.

2. What would you consider as essentials for effective teaching and learning to take place in Literacy in your grade?

Teaching aids are essential. Methods of teaching must be suitable for the lesson, for example, showing learners a film. Take current events and develop your lesson around it.

3. Where do you get the information to plan your Literacy lessons?

I get my information from textbooks. I use the Department of Education workbooks and documents, library books and the Internet.

4. How do you know which sources of information to use for planning?

Start with the basic source, i.e. the policy documents. It gives direction. I also rely on my experience.

5. What pedagogic principles inform the way you teach Literacy?

I have no preference for any particular approach to my lessons. Teach word recognition. Be practical. Use visual aids. Pictorial studies are used in my lessons.

B. Teachers' understanding about pedagogy:

1. What are your views on the sources of information that you use to plan Literacy lessons?

I rely on the Internet because my lessons are built around current events and therefore I feel that the sources are excellent. The Internet has ideas on almost everything you need to know.

2. What do you understand by the term pedagogy/teaching and learning?

Pedagogy is the methods used to get learners to learn to read and write.

3. What are your understandings about teaching/developing learners' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking?

The teacher's role is critical in developing learners' skills in Literacy. The teacher must guide the learners. They need exposure to different types of writing (dialogue, letter, and diary). Writing skills are developed through this exposure. For reading, collect newspaper articles and practice read it daily.

4. What were some of your experiences in teaching Literacy to Foundation Phase learners that influence the way you teach reading, writing listening and speaking?

It is important to link current events with literacy in the class. Learners are able to talk and write because of the exposure. They like exciting things. Rewarding learners is important.

5. How do you go about planning and preparing Literacy lessons?

I start with the policy documents. Look at the learning outcomes and assessment standards. Develop lessons around the learning outcomes and assessment standards. When opportunities arise, I do incidental teaching.

C. Teaching and learning strategies:

1. What methods of teaching do you use the most to develop learners' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking?

I use group teaching, oral drill and discussion methods.

2. Why do you rely on these methods?

Through discussion, we get learners to speak and this develops their listening and speaking skills. To enhance skills in reading and writing, make use of oral drill. Those who don't know listen to the others and catch up.

3. How do you cater for learners of various abilities and skills?

Give learners individual attention. Bring them out in groups. Additional work must be given to weak learners.

4. What sources informs your decision to employ certain learning strategies?

It depends on the learners' performance. I may revisit a section if the children do not understand.

5. What are your perceptions on poetry, music, and play as a learning tool to develop learners' skills in Literacy?

I love that but the volume of work is so great that there is very little time for these activities.

6. What are your perceptions on the monitoring of learners' work, giving feedback, as well as reflection on your teaching practice?

It must be done almost immediately. The teacher must do constant supervision.

D. Classroom interactions:

1. What are your perceptions of social interaction between you and your learners as a learning tool for developing Literacy skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking?

Bonding develops between the teacher and learners during such social interaction and this is important for effective teaching.

2. How can we create opportunities for positive interactions between the teacher and learners?

The teacher must be caring and sympathetic. Show learners that you love them.

3. How can we create opportunities for positive interactions amongst learners?

The classroom atmosphere must be such that care, sympathy and love for each other are prevalent.

E. Creation of Learning environments:

1. What are your perceptions of an appropriate learning environment?

There should be enough space, a mat area for group work, and resources on walls. Learners should have their stationery.

2. What do you do to ensure that all learners are actively engaged in Literacy lessons?

Involve the learners in the lesson. There must be constant supervision.

3. What are the resources that you use to support literacy in your class?

Department of Education workbooks as well as worksheets are given to learners.

4. Comment on their adequacy?

The workbooks are excellent but there is no space for working out the answers. Children tend to guess the answers.

5. What do you think would be supportive of an enriched literacy environment for the Foundation Phase?

Word games, puzzles and books would be supportive of an enriched literacy environment.

6. How might we provide this?

The teacher can make or improvise some of these items.

F. General:

1. What are the factors that help Foundation Phase teachers to shape their pedagogy for early literacy?

Training colleges, workshops and experience help to shape teachers' pedagogy for early literacy.

2. What are the factors that impede teaching and learning of literacy in the Foundation Phase?

The varying ability levels of children impede teaching and learning. Classes should be graded and remedial classes should be re-established in schools.

