

**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOUNDATIONS
FOR LEARNING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE LITERACY LEARNING
PROGRAMME IN DISADVANTAGED
CONTEXTS**

By

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the requirements of the degree

Master of Education

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SUBMISSION APPROVED

As the candidate's supervisor I have approved this dissertation for submission.

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DECLARATION

I, Joan Gouws, declare that the research involved in this dissertation, entitled:

“Challenges and Opportunities in the implementation of the Foundations for Learning with special reference to the Literacy Learning Programme in disadvantaged contexts.”

represents my own original work and does not contain material previously submitted for the purpose of any degree or diploma.

Joan Gouws

May 2011

DEDICATION

This dissertation is firstly dedicated to Jesus Christ Who is Lord of my life. Without His grace, wisdom, knowledge and guidance I would never have been able to complete this work and I give Him all the praise and glory for His grace, favour, goodness, mercy and loving kindness that He bestows on me daily.

Secondly I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Isaac Charel Verster; my mother, Dalene Verster; my son, Jaco Gouws and my daughter, Charlene Gouws.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Foundation Phase (FP) teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Foundations for Learning (FFL) (South Africa Government Gazette, No 30990 2008) in the Literacy Learning Programme (LLP) (2008). FFL is the new curriculum policy for FP that consists of Numeracy and Literacy Learning programmes. This policy was introduced to address the challenges teachers had with the previous curriculum policy, Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The aim of this study is to find out how FP teachers experience the implementation of the FFL.

This is a qualitative study located within the interpretive paradigm. Informants were purposively selected from two primary schools located in a rural and a township area in KwaZulu-Natal. Eight FP teachers teaching grades R-3 participated in two focus group interviews. To generate data from these informants, semi-structured interviews, observations and documentary analyses were used as instruments.

Findings reveal that teachers had to make changes to their teaching approach as a result of the implementation of the FFL and they experienced feelings of being swamped by all the changes that seemed to be too much to understand. Teachers reported difficulties in understanding and accepting new processes, procedures and expectations associated with educational changes.

It is clear that it is impossible to successfully implement change in an education system if serious investments are not made in the professional development of teachers (Hargreaves, 2003). Without sufficient, training, guidance and mentoring in the implementation of the FFL in the LLP, teachers feel de-motivated and anxious as they do not understand the FFL document and thus feel threatened by the way they taught in the past. Teachers fail to understand the requirements set out in the FFL document because the prescriptions are too vague.

The study recommends a closer relationship with the Department of Education (DoE) for guidance, regular monitoring, mentoring, workshops and training to be conducted by the DoE. In addition, experienced and perhaps competent FP educators, lecturers and non-governmental

organizations, e.g. Read Educational Trust could assist in the implementing strategies to ensure effective implementation of the FFL campaign in the LLP.

The implications of the findings from this research should be useful to educators, curriculum development specialists, textbook writers and teacher trainers to gain a better understanding of the needs, understandings, challenges and opportunities teachers experience in the implementation of the FFL in the LLP.

ABBREVIATIONS

- BLA - Balanced Literacy Approach
- BLP - Balanced Literacy Programme
- C2005 - Curriculum 2005
- DoE - Department of Education
- FFL - Foundations for Learning
- FP - Foundation Phase
- LLP - Literacy Learning Programme
- MLA - Monitoring Learning Achievement
- NCS - National Curriculum Statement
- OBA - Outcome-Based Assessment
- OBE - Outcome-Based Education
- RNCS - Revised National Curriculum Statement

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CHAPTER 1

MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Change is an ever-present phenomenon in life and every dimension of human existence is subject to change, including education. Change is not intended to slow things down but it is intended to challenge existing things as being tentative and temporary in our search for improvement (Meyer, Lombard, Warnich and Wolhuter 2010). Carr and Hartnett, in Collins and Cook (2001) said that the process of change in which all are involved can only be understood through grasping the process of change as a whole. Educational change and democratic change should not be understood as separate processes (Collins and Cook, 2001). John Welton (2001) in Jansen and Sayed (2001) states for teachers to be ready to change, they need to have motivation and capacity to change. Therefore as a result of change that has taken place in the Foundation Phase (FP) Literacy Learning Programme (LLP) this study looks at the FP teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Foundations for Learning (FFL) in 2008 as the newly introduced curriculum policy. This new policy brings about change in the way FP teachers use to do things. Bloch (2009) argues that children should go back to the basics of reading and numeracy. He further says that the pedagogical and learning supports need to be in place. He said that the FFL Campaign is a good start to equip teachers as it is practical and focused, specifically on reading and writing.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

My interest in conducting this study emanated from three sources: my own experiences as a teacher and teacher trainer; broad problems and issues that are taking place in the field of the Literacy curriculum and the shortage of studies in this field.

Firstly, my intention to conduct research in this area is motivated by my experience in teacher education. Through my recent experiences in classrooms in the Inanda area, for example, I

found that FP teachers had the resources prescribed by the FFL but they lacked understanding about the nature of teaching and learning required by this campaign for literacy. It is timeous to conduct my study as FP teachers would have been working with the FFL for two years. They are now in a good position to talk about the challenges and opportunities that resulted from the FFL.

Secondly, poor performance in literacy is one of the concerns in any education system. Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) (1999) was one of the first large cross-national studies of quality in which South Africa participated. As part of the UNESCO Literacy Decade 2003 – 2013 and the 'Education for All'(EFA), campaign, the study was designed to track and monitor the quality of education in primary schools in participating countries and to aim to increase literacy rates by 50% by the year 2015 (Department of Education, 1999). South Africa scored 48, 1% in the campaign. The literacy task consisted of 30 items focusing on word recognition; understanding of detail content; writing skills; spelling; grammar; retrieving information, and providing information. The Progress in the International Reading study (PIRLS) (2006) done by the University of Pretoria revealed the following results: 2007 South Africa the weakest of 45 countries (Dada,F., Dipholo, T.,Hoadley, H., Khembo, E., Muller, S. and Volmink,J. 2009). In 2005 the Department of Education (DoE) released the results of the academic performance of a sample of 34 015 Grade 6 learners tested in 2003. Learners obtained an average for language of 35 - 38%. Only 28% of South African learners function in language at the "achieved" or above standard required by the curriculum and two-thirds performed below the level expected for them. When the education officials from a district in the Gauteng Department of Education visited schools after the initial Curriculum 2005 (C2005) orientation in 1997, they noticed that many grade one learners were having difficulty learning to read. These findings indicate that the vast majority of children attending disadvantaged schools do not acquire a basic level of mastery in reading and writing. These children struggle to read for meaning and their learning remains context-bound and a non-general sable. South Africa's primary education achievement gap, with its distinct bimodal distribution, begins in the FP (Fleisch, 2008).

Thirdly, FFL is a new initiative in South Africa. As far as I could establish there is no study that has been conducted on the teachers' understandings of the FFL. This study is therefore obvious in revealing FP experiences in the implementation of the FFL.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The advent of South African democracy gave rise to the new education curriculum. In March 1997 the Minister of Education announced the adoption of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum for South Africa, namely C2005. According to Killen (2000), OBE was not a totally new approach to teaching, but encouraged the systematic application of a number of educational ideas that were part of good educational practice for many years. In western countries, OBE had its roots in earlier work on educational objectives, competency-based education, mastery learning and criterion-referenced assessment (Killen, 2000). According to Skilbeck in Marjoribanks (1991), curriculum may be thought of as a map or chart of experiences through which the learner is expected to learn efficiently and to apply those learnings in life situations, although socio-cultural pressures and forces do affect the curriculum (Marjoribanks, 1991).

In transforming society, education, through an outcomes based philosophy aimed at promoting holistic development of children, promoting the culture of learning and teaching, instilling human rights values and a high level of professionalism amongst the teaching workforce (School Education Act, Gauteng, 1995:29). OBE was set as a means of meeting the needs of all learners regardless of their environment, ethnicity, economic status or disability to result in greater curricular focus, better instructional methods and reliable and valid assessment practices (Meyer, L., Lombard, K., Warnich, P., and Wolhuter, C. 2010). OBE aimed at equipping all learners with knowledge, competencies and orientations needed to be successful after completing their studies and to encompass a culture of human rights, multi-lingualism, multi-culturalism and sensitivity to values of reconciliation and nation building (Dreyer, 1997:3), to enable children application in life after school. We are in agreement that the above mentioned factors should create a literate society.

The old curriculum was more content-based and focused on the facilitator's input. OBE shifted towards "Learning programmes" (LP)'s which are outcomes based and focused on learners' understanding of what they should do and know. The major focus of OBE was outcomes based assessment (OBA) which focused on the outcomes that learners demonstrated after learning. Comparing individual learners' work to a set of criteria or Learning outcomes (LO)'s were used

to assess, in a formative way, the learner's ability to learn during the learning process (Gultig, Lubisi, Parker, Wedekind, 2002).

1.3.1 Problems with OBE

Jonathan Jansen predicted already in 1998 that OBE would fail because the policy was driven by political imperatives which had little to do with the realities of the classroom life. Jansen said that OBE would undermine the already fragile learning environment in schools and classrooms of the new South Africa (Jansen, 1998). Jansen also stated that OBE would fail in the South African education system because it was based on flawed assumptions about what happens inside schools, how classrooms are organized and what kinds of teachers exist within the system. He further said that what a learner demonstrates, given a set of outcomes, side-steps the important issues of values in the curriculum. Another criticism was the management of OBE. He saw that the administrative part of OBE would become an extra burden on teachers. Jansen said that OBE threatens to atomize and fragment curriculum knowledge. Further OBE requires trained and retrained teachers in assessment. Schools accepted continuous assessment but in a weak way and the ineffectiveness of the syllabus revision process in changing curriculum practice should have indicated to policy-makers and planners that OBE, as a national curriculum initiative, was likely to fail (Jansen, 1999).

In 2001 and 2003/4 and 2007, South African National Department of Education (Department of Education, 2005), Provincial DoE as well as international bodies, conducted two national systemic evaluations to establish Literacy and Numeracy levels in primary schools and to gather baseline information on learning in the first three years of schooling. These surveys showed poor and low levels of reading ability when children were tested for their ability to read at age-appropriate levels across the country. Large numbers of South African children simply do not read. The 2001 Systemic evaluation of 51 000 randomly selected grade three learners, comprising about 5% of the total grade three enrolment showed in the Literacy task an average score of 54% scores (Department of Education, 2008). When the Literacy task was broken down into the oral domain and the reading and writing domain, the average score on the reading and writing domain was much lower (39%) It was also revealed that the average FP learner was barely coping with the demands of learning to read and write (Fleisch, 2008).

1.3.2 The introduction of the Foundations for Learning (FFL)

As a result of the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the C2005, which was not prescriptive regarding what the teacher should do in class, a new curriculum policy was introduced called Foundations for Learning (FFL).

On 14 March 2008 the FFL Campaign was published in the South African Government Gazette by Naledi Pandor, the Minister of Education, with the aim of improving learner performance and abilities in reading, writing and numeracy in all South African schools. The four year campaign provides clear directives to the entire education system on minimum expectations at each level of the General Phase of schooling. It also states that it sends out a “Call to Action” to all South Africans to join hands with the DoE to improve learning outcomes (LO)’s in these crucial areas (DoE: Government Gazette 2008).

The FFL is an attempt to address the crisis in early literacy and numeracy. Pandor (2008) noted that performance in Reading and Numeracy in international assessments was appalling. The intention is to ensure that ultimately learners across the system acquire and sustain a solid foundation for learning. The campaign provides clear directives on minimum expectations at each level of schooling, regarding: specific time frames, “Drop everything and read time” (DAR) for 30 minutes per day; sufficient resources to ensure effective teaching and learning; assessment to monitor learner progress and annual national assessments to measure progress towards achievement of set targets (DoE Government Gazette 2008). Teachers are directed by the campaign to make changes to their daily and weekly planning, to follow the prescribed formal teaching and learning time allocations, to fit daily activities into their planning and make recommended resources, if the schools did not buy resources. To be able to adhere to the FFL campaign, teachers have to change their teaching strategies to fit all the prescribed activities and methodologies. Going hand in hand with the Government Gazette, schools were issued with FFL FP Lesson plans, FFL Assessment Framework for FP as well as the FFL Quarterly Assessment Activities for FP by the DoE.

The FFL Assessment Framework FP document schools received from the (Department of Education 2008), provides teachers with support as they monitor learner progress in Numeracy and Literacy. The FFL Assessment Framework for FP includes milestones derived from the

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards from the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Literacy and Numeracy. The term “milestones” is used to indicate the expected level of learners’ progress to become literate and numerate. It gives a sense of what their achievements could be at given points during the school year, therefore it has been packaged into four terms for each grade to facilitate planning for teaching. The milestones explain the content embedded in the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards. The milestones are also written into manageable units to assist teachers to develop the required assessment tasks per term. The document includes rubrics for the last assessment task per term so that schools and districts can develop a common assessment task which is to be communicated to the District Offices (Department of Education, 2008).

Ms Palesa Tyobeka, Deputy Director-General: General Education and Training, provided schools with a helpful resource called the FFL Quarterly Assessment Activities for Literacy and Numeracy Grade 1-3, based on the quarterly assessment tasks of learners, which teachers can use as a guide to assess learners (Department of Education, 2009). Schools were also issued with FFL- FP Lesson plans, which are divided in four terms. The FFL-FP Lesson plans indicate exactly what the focus of development would be and what learners should be able to do. The document also includes an overview of assessment tasks which consists of activities to be used for assessment (Department of Education, 2009).

1.4 TABLES

Table 1.4.1 Daily prescribed activities in the FFL (Department of Education, 2008)

Number	Activities	Minutes Grade 1	Minutes Grade 2	Minutes Grade 3
1	<p>Oral work at the beginning of each day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark register as learner’s name is called they say how they are feeling • 2-4 learners tell their personal experience or news • Day chart, Month chart, Birthday chart and Weather chart 	10	10	10
	Reading and Writing Focus Time			

2	Shared reading or shared writing	15	15	15
3	Word and sentence level work (do one of the following) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonics or spelling • Sight Words • Vocabulary • Language 	15	15	15
4	Group, Guided and Independent reading/ Writing	30	30	30
5	Hand writing	10 x 5	10 x 2	15 x 2
6	Writing	10 x 5	20 x 3	20 x 3
7	Listening and Speaking	10 x 5	10 x 2	10 x 2
8	First Additional language	10 x 5	20 x 5	30 x 5
9	Reading for enjoyment	30	30	30

The table above, as adopted from the South African Government Gazette, No. 30880 (2008), shows the kind of activities teachers should employ in their teaching of Literacy. The FFL also recommends resources teachers should use in its implementation in the teaching of Literacy as outlined in the South African Government Gazette, No. 30880 (2008).

Table 1.4.2 List of recommended resources

Walls	Learners	Teachers	Additional resources
Alphabet frieze	Workbooks	Big books	Sets of plastic alphabet letters
Alphabet charts: Letter, word, and picture	Sets of small alphabet cards for word building	Graded readers	Sets of cards: Alphabet cards Alphabet and picture cards for matching Alphabet and word cards for matching CVC word cards for sounding out Blends and picture cards for matching Vowel combinations cards Sight words sets
Birthday chart	Sight words	Lists of reading words per reader	Cork board to display learners' work

Weather chart	Jotters: un-lined as well as lined books	Read-aloud stories	Library box
Numbers word chart	Personal dictionaries	Independent reading books on different topics	Flipchart stand with paper and koki's
Colour word chart	Stationary: wax crayons, pencils, sharpeners, soft erasers and blank paper for drawing	A systematic programme which includes: Phonemic awareness, Phonic development, Sight words, Language development.	
Vocabulary charts which include words, and pictures, e.g. my body, my family, fruit, farm animals and actions			
Flash cards with learners' names and sight words			

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

It is mentioned above that FFL is a new curriculum policy. I am not aware of studies that have been published on the FP teachers' experiences of its implementation. Studies that have been conducted focus on other areas of curriculum implementation. Researchers such as Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002), Matshidiso (2007), Higgs, Vakalisa, Mda and Assie-Lumumba (2000), Churchill, Williamson and Grady (1997), Todd and Mason (2005) and Vambe (2005) have conducted studies on teachers' experiences of the curriculum and they have presented these experiences in the form of challenges and opportunities. Attitudes of teachers in the implementation of the curriculum are highlighted as one of the challenges where teachers refuse to adopt change.

Numerous schools in South Africa have been unsuccessful in implementing the concept of outcomes to drive the educational programmes and state resources have not been sufficient to bring all schools up to the standards that was enjoyed by former Model C schools prior to 1994

(Van Deventer, 2009, Whitaker and Whitaker, 1995; Todd and Mason, 2005; Vambe, 2005; Jansen, 1998). Van Deventer (2009) states that according to Jansen, Botha, Fiske and Prinsloo the policy was implemented because of the lack of management capacity and the scarcity of resources. Spady (1994) wrote an article in which he said that it was time to end the confusion about OBE in South Africa. He argues that prior to and since its inception in 1997, the C 2005 initiative missed the OBE mark: There was never clear and compelling and operational framework of exit outcomes as a basis for curriculum change. After a period of six years Pieter van Zyl published in the You Magazine (2009) that the OBE teaching system is not working and results in a generation of young people who are unprepared for adult life (You, 19 November, 2009, p 154). Kader Ashmal, the Minister of Education in 1999, declared that his concern with the curriculum was that it did not explicitly mention the need for students to know how to read and write (Fleisch, 2008).

Problems associated with the Literacy Learning Programme (LLP) are best understood with the broad concerns regarding OBE as a choice for the FP. Matshidiso (2007) conducted a survey amongst teachers in the Bojanjala West region of the North-West province in South Africa. The aim of the study was to determine how teachers perceive Outcome-Based Assessments (OBA) as part of OBE and what problems they experienced in its implementation. Findings indicated that teachers displayed negative perceptions. A second survey was conducted among a sample of South African teachers who teach English First Additional Language to determine how teachers in public schools in South Africa experience the OBA. Findings indicated that teachers voiced negative perceptions about its practical implementation, namely: their lack of knowledge of and skills in OBE and OBA due to inadequate training; a lack of confidence and competency to implement OBE and OBA; inadequate departmental support and guidance in the implementations of the NCS; not enough serious departmental investment in the sustained professional development of teachers.

Teachers experience difficulty in unpacking and breaking down the Assessment Standards (AS) and to set attainable outcomes. Vilakazi, (2000) as cited in Higgs, Vakalisa, Mda and Assie-Lumumba, Vice-Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission in South Africa reported that multilingualism is the answer to language problems. He said according to findings of research done by two professors from George Mason University in Virginia in 1995 with non-

English speaking students, were that children who received six years of bilingual education performed better than 70% of all 11th graders. Vilakazi, said that the highest achievers are products of “two-way” schools, where half of the curriculum is taught in English and half in a foreign language. Research in this area in a Spanish–English curriculum showed that after six years children in grade six scored at a grade nine level in reading (Vilakazi (2000) as cited in Higgs, Vakalisa, Mda & Assie-Lumumba, 2000).

Literature also states that language poses a challenge in the implementation of a curriculum. The model for the study of students’ learning by Marjoribanks (1991) represents a dynamic set of influences and interactions. Studies maintain that a curriculum that is not responsive to the context of learning causes challenges. Majoribanks (1991) states that learners’ learning is influenced by the learners’ own individual characteristics and by the instruction that is presented in schools and also by how learners perceive their environments and by the meanings which learners attribute to their learning contexts.

In Whitaker and Whitaker, (1995) Jansen, Botha, Fiske and Prinsloo highlight the issue of the lack of resources in their study on the teachers’ experiences of implementing the curriculum. This includes teachers who are not properly trained and the lack of physical resources. They maintain that the implementation of curriculum policy fails because of the lack of management capacity and the scarcity of resources (Whitaker and Whitaker, 1995). Literature highlights doors that new curriculum opens. Osborn and Broadfoot (1992) in their study found that teachers are positive about having structure and guidelines in which they can work, because it creates the opportunity to be creative in the way they work with individual learners. Teachers’ professionalism is also affected because of self study by reading more widely, after reflection on their lessons. By doing this Churchill, Williamson and Grady (1997) discovered that teaching practices and learners’ learning experiences improved.