3. What are your views on curriculum changes and its effects on pedagogy for literacy?

Our approach to teaching and learning is important. Have a positive attitude.

4. Is there anything that you would like to tell me about pedagogy in the Foundation Phase that I did not ask you about?

None

End of task. Thank you

APPENDIX 4

OBSERVATION SCHEDULES

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE (1)

School: Model Primary School

Date: 10/05/2011

Teacher: Sue

Time: 9h00

Grade: Grade 1

No. of learners present: 26

A. CONTENT:

The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter by:		YES	NO
1.	Presenting planned and structured lessons to scaffold learners' achievements of outcomes in literacy.	✓	
2.	Adapting the lesson to their suit the needs and abilities of all learners.		✓
3.	Building on what the child already knows and gradually introducing the new information.	✓	
4.	Integrating the lesson with other aspects of the curriculum.	✓	

NOTES: *Learners related their news. One of the children's news was selected for writing in their books. The sentence was constructed on the board by the teacher as each word was given by the learners. Learners then copied the sentence into their books. The teacher focused on capital letters, spacing of word and full stop. She drew children's attention to parts of the car. The number 4 was reinforced (4 wheels). During the reading lesson, the teacher focused learners on the pictures to help them predict the text and create meaning.*

B. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding of pedagogic strategies by		YES	NO
1.	Working from a solid knowledge base around the barriers to learning.		✓
2.	Employing different strategies for working with learners of various abilities and skills.		✓
3.	Encouraging active learner participation.		✓
4.	Establishing a balance between teacher-directed and learner-directed activity.		✓
5.	Using a variety of instructional strategies including music, poems and play as cultural tools to learn about language.		✓

NOTES: *One of the children could not identify a word. The teacher remarked, "You haven't practised your words." She did not point out to the child some possible ways to figure out the word. The only strategy used during the reading lesson was to look and interpret the pictures to create meaning of the text. The lesson was teacher-dominated. She was not encouraging to some learners. She had indicated to one of the learners that she was very*

disappointed with his reading. To another child she had remarked “It took you very long to complete your work”. She was able to correct a learner’s speech immediately. The child had used the phrase “Me and my mum...” and the teacher corrected her with the phrase “My mum and I...”

C. CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding about the effects of classroom interaction on pedagogy by:		YES	NO
1.	Interacting with learners in a sensitive manner, and encouraging responses from the learners.		✓
2.	Communicating to their learners what is expected.	✓	
3.	Using communication as a tool to develop the learners’ language skills.	✓	

NOTES: Although the teacher was able to encourage responses from the learners, she was often insensitive in her interaction with the learners. She had remarked to one of the learners, “Hey mister, complete your work. You must work faster.” Her instructions were clear and learners understood what was to be done. They had enjoyed free communication with the teacher. The teacher was a good listener to children’s news. Learners were encouraged to speak one at a time.

D. MONITORING LEARNING

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding on the results of monitoring learners work by:		YES	NO
1.	Ensuring that learners understand what is to be done.	✓	
2.	Providing corrective feedback from the application activities.	✓	
3.	Reflecting on and evaluating her teaching practice so as to enhance their professional knowledge and its effects on their future instructional planning.		✓

NOTES: She took quick walks around the class in between the group reading lesson to check on learners’ work. She corrected some of the learners on the spot. For example, she had pointed out the use of capital letters to some learners. She had corrected some learners’ handwriting.

E. CREATION OF A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding on the need to create a proper learning environment by:		YES	NO
1.	Encouraging learners to be actively engaged in the lessons.	✓	
2.	Creating learning environments that address the broad range of children's developmental needs.		✓
3.	Accommodating the varying intellectual abilities of children.		✓
4.	Encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning.	✓	

NOTES: *She had given quite a few learners an opportunity to relate their news. Shy learners were called out by name to answer questions during the reading lesson. The seating in the classroom was arranged according to ability groups. Extra attention was given to the weak learners. Learners were encouraged to exercise care and not rub excessively in their books.*

F. LEARNER SUPPORT MATERIALS

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the importance of learner support materials by:		YES	NO
1.	Using the resources available effectively to help achieve their learning goals for their learners.	✓	
2.	Giving learners adequate exposure to books, reference charts and worksheets to promote learning.	✓	