1.6 THE FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

FFL encompasses Numeracy and Literacy Learning Programmes for grades R to 3. This study focuses on the LLP. I chose to focus on the LLP because it has the largest time allocation in the curriculum and is considered to be critical for early learning. I believe that this research focus will help to gain insight into teachers’ experiences of implementing FFL with specific reference to the LLP. Furthermore, the study focuses on the experiences of FP teachers who are teaching

in schools located in disadvantaged areas. Its purpose is to find out how FP teachers experience the implementation of the newly introduced curriculum, the FFL. The study aims to see if this new curriculum is well understood and user-friendly since teachers experienced challenges with the implementation of C2005 thus the FFL aims at addressing those challenges.

1.7 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The FFL is the new curriculum policy. It has not been recorded how teachers experience its implementation. I would argue that teachers still have a long way to go in order to understand planning, integration, teaching and assessment to make a real difference in children's learning. The FFL is published in English only. It does not accommodate African mother tongue, for example isiZulu. Teachers are expected to use this document for both English and isiZulu Literacy. Teachers in disadvantaged contexts are given teaching packs with heavy guidance on what to teach and how to go about teaching the basic skills in the LLP. Some are also provided with resource packs. It is assumed that by heavy support teachers will embark on the process of getting literacy right for the young learners. Through my personal engagements with teachers in the FP in disadvantaged contexts, I know that they find their tasks challenging. In this study I aim to examine understandings and classroom practices with the view to shed light on the realities of implementing the FFL.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTION

This study seeks to answer these critical questions: (Please also refer to appendices 4-7)

1.8.1 Main question

What are teachers' experiences in the implementation of the FFL, with specific reference to the LLP?

1.8.2 Sub-questions

Understandings

- How do teachers understand the requirements as laid out FFL for LLP?
- Where do they draw their understandings from?

- What are the factors that pose a challenge to their understanding of teaching literacy?
- Are there opportunities which enable expanded understandings for the LLP? What are these and how did they emerge?

Classroom Practice

- What does classroom practice suggest about the implementation of the FFL for LLP?
- What methodologies do teachers use in the practice?
- What resources/artifacts do they use to support their practice?
- What are the factors that challenge practice in the LLP?
- Is there evidence of good/effective practices? What are these and how did they emerge?
- From a study on teachers' understanding and their practice what can we infer about the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the FFL for LLP ?

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of symbolic interactionism is relevant for this study. The work of Blumer (1969) provides the basic ideas in this theory. He states that the action of human being towards something is based on how they make meaning of it. The meanings are arrived at through social interaction. Meanings do not remain unchanged. They are interpreted and reinterpreted. People do not just react to other actions. They attach meaning to make sense of it. This is different from natural stimulus responses in behaviourist theories. We can accept that people act the way they do because they have definitions of situations.

The ideas of Longstreth (1997) are also helpful in understanding symbolic interactionism. He talks about three core principles. Firstly, people's meaning is really a social construction of what they see as real. Once something is seen as real, it has consequences. Each person's reality differs and is shared through tools. Secondly, language is a tool to give meaning in social interactions. We make meaning by talking to others. Thirdly, it is our thoughts that help us to interpret language and meaning.

For this study I found the use of symbolic interactionism useful. I was dealing with teachers' understanding and practices. This means that they had subjective interpretations about teaching literacy. In other words they socially constructed the meaning using their frame of references and

the context in which they found themselves in. In order to access these interpretations I used semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, observations and document analyses. This supports the idea that a social interactionist sees meaning coming out from the interaction between people, while a contradicting point of view asserts that meaning is already established in a person's psychological make-up (Nelson, 1998).

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study falls within the interpretive paradigm. Interpretivists believe that the world is changeable and that it is possible to understand how people make sense of the contexts in which they live and work and elaborate what lies beyond. Research will be done from the viewpoint of the participants demonstrating activeness and openness to gain insights through discovering meanings by improving comprehension of the whole, because the underlying assumption of interpretivism is that the whole needs to be examined in order to understand a phenomena (Neil, 2006). As this research study falls under the social sciences, participants' behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions are respected (UKZN Handout to students: Understanding Research Learning Guide).

The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for the study. Qualitative research involves the collection of a variety of empirical data in the form of words which gives an in-depth understanding of what people experience (Louw and Edwards 2008). Densombe (2003) provides a useful idea to think of qualitative research. This method was chosen because it needs the words of teachers and not to interpret information in terms of numbers. This study will help to provide a deep understanding of what teachers are thinking and doing in the name of literacy in FP classrooms.

1.10.1 Sampling design

Two schools were chosen from two locations that were purposively sampled. The study is exploratory and seeks understanding rather than generalization therefore a small sample was adequate. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p.175) purposive sampling is sometimes called "judgemental sampling". This type of sampling allowed the researcher to

select particular samples based on particular characteristics. This study concentrates on the LLP in economically challenged schools as these locations face the greatest challenges.

The researcher chose a township school and rural school. Both these schools teach through the medium of the mother tongue, namely IsiZulu. The researcher has chosen these two specific schools because I used to work in both schools as a lecturer, teacher trainer and mentor. I know most of the staff and I have good general understanding of both schools. Secondly, the township school is managed well in comparison with the rural school, where vandalism occurs often. Both schools' infrastructure is appalling and resources are limited.

This is a small scale study and cannot include many teachers. I selected 1 teacher from each grade in the FP which includes Grade R. A total of 8 teachers were included in the study. I see this as sufficient to raise issues around the implementation of the LLP in disadvantaged contexts.

1.10.2 Research Instruments

Three of the instruments suggested by Yin (2003) that were used to gather data were: interviews, observations and document analyses. Focus group interviews were used in order to gain information about teachers' understandings and discussion on practice. The interviews used were semi-structured. Cannold in McNaughton (2001, p.179) argues that semi-structured interviews can be thought of as "structured conversations". This type of interviewing allows for flexibility and allowed me to probe for details regarding responses from teachers. Field and Thomas (2008) state that semi-structured interviews are valuable in order to bring the questions to the level of the participants' understanding.

Observations were used in order to get information on classroom practice. Observations present a key way to get information from live situations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). It allowed the researcher to get first-hand information that might have been overlooked in the interviews.

Document analysis was the third instrument used during the study. Document analysis is the systematic exploration of the content of written documents or artefacts. Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue that to analyse content of documents as the objective, give valuable information. In

this study learners' documents which include: exercise books, workbooks developed by the DoE and activity sheets were analysed. Teachers' documents analysed, include: files which includes planning, assessment, policy documents and minutes of meetings. These documents are a reflection of the day-to-day work in classes. Results of document analysis may complement or refute data gathered through interviews and observations and suggest whether or not the FFL is implemented or not. The advantage of document analysis is that documents are unobtrusive and can be used without imposing on participants to check for reliability but a disadvantage is that documents might not have been written for the purpose of the research, therefore observations as well as interviews are important for this study (Robson, 2002).

1.10.3 Data analysis

The data was analyzed through a four step approach suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2001). The first step has to do with an interim analysis of the data. The next step was to generate topics related to the research questions. The next step was the comparison of topics across the data set to establish what was duplicated or overlapping and similar topics were then clustered together. The last step was the discovery of patterns to inform abstractions.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is defined as "the moral philosophy or a set of moral principles underpinning a project." (Aubrey et al., 2000, p.156). The ethical clearance certificate for the study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu Natal, namely Professor Steve Collings, Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the South African Provincial DoE, namely Dr S.Z. Mbokazi, Acting Superintendent-General, KwaZulu Natal. Consent was also obtained from principals of schools, teachers, parents and care givers. All participation was voluntary and confidentiality and anonymity were assured and practiced.

1.12 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1.12.1 Learning outcome (LO)

Learning outcomes are descriptions of what learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do at the end of the General Education and Training band (Department of Education, 2002).

1.12.2 Assessment Standard (AS)

Assessment standards describe the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes and the ways of demonstrating their achievement. Assessment standards are grade specific and show how conceptual progression occur in a Learning Area without a prescribed method (Department of Education, 2002).

1.12.3 Literacy Learning Programme (LLP)

The LLP is structured and systematic arrangements of literacy activities that promote the attainment of LO's and AS' for the phase (Department of Education, 2002).

1.12.4 Continuous assessment (CASS)

The National Protocol on Assessment for Schools Grade R-12 states that continuous assessment is an assessment model that encourages integration of assessment into the teaching and the development of learners through ongoing feedback, to determine the learner's achievement during the course of a grade or level (Department of Education, 2005).

1.12.5 Foundations for Learning (FFL) Campaign

The FFL Campaign is a four-year campaign to create a national focus on improving the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children to demonstrate age appropriate levels of Literacy and Numeracy. The campaign will provide teachers and schools with clear directives on the DoE's expectations of schools and teachers. At the end of 2011 the FFL campaign will culminate with a national evaluation to assess the Literacy and Numeracy of FP

and Intermediate Phase learners in order to determine the impact of the campaign (Department of Education, 2008)

1.12.6 Learning Programme (LP)

Learning programmes are structured and systematic arrangements of activities that promote the attainment of LO's and AS's for the phase. LO's and AS's specify the scope of learning and assessment activities per phase. They contain work schedules that provide the pace and the sequencing of activities each year as well as exemplars of lesson plans to be implemented in any given period. LP's must ensure that all LO's and AS's are effectively pursued and that each learning area is allocated its prescribed time and emphasis (Department of Education, 2002).

1.12.7 Milestones

The term "milestones" is used to indicate the expected level of development of learners' progress to becoming literate and it gives a sense of what their achievements could be at given points in the school year (Department of Education, 2008). Milestones are found in the FFL Assessment Framework FP document.

1.12.8 A Balanced Language Programme (BLP)

A Balanced Language Programme is an approach to language and literacy teaching and learning, that shows how to teach the curriculum content effectively. The BLP is based on an Interactive Model of Reading which is a combination of a Phonics and Whole Language approach. This programme uses different teaching and learning methodologies, namely: Shared Reading, Shared Writing, Word and Sentence Level work, Group Reading, Guided Reading, Independent Reading, Independent Writing, Reading Aloud and DAR, each with a specific purpose (Botha, 2008).

1.12.9 Shared Reading

Shared Reading is a whole class activity where the teacher and learners share a complete text with the focus on modeling and teaching reading skills, reading for meaning and comprehension of the text as a whole. The methodology entails an introduction of the text by the display of a

big book, discussing the type of text, characters, setting, keywords and illustrations to develop learners' visual literacy, prediction skills and understanding (Nixon, 2008).

1.12.10 Shared Writing

Shared Writing is a teacher-led activity when the teacher writes with the learners. The teacher guides the process and writes, using the words and ideas of learners whenever possible to prepare learners for Independent Writing (Nixon, 2008).

1.12.11 Word and Sentence Level Work

Word and Sentence level skills are taught in a systematic way. The focus of Word Level work are on Phonemics, Phonics, Sight words, Spelling patterns and Vocabulary, while Sentence Level work focuses on Sentence patterns, Language structures and Punctuation. The method includes re-reading the shared reading book or read-aloud text from which mini-lessons will follow with reference to specific words or sentences to illustrate the rule or knowledge taught (Botha, 2008).

1.12.12 Group Reading

Through Group Reading learners' reading skills are developed by supported practice in reading. Learners sit in groups of about six learners in a group of mixed ability and each learner reads a paragraph or a page aloud. The book is discussed and after-reading activities done. Group leaders fulfill a role of allowing learners to predict what the text will be about, giving each learner a chance to read, helping those who struggle and discussing questions based on the text (Millward, 2008).

1.12.13 Guided Reading

During Guided Reading the teacher works with a small group of learners who read at the same level. The teacher helps learners to read and understand a text using the reading skills and strategies that they have already learned while the rest of the class is busy with independent reading and writing activities or Group Reading (Botha, 2008).

1.12.14 Independent Reading

Independent reading takes place when learners read a text silently or aloud by themselves. The reason for Independent reading is to develop fluency, stamina, meaning, practice ability in all subjects, learn language skills, become life-long learners, learn knowledge of the world and improve writing abilities (Nixon, 2008).

1.12.15 Independent Writing

Independent Writing takes place when learners write meaningful text, at their own writing level and by themselves, e.g. words, sentences, or more advanced writing in all genres, to develop writing proficiency (Nixon, 2008).

1.12.16 Reading Aloud

Reading Aloud is a whole class activity where the teacher reads a text aloud to learners for enjoyment, meaning and to develop vocabulary. It helps learners to become better readers by developing their language skills, knowledge through stories, introduction to the style of written language and to develop thinking, prediction skills and sequencing. Learners' concentration skills and problem solving skills also develop through Reading aloud (Katz, 2008).

1.12.17 Drop everything and Read (DAR)

Means drop everything and read independently. Learners are allowed to choose books they want to read, read different texts and it gives learners the opportunity to read a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction books for enjoyment and interest. One of the minimum expectations set out in the FFL document is that every teacher in the FP will spend at least 30 minutes daily on reading for enjoyment (Nixon, 2008).

1.13 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

There are five chapters in this study and they are organized as follows:

This chapter one, the introductory part of the study, has provided background information on the curriculum of South Africa and the reasons that led to the introduction of the FFL.

Chapter two, the literature review provides a discussion on the curriculum changes that were experienced in South Africa. The FP is presented and a discussion regarding key issues that relate to curriculum in general and the LLP in particular follow.

Chapter three is concerned with the methods that were used to conduct the research study as well as methods of sampling, data collection and analyses of data, ethical guidelines and research design.

Chapter four focuses on data presentation, results of the research and a discussion and interpretation thereof.

In Chapter five a discussion of the results and findings of the study is presented. The limitations of the study are pointed out and recommendations for further research are provided.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses information on the literature reviewed. Literature that is presented focuses on teachers' experiences of the implementation of curriculum. Both local and international literature on the opportunities and challenges encountered in the implementation process of any given curriculum are presented. In this chapter, the theoretical framework that underpins this study is also presented.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature studied for this study reveals challenges related to the implementation of different curricular. In this study literature on challenges faced in the implementation of the curriculum focuses on the impact that the change in curriculum has on teachers' experiences and their attitudes towards the new curriculum; curriculum design; language through which the curriculum is delivered to learners; context relevancy of the curriculum; resources and physical infrastructure; assessment and management of the curriculum. Most literature reviewed highlights the challenges and very little is mentioned about opportunities.

2.2.1 Challenges in the implementation of the curriculum

2.2.1.1 Change in curriculum

Change in the implementation of the curriculum could hinder the entire process. People often blind themselves to new possibilities and say:

“We teach the way we do because of how we were taught ourselves” Our practices are influenced by our educational and life beliefs.” (Criticos, Long, Moletsane, Mthiyane, 2008, p. 11)

The copying of the way teachers were taught when still at school could result in poor practice. Teachers need to choose to keep good influences and modify poor influences as Criticos, Long, Moletsane and Mthiyane (2008) maintain. Fullan (1997) explains that real change will be noticed through actions when individuals alter their ways of thinking which he explains involves personal experience and a willingness to participate in the new initiative. He further explains that educational change impacts on teachers' conceptions of their self competence.

Lemmer and Badenhorst (1997) state that education has been regarded as a means to effect change in society but that existing value systems and vested interests often work to prevent change from taking place. Popkewitz, in Lemmer and Badenhorst (1997) argues that teachers should become aware that they are agents of change with the mandate to effect social transformation, although the process poses many challenges (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005).

Amidst all the changes in education in South Africa, the traditional role of the teacher is being challenged, because previously the teacher was seen as a transmitter of knowledge but now as a facilitator of learning. Although new structures in education create the impression of reform in education, the same power relations of old are kept intact inside the classroom by teachers who feel that their authority needs to be reasserted. The lack of understanding is threatening and creates a feeling of being powerless and teachers become victims of the system. In the new paradigm teachers serve as change facilitators who design and implement strategies for improvement. Criticos, Long, Moletsane, and Mtiyane (2002) say that the rapid change in education could also evoke fear and anger in teachers. Research suggests that teachers need understanding of and draw on cultural knowledge to support learning (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005).

Teachers have to choose which changes to make for improvement, before implementation of the new, because change challenges current practices and assumptions. Without support schools cannot develop and change and need to decide how to mobilize the support for assistance in the process (Hargreaves, Hopkins and Leask, 2005). Hargreaves (2003) argues that it is impossible to successfully implement change in an education system if serious investments, e.g. in-service training, are not made in the professional development of teachers (Hargreaves, 2003). Reddy (2001) in Jansen and Sayed (2001) said that people lead as they are led and manage as they are

managed. He further explained that people learn or fail to learn as they are taught or supported in their learning.

Another challenge is to find the most suitable medium of teaching, because content can only be presented to someone in a given form (Lemmer and Badenhorst, 1997). Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) claim to transform the quality of education teachers need change in the area of achieving ownership. In other words they need to experience and feel that they can have an influence and control over what happens in their hands; cultivate a culture of learning for all; achieve professionalism in teaching and promote healthy development at all levels of education. For teachers, the challenge is to reconstruct education from what it has been to a system that brings equity to education of all children, to be able to transform the process to achieve quality education.

The key role in the process of change is to see one self as an active agent in the process of change by using your own information skills and power to do something about the situation. It is important to empower yourself and use the help of others to complement your own skills (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2002). The ingredient of a well designed curriculum educational reform is that it should occur gradually and be part and parcel of social reform. Improved education can create change which has to be planned and implemented within the larger framework of socio- economic change. Within the socio-economic change, educational demands enlarge and are seen as challenges for all in education. Key factors in this process are central government, grassroots participation and much needed resources.

Hargreaves, Hopkins and Leask (2005) argue that it is hardly the case that the process of educational change happens systematically to prove a difference. It proceeds in fits and starts, because it is seldom thought in advance, planned and systematically implemented without being tested and evaluated. Darling-Hammond (1994) and Guadarrama (2001) in Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) argue that in creating professional development, schools along with strategies, pose problems and challenges. Christie (2006) claims that the future of education in South Africa will be shaped by its people through struggle and historical change. Christie (2006) further argues that there are no blueprints for educational change.

2.2.1.2 Teachers experiences and attitudes

Matshidiso (2007) conducted a survey amongst teachers in the Bojanjala West region of the North-West province in South Africa in order to determine how teachers perceive Outcomes-Based Assessments (OBA) as part of OBE and what problems they experienced with its implementation. Matshidiso (2007) found that the true role of formative assessment and the timely feedback to learners are not understood and there is a disregard for assessment methods other than teacher assessment. A survey among a sample of South African teachers who teach English First Additional Language (FAL) to determine how teachers in public schools in South Africa experience the OBA was conducted. Teachers also voiced negative perceptions about its practical implementation, namely: their lack of knowledge of and skills in OBE and OBA due to inadequate training; a lack of confidence and competency to implement OBE and OBA; inadequate departmental support and guidance in the implementations of the NCS; not enough serious departmental investment in the sustained professional development of teachers. Teachers experience difficulties in unpacking and breaking down the Assessment Standards (AS) to set attainable outcomes. They find it difficult to build the progression into their teaching material and assessment tools because the progression in Learning Outcomes (LO's) and AS's is not clear to everyone. Many struggle to design their own learning material which can lead to the attainment of selected outcomes and be relevant to the lives and language needs of their learners. The importance of the true role of formative assessment and timely feedback to learners are not understood and there is disregard for assessment methods other than teacher assessment.

2.2.1.3 Curriculum design

The design of the curriculum plays a major role in the implementation process. The design may pose problems to the teachers. Very complicated curriculum is likely to fail. This takes into consideration the time frames allocated to teaching and learning in the implementation process. According to Dreyer (1997) C2005 attempted to bring change by aiming at integrating education and training, promoting lifelong learning for all South Africans and focusing on outcomes rather than content, to equip all learners with knowledge, competencies and orientations needed to be successful after completing their studies. C2005 required educators to remodel an outdated manner of teaching in the LLP. Many educators however found it difficult to shift in orientation to the teaching of Literacy for active learner participation in C2005 because of a

misunderstanding that C2005 meant abolishment of traditional, transmissive approaches. Active learning needed to be understood for educators to go beyond being a mere transmitter of knowledge.