NOTES: *Amongst others, phonic charts were displayed on the wall. Sight words on a sheet were given to learners to learn at home and for reference in class. There was a reading corner, a nature corner and an activity corner.*

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE (2)

School: Parklane Primary School

Date: 08/06/2011

Teacher: Pam

Time: 9h00

Grade: Grade 2

No. of learners present: 43

A. CONTENT:

The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter by:		YES	NO
1.	Presenting planned and structured lessons to scaffold learners' achievements of outcomes in literacy.		✓
2.	Adapting the lesson to their suit the needs and abilities of all learners.		✓
3.	Building on what the child already knows and gradually introducing the new information.	✓	
4.	Integrating the lesson with other aspects of the curriculum.	✓	

NOTES: *A structure for the creative writing was not discussed. For example, the story must have a beginning, a middle and end. During the discussion, the anatomy of the elephant, its habits and habitation was discussed. Learners were then asked to write a story on elephants. It was not clear whether the story should be factual or imaginative. Weak learners were not given guided writing. The lesson was integrated with some phonic work ('e' sound). During the reading lesson, the learners were seated on the carpet and read from a word list, while the teacher put up some words on the board for the rest of the class to complete their creative writing. When she was done, she had asked individual learners to read from their readers. No clear criteria for the reading lesson were evident.*

B. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding of pedagogic strategies by		YES	NO
1.	Working from a solid knowledge base around the barriers to learning.		✓
2.	Employing different strategies for working with learners of various abilities and skills.	✓	
3.	Encouraging active learner participation.	✓	
4.	Establishing a balance between teacher-directed and learner-directed activity.		✓
5.	Using a variety of instructional strategies including music, poems and play as cultural tools to learn about language.		✓

NOTES: *The teacher gave learners two sentences to start off their story. During the reading lesson a child that could not identify a word was encouraged to sound out the letters. Learners were encouraged to participate in the discussion by constantly referring them to the picture on the board. The teacher dominated the discussion by asking questions to which learners simply provided answers. Learners were not encouraged to challenge each other's*

responses. Apart from the pictures and storytelling, lessons did not include music, poems, drama, etc.

C. CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding about the effects of classroom interaction on pedagogy by:		YES	NO
1.	Interacting with learners in a sensitive manner, and encouraging responses from the learners.		✓
2.	Communicating to their learners what is expected.	✓	
3.	Using communication as a tool to develop the learners' language skills.	✓	

NOTES: *The teacher praised learners for their responses during the discussion lesson. Learners were encouraged to share their experiences, describe elephants and give their views on why Elly should return to the circus. However, for the creative writing, the teacher was not clear on the kind of writing that was expected.*

D. MONITORING LEARNING

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding on the results of monitoring learners work by:		YES	NO
1.	Ensuring that learners understand what is to be done.		✓
2.	Providing corrective feedback from the application activities.	✓	
3.	Reflecting on and evaluating her teaching practice so as to enhance their professional knowledge and its effects on their future instructional planning.		✓

NOTES: *The teacher did not check on learners while they were engaged in creative writing, to ascertain whether they were doing what is expected. There was no evidence of reflection on her teaching.*

E. CREATION OF A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding on the need to create a proper learning environment by:		YES	NO
1.	Encouraging learners to be actively engaged in the lessons.	✓	
2.	Creating learning environments that address the broad range of children's developmental needs.		✓
3.	Accommodating the varying intellectual abilities of children.		✓
4.	Encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning.	✓	

NOTES: *Pictures and words were put up to assist learners. Phonic charts were displayed on the walls. Learners were encouraged to ask for help when they needed to. All children were expected to write the story with no extra guidance or help given to the weak learners.*

F. LEARNER SUPPORT MATERIALS

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the importance of learner support materials by:		YES	NO
1.	Using the resources available effectively to help achieve their learning goals for their learners.	✓	
2.	Giving learners adequate exposure to books, reference charts and worksheets to promote learning.	✓	

NOTES: *The teacher narrated a story, displayed pictures and vocabulary to assist learners in writing their story*

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE (3)