2.2.1.4 Language as a curriculum transmission tool

The language of learning and teaching (LOLT) plays an important role in the curriculum implementation. No matter how well designed the curriculum, if the language of delivery is not understood by learners, that curriculum is deemed to fail. It is important that learners understand the language of learning, speak the language of learning and see the language of learning (MacGilchrist, 2005). Language gives access to the meaning and symbols of cultures and is an important resource in life (Christie, 2008). Valdes, Bunch, Snow, Lee & Matos in Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) state that regardless of the language backgrounds of learners, all teachers are directly involved with language through presenting information through communication.

Research in schools Great Britain suggests that teachers need understanding of and draw on, cultural knowledge to support learning (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005). Research in Great Britain showed further that schools have to choose which changes to make for improvement, before implementation of the new, because change challenges current practices and assumptions. Without support, schools cannot develop and change and need to decide how to mobilize the support for assistance in the process. Further findings of the study in Great Britain schools showed that there is a tendency for teachers to feel overwhelmed by changes to curriculum (Hargreaves, Hopkins and Leask, 2005). South African researcher, Reddy in Jansen and Sayed (2001) said that people lead as they are led, they manage as they are managed and people learn or fail to learn as they are taught or supported in their learning. The conclusion is that at all levels role models are needed to demonstrate appropriate and effective ways of working collectively to transform the education system and society (Jansen and Sayed, 2001).

Vilakazi (2000) in Higgs, Vakalisa, Mda and Assie-Lumumba (2000) state that the more languages one masters, the more access one has to other cultures, knowledge and people. He said that a barrier to successful education of African people has been the use of European languages, because the African student did not master English alongside his or her mother

tongue and as a result students do not have comfortable understanding of the language. He also said that early introduction to multilingualism seems to answer the problem. Vilakazi reported that according to findings of research done by two professors from George Mason University in Virginia in 1995 with non-English speaking students were that children who received six years of bilingual education performed better than 70% of all 11th graders. Vilakazi further said that the highest achievers are products of “two-way” schools, where half of the curriculum is taught in English and half in a foreign language. Research in this area in a Spanish–English curriculum showed that after six years children in grade six scored at a grade nine level in reading Vilakazi (2000) in Higgs, Vakalisa, Mda and Assie-Lumumba. According to Smitherthan (2000) in Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005), the oral style of young African American speakers is part of a complex tradition which includes folk sayings, verbal and cultural interplay, rituals and talk. Research shows that when participating in a socially sensitive situation, interacting with white English speaking people, speech is different from how spoken when surrounded by African Americans. Young people’s language is influenced by adults’ language, depending on the geographic area and cultural factors and by the goals, purposes and situations for speaking. Bilingualism is important for children to communicate with all people. These challenges need understanding teachers to respond to learners from different language backgrounds. To educate learners who do not speak societal language is a complex, challenging endeavour as Darling-Hammond (2005) argues.

Reading is the most important linguistic skill that needs to be developed, because it serves as the building block upon which other learning takes place, to give children the gift of life-long learning (Department of Education, 2008). Potenza and Johannesson (2003) state that it is imperative that learners are able to read and write basic texts at the end of grade 3, starting in grade 1 through exposure to lots of books at the learners’ level. The Language-in-Education Policy of 1997 shows clearly that learners should learn in their mother tongue, and English as First Additional Language should be taught alongside mother tongue from Grade 1 (Department of Education, 1997) Sadly, this still does not happen in all South African schools (Department of Education, 2008). Research has consistently shown that young children learn best through their mother tongue and that learning to read and write in one’s mother tongue enhances access to literacy in other languages. Beukes (1992) emphasised the value of mother-tongue education, particularly during a child’s formative years as recognised on a world-wide basis. In the new

curriculum it is suggested that an additive multilingualism approach to the teaching and learning of languages will be conducted, which means that literacy is first established in the home language before skills are transferred to additional languages (Potenza and Johannesson, 2003). Research shows that in some countries the language of instruction is in the mother tongue. The suggestion in the NEPI report (1992) in Dekker and Lemmer (1998) was that all South Africans should have access to English from the first year in school (Dekker and Lemmer 1998).

2.2.1.5 Context relevancy of the curriculum

Never should one forget that the learning is about what is best for the student or learners. Learning should always be investigated in relation to learners' social and cultural background contexts in which much of their learning is embedded, their individual characteristics, learning outcomes of females and males from different social classes and from different ethnic and racial groups, the quality and nature of instruction, and the learners' perceptions of their experiences. The model for the study of learners' learning by Marjoribanks (1991) represents a dynamic set of influences and interactions. It suggests that the learners' learning is influenced by the learners' own individual characteristics and by the instruction that is presented in schools and also by how learners perceive their environments and by the meanings which learners endow to their learning contexts as Marjoribanks (1991) states.

2.2.1.6 Human and physical resources

Children are believed to be stimulated through visual materials, therefore such resources are vital in the FP. The problem at stake is that some teachers have their resources up on the classroom walls but these are not always being used. Van Deventer (2009) in Whitaker and Whitaker; (1995); Todd and Mason, (2005) and Vambe (2005) maintain that numerous schools in South Africa have been unsuccessful in implementing the concept of outcomes to drive the educational programmes and state resources have not been sufficient to bring all schools up to the standards that was enjoyed by former Model C schools prior to 1994. Jansen, Botha, Fiske and Prinsloo (1995) in Whitaker and Whitaker, maintain that the implementation of curriculum policy fails because of the lack of management capacity and the scarcity of resources (Whitaker and Whitaker, 1995). This incorporates both physical and human resources. The critical shortage of professionally-trained teachers is one of the most serious problems confronting education in

South Africa. It is widely acknowledged that the quality of basic schooling needs to be addressed to include the need for learning opportunities, the importance of language and curriculum issues and the key role of teacher-training and in-service teacher support.

The best way to bring more qualified youth into universities and colleges is obviously to improve the quality of the South African schooling system. South Africans cannot just say that schools need to be improved and then wait for this to happen before we can provide decent quality higher education for more young people (Nzimande, 2009). Jansen (1998) argues that the curriculum which is not well designed undermines the already fragile learning environment in schools and classrooms of the new South Africa. He maintains that curriculum fails because of the flawed assumptions about what happens inside schools, how classrooms are organised and what kinds of teachers exist within the system. Another point made is that there were strong philosophical rationales for questioning the desirability of OBE in particular in democratic school systems.

2.2.1.7 Assessment

The different types of assessment are not always understood. Many teachers are confused because Continuous Assessment (CASS) does not serve a formative purpose and in many cases the formal assessment tasks to be completed as part of the CASS programme do not always flow naturally from the teaching and learning but are removed from it and are sometimes done for “window-dressing” purposes which is also the reason that learners are coached to perform well in tests. Teachers many times feel that they work in isolation and are not part of a professional support group and training of teachers by departmental officials are often inadequate. The vagueness of assessment standards and the complexity of learning outcomes in the NCS is also seen as a difficulty for teachers. As there is a lack of standardised assessment tools, some teachers accepts mediocrity and do not see reason to challenge learners to excel further once the desired learning outcomes have been achieved. Overcrowded classrooms and infrastructural deficiencies at schools and a lack of parental support and involvement also play a negative role (Marjoribanks, 1991).

Wiggins and McTighe, (1998) argue that teachers are challenged based on reviews of research on effective assessment by at the start, keeping the end in mind. This view requires ongoing self-assessment and reflection. The approach moves from content mastery to demonstration of

understanding. Thus from a focus on recall of information to a broader repertoire of assessment strategies that includes alternative, as well as traditional, measures of learning.

2.2.1.8 Management of the curriculum

Another criticism by Jansen (1999) was the management of curriculum. Administration of a curriculum requires knowledgeable and well trained staff for it to succeed. South Africa has large numbers of unqualified teachers. This poses a problem in the implementation process. Jansen (1999) argues that a curriculum innovation has not taken adequate account of the resource status of schools and classrooms in South Africa. Such a curriculum undermines the already weak culture of teaching and learning in South African schools by escalating the administrative burden of change at the very time that rationalisation further limes the human resource capacity for managing such change. More schools are loaded with unworkable innovations (Jansen, 1999).

2.2.2 Opportunities in the implementation of a well designed language curriculum

Literature highlights doors that a balanced language curriculum opens. According to Van Tassel-Baska (2003) a well-designed language curriculum benefits learners in the five following areas which are: literature, writing, language study, oral communication and first additional language (FAL).

Van Tassel-Baska (2003) maintains that literature provides many experiences for learners to read quality texts. This includes poetry, plays, essays, whilst in teaching reading the emphasis on critical reading and the development of analysis and interpretation skills should be a focal point. Writing is also a very important component of a language curriculum. A writing programme for high ability learners should emphasize the development of skills in expository and persuasive writing. She also maintains that an early introduction of the foreign language should benefit learners and lastly she states that oral communication should be at the centre of the language curriculum for young children.

Hammond (2006) argues that a well developed language curriculum needs to respond to the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Hammond (2006) further argues the ways in which the teacher weaves both content and language teaching in her lessons, her explicit

teaching of language, as well as her ability to incorporate drama, contributes to her learners' successful learning of intellectually challenging curriculum content and their affective engagement with that content.

Osborn and Broadfoot (1992) in their study found that teachers are positive about having structure and guidelines in which they can work, because it creates the opportunity to be creative in the way they work with individual learners. Teachers' professionalism is also affected because of self study by reading more widely, after reflection on their lessons. By doing this Churchill, Williamson and Grady (1997) discovered that teaching practices and learners' learning experiences improved. Parent relationships are also affected, because teachers have the opportunity to communicate with parents through written records and schemes of work. Churchill, Williamson and Grady (1997) said that teachers perceived opportunities to empower them in aspects of planning activities, giving better feedback to learners and establishing clear assessment criteria. Kelly (2009) states that another opportunity afforded by of a democratic curriculum, is more efficient teaching because of teachers' professional judgement, their interpretation and implementation of the curriculum.

In a study on the impact of current changes in English Primary schools on teacher professionalism, by Osborn and Broadfoot (1992) some teachers spoke of the positive effect of having a structure and guidelines within which to work which gave them an opportunity to be creative in the way they worked with individual children rather than being worried whether they had covered what should be covered. This also creates an opportunity to read more widely and to collaborate more closely with other teachers as an enhancement of their professionalism. It creates an opportunity to improve their relationship with parents who see teachers as more professional now that they report back on individual children through written records and schemes of work.

Another opportunity for teachers is manifested in reviewing and reflecting on their own practice. Through a self evaluation process an opportunity is given to teachers to celebrate achievements with a valued colleague or to reflect on strategies to become more successful (Hammond, 2006). Teachers perceived improvements in their teaching practices and learners' learning experiences. This also creates opportunities to plan activities, give better feedback to learners and to establish

clear assessment criteria. Teachers have also been afforded considerable empowerment (Churchill, Williamson and Grady, 1997).

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is underpinned by the theory of symbolic interactionism.

The history of the theory:

Herbet Blumer is the founder of the theory of social interactionism. This theory is derived from the works of George Herbet, Mead and Charles Cooley in Blumer, 1969. Blumer was a student and interpreter of Mead. Blumer coined the term and put forward an influential summary of the perspective. According to Blumer (1969) people act toward things based on the meaning those things have for them; and these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation. Blumer's work is also influenced by the work of John Dewey who insisted that human beings are best understood in relation to their environment. He further said that interaction refers to one's present experience as a function of the interaction between one's past experiences and the present situation (Dewey 1938/1997).

Core Principles of the Theory of Social Interactionism:

The theory of social interactionism consists of three core principles: meaning, language and thought.

Meaning:

Blumer (1962) states that meanings are arrived at through social interaction. These meanings do not remain unchanged. They are interpreted and reinterpreted. According to Blumer, humans act toward things according to the meanings they give to those things. Symbolic Interactionism holds the principal of meaning to be the central aspect of human behavior (Blumer, 1962). People act upon the meaning assigned to things. People's meaning is really a social construction of what they see as real. Once something is seen as real, it has consequences. Each person's reality differs and is shared through tools.

Language:

Blumer (1969) defines language as the source of meaning. Language is a tool to give meaning in social interactions. Therefore meaning emerges from social interaction and the language used. People make meanings by talking to others. This gives humans a means by which to negotiate meaning through symbols. Humans identify meaning in speech acts with others.

Thought:

Blumer (1969) maintains that thought is ability, distinctly different from animals, in that human beings have the ability to think about things rather than simply reacting instinctually. It is our thoughts that help us to interpret language meaning. Blumer defines thought as a mental conversation that requires different points of view. One's own thought process is used to develop one's own interpretation of things encountered in one's environment. The meanings of the things we encounter, though formed by social interaction, are altered through our understandings and therefore an individual's interpretation of the meaning will guide and determine action.

Implication of the theory:

For this study, I found the use of symbolic interactionism relevant and useful. I was dealing with teachers' understanding of and practices which lead to the opportunities and challenges they encounter in their implementation process of the FFL, particularly the LLP. This means that teachers had subjective interpretations about the teaching of literacy. In other words, they socially constructed the meaning using their frame of reference and the context in which they found themselves in. In order to access these interpretations. I used semi-structured interviews and focus groups interviews. This supports the idea that a social interactionist sees meaning coming out from the interaction between people, while a contradicting point of view asserts that meaning is already established in a person's psychological make-up (Nelson, 1998).

Furthermore, in semi-structuring the interview schedules, themes such as teachers' understandings of the FFL, the language used in the document for the teaching of mother tongue of an African language and their thinking about the entire curriculum were used. The three core areas of the theory such as meaning, language and thought influenced the design of the interview schedule.

2.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed the challenges teachers experience in the implementation of a curriculum as well as strengths and opportunities for teachers of a well-designed curriculum through the presentation of reviewed literature. This chapter also presented the theoretical framework that underpins the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the methods that were used to conduct a research study on the challenges teachers face and their understanding of the Foundations for Learning (FFL) with the focus on Literacy in Foundation Phase (FP). The methods of sampling, collecting and analysing of data, ethical guidelines, as well as the research design will be discussed. Research methodology describes the activity of the research study and how it proceeds. Good methodology leads to a successful research study with accuracy and usefulness (Patton, 2002).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is approached from the interpretive paradigm. This paradigm was relevant, because it allows informants to interpret teachers' experiences which are the core of this study with its emphasis on experience, understandings and interpretations of the FFL. The qualitative research approach is most suitable for this study. A qualitative approach, according to Patton (2000, p.11), emerges from the researcher's observations and interviews that occur in the real world rather than in the laboratory. Qualitative research or naturalistic research or inquiry, involves the collection of a variety of empirical data in the form of words which gives an in-depth understanding of what people experience (Louw and Edwards, 2008). Denscombe (2003) provides a useful idea to think of qualitative research. The author uses the analogy of a torch light – if you shine a torch up close to something you see a small area in great detail. Conversely, if you shine the torch some distance away then you will cover a greater area but you will not pick up on the details. According to Babbie, qualitative approaches have the advantages of flexibility, in-depth analysis and the potential to observe a variety of aspects of a social situation (Babbie, 1986). During the course of an interview or observation, the researcher is able to note changes in bodily expression, voice intonation and environmental factors that might influence the interviewee's responses, which is valuable. Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p.30), describe qualitative research as descriptive in that the data collected in qualitative studies are in the form of words or

pictures rather than numbers. Robson (2002) suggests good research questions and classification of the purposes of enquiry to be: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and emancipatory, which was useful in allowing the researcher access to the teachers' teaching methodologies and the learners' classroom experiences.

According to Hunt (2001: 7), the researcher or observer wants to be "in the shoes" of the participants to understand their experiences. Qualitative research tries to give us a rich multidimensional view of a topic or phenomena. My study helps to provide a deep understanding of what teachers are thinking and doing in the name of literacy in FP classrooms.

This study needs the words of teachers and not the numbers. It does not seek to make generalisations but rather it seeks to understand and raise issues in early schooling. Sandelowski (1989) claims that a qualitative study can be considered credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize.

3.3 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In order to obtain a contextual understanding of how the implementation Literacy Learning programme (LLP) is experienced and understood, I chose two schools in two locations that were purposively sampled. I chose an urban township school and a school in a rural area in disadvantaged contexts. Both schools are in need of more classrooms. The school in the urban township has no playgrounds and is in need of more classrooms and teachers for the big number of learners. The school in the rural area is vandalized and dilapidated. From past experience working in these schools I know that both these schools are teaching in the mother tongue and English. Often teaching takes place in the second language, but is explained in the mother tongue.

3.4 SAMPLING METHOD

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p.175) purposive sampling is sometimes called "judgemental sampling". This type of sampling allowed me, the researcher to select particular samples based on particular characteristics. This study concentrates on the LLP in disadvantaged contexts as schools in these locations face the greatest challenges.

The study is exploratory and seeks understanding rather than generalization therefore a small sample was adequate. This is a small scale study and cannot include many participants therefore the main study consisted of 8 teachers from Grade R to Grade 3. After a meeting with the FP teachers at each school to explain the purpose of the study, the researcher asked that one teacher per grade per school made themselves available to be part of the study. Qualitative research could be conducted with a small number of cases. It is impossible to carry out effective qualitative research with very large samples of people, since as numbers increase, so does the difficulty of doing justice to the mass of qualitative material that is produced (Woolfe, Dryden and Shreelagh 2003, p.75). The researcher experienced this during her research study with two schools and 8 qualified teacher participants.

3.4.1 Sample Characteristics

Participants were African females with between 5 and 20 years of teaching experience. Qualifications obtained varied between Primary Teacher diplomas, B.Ed and B. Ed. (honours) degrees.

3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Data was generated through three instruments namely: semi-structured interviews, observations and documentary analysis.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Since I was dealing with a cluster of teachers at two schools, I also held semi-structured focus group interviews with 4 teachers after a meeting with the principal per school, to get a broader picture on the understanding and implementation of LLP. School principals as managers of the schools were respected for their position and informed about the progress of the research. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) note that a focus group interview serves as a strategy for getting a better understanding of a problem by interviewing a carefully selected group of people rather than individuals. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) explains that a focus group is typically a group of people who share a similar type of experience which explains why it is important for the study. The coming together of the group was important as they were all FP

teachers with different focal phases. They stimulated each others ideas which produced rich data.

In order to gain information about teachers' understandings and discussion on practice, I used semi-structured interviews. Cannold in McNaughton (2001) argues that semi-structured interviews can be thought of as "structured conversations" They can be made up of both closed and open-based questions. This type of interviewing allows for flexibility. Although predetermined questions were prepared, wording was changed by given explanations which allowed me to probe for details regarding responses from teachers (Robson 2002). Field and Thomas (2008) state that semi-structured interviews are valuable in order to bring the questions to the level of the participants' understanding.

3.5.2 Observations

I used observations in order to get information on classroom practice. Observations present a key way to get information from live situations (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2000). Observations allowed the researcher to get first-hand information that might have been overlooked in the interviews. For this study I used a structured observation schedule to get an understanding of the physical environment, the teaching and learning interactions and the programme setting, because I was investigating for challenges as well as opportunities teachers experience in the implementation of the FFL in the LLP. This provided me with understanding of group compositions, verbal and non-verbal interactions, as well as the methodologies and resources that are used in the LLP. I observed oral lessons, reading and writing lessons. I did two observations for each of these categories in each class. In Grade R, I was sensitive to the integrated approach to the LLP.