School: Everite Primary School
 Teacher: Pam
 Grade: Grade 2

Date: 21/06/11
 Time: 9h00
 No. of learners present: 32

A. CONTENT:

The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter by:		YES	NO
1.	Presenting planned and structured lessons to scaffold learners' achievements of outcomes in literacy.	✓	
2.	Adapting the lesson to their suit the needs and abilities of all learners.		✓
3.	Building on what the child already knows and gradually introducing the new information.	✓	
4.	Integrating the lesson with other aspects of the curriculum.	✓	

NOTES: *Learners watched the movie "Finding Nemo" before writing a story on the adventures of an underwater creature. During the discussion, the teacher pointed out Nemo's adventures. The teacher explained that it did not have to be real and therefore they were to use their imagination. They must write down whatever they feel and think happens to sea creatures. The lesson was integrated with Life-skills. Dangers encountered underwater were discussed. Learners were reminded on the use of capital letters, punctuation, conjunctions and use of adjectives. All learners were expected to write the story.*

B. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding of pedagogic strategies by		YES	NO
1.	Working from a solid knowledge base around the barriers to learning.	✓	
2.	Employing different strategies for working with learners of various abilities and skills.		✓
3.	Encouraging active learner participation.	✓	
4.	Establishing a balance between teacher-directed and learner-directed activity.		✓
5.	Using a variety of instructional strategies including music, poems and play as cultural tools to learn about language.		✓

NOTES: *Pictures of the royal wedding were shown. A discussion was held with the entire class. Learners were encouraged to focus on the outfits, transport, people, buildings, and transport. The teacher led all discussions. Weak learners were encouraged to look at the pictures and give two sentences on what they could see. The quiet learners were also encouraged to answer. Other than the DVD, pictures and discussion, no other strategies were employed. In the reading lesson, the teacher read phrases at a time and the learners repeated. Learners were also asked to read out loud individually and at random. Learners were encouraged to borrow books and read on their own.*

C. CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding about the effects of classroom interaction on pedagogy by:		YES	NO
1.	Interacting with learners in a sensitive manner, and encouraging responses from the learners.	✓	
2.	Communicating to their learners what is expected.	✓	
3.	Using communication as a tool to develop the learners' language skills.	✓	

NOTES: *The teacher listened attentively as learners spoke. She also encouraged others to listen. Learners spoke freely to the teacher seeking clarity when they were unsure what to do. For example, a child had asked the teacher whether she must cut and stick pictures or draw them and the teacher politely answered "No, I think you must draw them." She had promised the learners custard and jelly and a few naughty boys were acknowledged for their good behaviour. She had asked learners to look at the picture and plan a sentence in their heads. They were then to report the sentence that they had thought of. She had told learners not to start their sentences with "because". The workbook exercise was clearly explained.*

D. MONITORING LEARNING

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding on the results of monitoring learners work by:		YES	NO
1.	Ensuring that learners understand what is to be done.	✓	
2.	Providing corrective feedback from the application activities.		✓
3.	Reflecting on and evaluating her teaching practice so as to enhance their professional knowledge and its effects on their future instructional planning.		✓

NOTES: *Learners were asked to say their sentences to check if they were along the right lines. They were corrected immediately when asked to leave out the preceding words "I can see". The teacher took a quick walk around the class to check on learners' work. Not much was done to support struggling learners.*

E. CREATION OF A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding on the need to create a proper learning environment by:		YES	NO
1.	Encouraging learners to be actively engaged in the lessons.	✓	
2.	Creating learning environments that address the broad range of children's developmental needs.		✓
3.	Accommodating the varying intellectual abilities of children.		✓
4.	Encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning.	✓	

NOTES: *Quiet learners were encouraged to participate in the lesson. Samples of money, pictures of the royal wedding, and a map of the world were displayed at the discussion corner. All learners were expected to do the same tasks. Homework was given. Learners were encouraged to read library books.*

F. LEARNER SUPPORT MATERIALS

The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the importance of learner support materials by:		YES	NO
1.	Using the resources available effectively to help achieve their learning goals for their learners.	✓	
2.	Giving learners adequate exposure to books, reference charts and worksheets to promote learning.	✓	

NOTES: *The teacher used the Department of Basic Education workbooks effectively (P22, 23, and 24). Maps, money, pictures and a DVD were used in the lesson. Library books were made available. The resources were adequate for learners to draw from in completing their creative writing.*