3.5.3 Documentary analysis

Documentary analysis was my next method of collecting data. Artifacts or documents of interest to researchers are defined as things that people make and do (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984). The Government Gazette 14 March 2008, No. 30880 (Department of Education, 2008) was examined to see if the participants were adhering to the requirements as set out in this document. The use of this document was for the purpose of the implementation and teachers' understanding of the content. To get a better understanding of teachers' understandings of the planning for the FFL,

teachers' planning files, time tables, assessment files and all administration and management of the classroom files were analysed. Learners' exercise books, workbooks and written work were analysed during classroom visits to see if learners can write, what their level of writing is, if the activities correlate with lessons taught and if learners do enough daily writing. Robson (2002) suggests that content analyses of documents are important and should be done as a supplementary method. He further says that an advantage of document analyses is that it is unobtrusive and data is in a permanent form and could be re-analysed. Studies of teachers' planning, conceptions of testing, documents developed by the teachers, such as instructional plans and actual tests, were collected and analysed.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analysed through an approach suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2001). This approach has four steps and the steps were utilized as follows in this study:

- An interim analysis of the data was conducted once significant data sets were received. This helped to get a sense of what was emerging but it also gave the researcher a chance to refocus the inquiry should the need arise. Once all the data was in, it was carefully read to get a sense of the whole.
- The next step was to generate the topics related to the research question. These topics were facilitated by asking questions such as, "What is this about?" "What are people talking about/doing?" "What was important in this in relation to the research questions and beyond?" A topic was established from the descriptions that are recurring. No attempts were made to identify the meaning at this stage.
- The next step was the comparison of topics across the data set to establish what was duplicated and overlapping. Similar topics were clustered together. This was followed by category formation which includes predetermined categories emanating from the research questions and literature.
- The last step was the discovery of patterns to inform abstractions. The relationship among categories was established. The patterns assisted in shedding light on teachers' understandings and practices.

3.7 VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

To ensure validity of interviews and observations, the technique of “member validation,” was used in which the respondents were given a copy of the observations and interview questions to provide feedback (Schaffir and Stebbins, 1991). According to Saunders & Lewis and Thornhill (2000), the main advantage is that this offers greater validity and less artificiality. More than one strategy to approach the topic of investigation was used (triangulation strategy), namely observation and semi-structured interviews and document analysis to confront the issues of reliability and validity. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), triangulation is the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously. Semi-structured interviews need to be analysed to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is defined as “the moral philosophy or a set of moral principles underpinning a project.” (Aubrey et al., 2000, p.156). Before going into the research field ethics were cleared. Several ethical requirements were considered during the data generation process. Ethical clearance from UKZN, Officials from the Departmental of Education, principal of the schools and respondents were obtained. The main requirements such as access, ethical clearance, anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent were respected. Ethical issues were cleared with the eight participants verbally, by means of a letter and an explanation of what and why I was conducting the research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2001). Merriam (1998) claims that good qualitative study is one that has been conducted in an ethical manner.

Participants were reminded that the research would not do harm directly or indirectly to the research subject. Within educational research, according to Lankshear and Knobel (2004), ethics is concerned with the insurance that the interests and well-being of participants are not harmed as a result of the research being done. They also highlights that harm can range from participants experiencing affronts to their dignity and being hurt by conclusions that are drawn about them and to having their reputations of credibility undermined publicly (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004).

Gregg and Jones (1990) in Robson (2002) emphasises that participants be treated fairly, with consideration and respect.

Participants were assured that the information I was collecting would be confidential and that they would hold the right to refuse permission for it to be printed. I emphasized that I had no intention of trying to influence anybody involved, either positively or negatively. Participants were made aware that their names, name of their school or other means of identification would be deleted from the data released on individuals. I stressed that I was only interested in obtaining and exploring their understanding, challenges they face and opportunities arising from the FFL in the LLP. Participants were considered at all times and treated with respect.

3.8.1 Ethical clearance certificate

A requirement of the University of KwaZulu- Natal's Research Office is that all researchers dealing with human subjects need to acquire ethical clearance from the University's Research Committee. The ethical clearance for the study was obtained via the University under which the study was undertaken and was granted before the commencement of data gathering process.

3.8.2 Access

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Provincial Department of Education. Principals of schools were also requested to grant permission to the schools and governing bodies of the schools concerned were informed by the school principals. All participation was voluntary and confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Ethical issues of informed consent and confidentiality involved in the interviews were cleared with all participants verbally and by means of a letter, explaining what it was I was doing and why I was doing this research study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2001).

3.8.3 Informed consent

Once school management granted permission, I verbally approached participants. Once they fully understood what was involved. Principals and teachers received letters to explain the research. The researcher respected the two schools' timetables and schools' routines at all times and gave feedback to the principals, head of departments (HODs) and educators.

3.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter three has focused on the research design and methodology of the study on the challenges and opportunities teachers experience in the implementation of FFL with special reference to the LLP in disadvantaged contexts. Data will be gathered through observations, interviews and document analysis. Ethical considerations and limitations to the study are also discussed. Van Manen points out that by using personal experiences can be a good starting point and my experience in the field of teaching, training, lecturing, mentoring and knowing the schools with participants on a professional basis was to my advantage, because of a trust relationship between us (Van Manen, 1990).

The following chapter will present presentation and interpretation of data.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the administration and analysis of the research instrument in the study is discussed, which will include the presentation, and interpretation of data. The research study explores and reports on the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the Foundations for Learning (FFL) with special reference to the Literacy Learning Programme (LLP) in disadvantaged contexts.

4.2 DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Two schools were chosen for the study. The one school is situated in a rural area and the second school is in a township. One teacher per grade, per school was chosen which gives us a total of 8 teachers in the Foundations Phase (FP), namely grade R, grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3.

Table 4.2.1 Distribution table of participants

Number of schools	Grade R teachers	Grade 1 teachers	Grade 2 teachers	Grade 3 teachers
2	2	2	2	2

4.3 REITERATION OF RESEARCH QUESTION

How do FP teachers experience the implementation of the FFL with specific reference to the LLP?

4.4 FINDINGS

The table below indicates the themes and subthemes emerged from data

Table 4.4.1 Themes and subthemes

Themes and Topics	Subthemes and Sub Topics
4.4.1.1 Challenges encountered in the implementation of FFL	4.4.1.1.1 Teachers' understandings of the FFL as the source of information 4.4.1.1.2 Teaching approaches in the LLP 4.4.1.1.3 Resources 4.4.1.1.4 Mentoring 4.4.1.1.5 Time Frames 4.4.1.1.6 Language 4.4.1.1.7 Teaching of handwriting
4.4.1.2 Opportunities in the implementation of the FFL	4.4.1.2.1 Learners' performance 4.4.1.2.2 Milestones and Assessment

4.4.1.1 Challenges in the implementation of the FFL

Teachers experience many challenges in the implementation of the FFL. The challenges will be discussed regarding an understanding of the requirements of the FFL and the source of information. Challenges in the area of teachers' approaches in teaching literacy, language and the teaching of handwriting will be discussed. More challenges for teachers, which play a huge role in teaching literacy are the need for necessary resources including the infrastructure of schools. Challenges regarding training, mentoring and guidance in the implementation of the FFL as well as their understanding of time frames will be discussed. (Please refer to appendix 4 - 6).

4.4.1.1.1 Teachers' understandings of the requirements of the FFL document as the source of information

It was evident in teachers' responses that teachers had challenges and had different kinds of understandings about the requirements of the FFL document as source of information. The FFL campaign was published in the South African Government Gazette: 30880 in 2008. The FFL document (2008) tells teachers the minimum contact teaching time, name the literacy activities with a list of minutes per activity as well as a list of recommended resources.

Teacher A, B and C said:

Teacher A: "Only one teacher per grade attended a meeting by the DoE to inform us about the FFL. It is very confusing, especially with timing - Far too much to understand. At my school we received no training or monitoring visits to guide us with extra help and we do not understand the document. Somehow I prefer to work as I used to in the past and only pick and choose something from the document to do".

Teacher B: "It is taken for granted that we understand the requirements of the FFL and I feel lost". "I saw the document, but there is no direction in the document to understand how to plan and fit everything in my day. I see many things to do, but what is required of me?"

Teacher C: "I do not have a FFL document. "The only source of information the principal and the HOD received was the FFL document. It does not indicate how to do the work or the planning to fit everything in. It is very vague". We also received a document on the milestones, but the milestones document does not tell us how to implement the FFL". "I don't no know how to do the work. I do what I think and I teach the way I used to teach".

Through the above extract, teachers' confusion and apathy was better understood and confirmed, because teachers do not understand the FFL document. They found it not user-friendly and they did not know how to use the FFL document, because the sources of information received were limited.

Teachers indicated the need for training, assistance and guidance and experience feelings of being swamped, lost and discouraged by all the changes that seems to be too much to understand. At the time of the study some teachers still had not received or even seen the FFL document

which presents a challenge. During observations and analysing documents, the FFL document was not present in teachers' files and participants explained that documents were kept in the principals' offices.

It is clear that the FFL document names the requirements to teach literacy but does not explain how to deal with the requirements and how to fit these in a daily programme. Without being trained in the FFL for more information, teachers do not know how to implement the FFL, because the document on its own does not reflect the knowledge they need for implementation.

4.4.1.1.2 Teaching approaches in the LLP

The focus was on the recommended Balanced Language Programme, (2008) which includes the following methods of teaching reading: Shared reading, Group reading, Guided reading, Independent reading, Reading aloud and Word and Sentence level work. (See Chapter 1 for definitions).

- ***Shared Reading:***

Participants A,B.C D said:

Teacher A: "I only received a few packs of books and posters from Read Educational Trust during the time I studied towards my B.Ed. degree. These books are not enough for all the teachers at my school and are only suitable for grade R or grade 1."

Teacher B: "We do not have big books for Shared Reading". "I have not been trained in Shared Reading".

Teacher C: " I have to write everything on the chalkboard to do shared reading and it takes too much time". "What will happen to my weak learners?"

Teacher D: "The number of learners in my class are too high and my classroom is too small to do Shared Reading."

According to these responses, teachers are challenged to do Shared Reading, especially because there are no or not enough books available. Some books are not on the learners' level, and teachers were not trained in the methodology. As a result of large numbers of learners per class,

teachers find it difficult to do Shared Reading. During observations, I saw only two teachers doing Shared Reading.

- ***Group Reading***

Teachers A and B responded:

Teacher A:

“I cannot do Group Reading with my grade 1 class. There are too many learners and I do not have enough little books. I give one or two books per table to do the worksheets after the Group Reading lessons”.

Teacher B: “Group Reading is very difficult to do in my big class. Learners make too much noise”.

I did not see any Group Reading during observations. I asked teachers whether they do Group Reading but it seems as if teachers do not understand the methodology of Group Reading and do not have enough books.

- ***Guided Reading***

Teachers A, B, C, D said:

Teacher A: “My learners cannot read in groups. They are too weak. I can only sometimes do guided reading, but there are too many learners in my class.”.

Teacher B: “When my grade 2 learners were in grade 1, they never learned to read. Learners only learned the phonics. Now I teach them to read from the start doing Shared Reading and I do not have little books”.

Teacher C: “It is very difficult, because I did not know the difference between group reading and guided reading”.

Teacher D: “We do not have packs of little books at our school. I let my learners read from the workbooks we received from the DoE.”

What I gathered from these responses is that many teachers are challenged, because they were not trained in the teaching methodologies. Some do not understand the meaning of the methodologies and they need direction. The lack of enough books at schools is a huge concern and the fact that classes are too big make it very difficult for teaching and doing Guided Reading.

- ***Independent reading, Drop Everything and Read (DAR) and Reading Aloud.***

Participants responded:

Teacher A: “I try to do a little bit of Reading Aloud, but time is limited. I do DAR sometimes, but we do not have storybooks at our school”.

Teacher B: “We have a library and sometimes we take the children to the library. Children cannot borrow the books, because there are not enough books.”

Teacher C: “Our children do not know how to use books and they break the books”.

Teacher D: “I try to do DAR at the end of the day, if there is time, but I have only a few very old books on my table which are not enough for everyone to do independent reading.”

According to the responses of teachers, participants are challenged to find time for Reading Aloud, DAR and independent reading. There are not enough books on the learners’ level of reading at schools. I did not observe DAR, Independent reading or Reading Aloud lessons.

- ***Word and Sentence Level Work***

Teachers said:

Teacher A: “I do shared writing and phonics with my learners. They must know phonics. I do not do phonics from the big book I use for Shared Reading”.

Teacher B: “I have the posters from Read Educational Trust, but I write the phonics on the chart or on the chalkboard”.

Teacher C: “My learners learn phonics in the old traditional way. I do not teach sight words, only spelling”. “What are sight words? My children write their names and spelling words in their books”.

Teachers tend to move back to their traditional way of teaching phonics, before teaching reading. Teachers are challenged, because they do not have the understanding of teaching in context, by using the Shared Reading (big books) for sight words, phonics, grammar and writing. At the time of the study, I did not observe Word and Sentence level work lessons. I saw words written on chalkboards and in learners' exercise books. The focus of the lessons observed on the chalkboards and in learners' books were the traditional way of teaching phonics in the past. No evidence of sight words, punctuation or language patterns lessons were observed. It was evident through observations that vocabulary formed part of phonic lessons. It is clear that teachers are challenged. They need training, mentoring and guidance in the different methodologies of teaching literacy.

4.4.1.1.3 Resources

In the FFL document (2008) a list of recommended resources appear. The list as indicated in chapter two table 2.2 is divided in four sections: for walls, for learners, for teachers and additional resources to promote Literacy development. Teacher responses:

Participants A, B, C, D:

Teacher A: "I try to display the learners' work, but the walls are dusty, because the windows cannot close properly and we do not have space or have cork boards to pin the work up. It is difficult, I do not know how to make my own resources, because no one has taught me to make them and I do not have koki's or cardboard".

Teacher B: "I received posters with the book pack from Read Educational Trust while I did a B.Ed. course, but the rest of the school did not receive books. These books and posters do not look good anymore, because of vandalism and because my classroom does not have glass in the windows and the wind blows and destroy my posters. When I try to make my own posters, they get destroyed all the time".

Teacher C: "We did not receive posters, big books, and graded readers. We also did not receive stationary, jotters and workbooks for the learners. Parents cannot afford to buy stationary and exercise books."

Teacher D: “Look at my classroom. It is too small, I do not have mat. The windows are broken and the tables and chairs are not enough. Learners have to share tables. “The children have no where to play. There are not enough workbooks for all my children. The DoE did not send enough books. Some children share the workbooks. It is not good”.

Results refer to both schools used in the study. Participants are challenged and concerned about a lack of physical resources and find it difficult to teach without the necessary instructional support materials, e.g. posters, charts, big books for Shared reading or small books for Group, Guided and Independent Reading. Through observation a shortage of resources was noticed, which was confirmed by teachers. Schools did not receive materials from the DoE. Teachers lack confidence in making their own material, e.g. posters and charts due to a lack of knowledge and training and because resources are destroyed. Children’s stationery and exercise books were not delivered on time or at all, which causes written activities to be almost impossible.

More challenges regarding infrastructure which plays an important role were observed, e.g. school grounds, play grounds and buildings which are not conducive and safe to teach outside the classrooms and for children to play during break time. Some classrooms are dusty and dirty and do not have windows that can open and close, so posters and charts are destroyed by wind and rain. It was noticed that not all classrooms have neat and clean chalkboards for teachers to use during teaching time or corkboards on clean walls to display posters and learners’ work to encourage a print rich environment. Overcrowded and dilapidated classrooms hinder the implementation of teaching Shared Reading, Group and Guided Reading and make it difficult to group learners. Another challenge is the lack of basic resources like enough learner desks and chairs, high learner-educator ratios, combined with poor physical conditions and inadequate facilities for teaching and learning, and inadequate instructional support materials, make it even more difficult to deliver quality literacy teaching. Teachers also are under pressure, because the workbooks from the DoE arrived a few weeks after the schools started and they had to try to catch up with the work. Schools also did not receive enough workbooks for each learner.

4.4.1.1.4 Mentoring

Through mentoring, teacher support visits, teacher training and development teachers should receive the necessary guidance. Teachers are key to the successful teaching of literacy and through mentoring, teacher training, development and support this should be achieved. Enabling

all teachers to teach literacy effectively, is a collaborative effort that involves a whole-school approach to literacy inspired by the principal, district officials, parents, the wider community and non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

Teachers responded in the following way:

Teacher A: "We need you to help us. We do not know how to fit everything in and no one helps us." We need at least two weeks of training".

Teacher B: "When you visited my classroom while you worked for READ, I knew what to do, but now no one helps me. I am confused".

Teacher C: "I learned more through Read Educational Trust's classroom visits when I did the Advanced Certificate in Education through Toyota Teach".

Participants in this study were faced with several challenges regarding the implementation of the FFL, namely poor understanding of the FFL due to inadequate training and a lack of support and mentoring during the implementation process. Teachers are desperate for training, guidance and mentoring in the teaching of word and sentence level work as well as in reading methodologies. It is clear that there is much confusion which causes stress, feelings of incompetency and despair. Most teachers do not understand how to fit the work into their daily and weekly planning.

4.4.1.1.5 Time Frames

According to the daily teacher activities during literacy time schedule, time is set out in minutes and I refer to the timeframes in chapter 1 under table 1.1. Teaching and learning time is set out in the FFL document in terms of Section 4 of the Employment of Educators Act of 1998. The formal school day for teachers is seven hours, plus an additional one and a half hours for preparation and marking time per day (Department of Education, 2008, p.8).

4.4.1.1.5.1 The minimum contact teaching time for the FP is set out in the following table (Department of Education, 2008, p.8):

Foundation Phase	Grade	Time
	R, 1 and 2	22 hours 30 minutes
	3	25 hours

4.4.1.1.5.2 The formal teaching allocations for Literacy in the FP are presented below as actual hours per grade (Department of Education, 2008, p.8):

Learning Programme	Grade	Time Allocation per day	Total per week
Literacy	R, 1, 2	1 hour 50 minutes	9 hours 10 minutes
	3	2 hours	10 hours

Teachers responded in the following way about the Time frames:

Teacher A: “We need you to help us. We do not know how to fit everything in and no one helps us. There is so much to do on the document. How must I do everything? The time frames are very confusing. The day is too short”.

Teacher B: “I just pick and choose something here and there from the FFL document. I do not know how to use the time frames in my planning. No one gives us guidance. We do not understand the time frames. We need help. There is too much work and the time in the FFL document does not fit in my day. How must I do everything? Now, I am confused”.

Teachers revealed that time allocated for each activity is very limited according to the FFL document. They have to do a number of activities and these allocations do not take into consideration the context of the classroom.

Teachers are challenged to fit the daily work into their planning. They find it difficult to understand that each section of the work needs to be covered but do not know how. They feel confused and that the activities are too many. Some teachers thought that all the recommended activities have to be done in one day, because the document does not give direction in how and what should be done per day. There is no explanation of the meaning of, e.g. 10x5 minutes or 20x3 minutes in the FFL document.

4.4.1.1.6 Language

Very little is said about language in the FFL, but the NCS document makes it clear that the Languages Learning Area Statement follows an additive approach to multilingualism, which means that learners learn their home language and at least one additional official language. It further states learners' home languages should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible, especially in FP where learners learn to read and write. Learners need to become competent in their additional language, while their home language is maintained and developed (South African DoE, 2002). Teachers received FFL lesson plans to follow. In 2011 schools were issued with literacy workbooks for learners.

Teachers' responses:

Teacher A: "We are expected to teach in the Home language, but the DoE sent us documents in English".

Teacher B: "The FFL lesson plans are only in English and difficult to follow, because we do not always understand them and now we have to make changes in IsiZulu, because the learners' workbooks are in IsiZulu".

Teacher C: "My grade 2 learners never learned to read in grade 1, because their teachers only taught them phonics. Now I have to teach them to read as well."

Teacher D: "I use the workbooks we received from the DoE for everything. They are good, but we received them late and now I have to catch up to get everything done".

Teacher E: "I use the workbooks that are in isiZulu, but I taught the children in English. Now I have to teach everything again. It is difficult and takes a lot of time. Children sometimes do not understand the Zulu words, because they know them only in English".

One of the challenges in language is, that learners were taught to read and write in English in 2010 but in 2011 the workbooks from the DoE arrived were written in IsiZulu. This means that learners had to be re-taught in isiZulu. Teachers said that their learners could not read Zulu words even in numeracy and this becomes very time-consuming. Another challenge is that some grade 2 learners did not learn to read in grade 1 and when they arrived in grade 2 they had to be taught to read from the beginning, because their grade 1 teacher only taught them phonics.

4.4.1.1.7 Teaching of Handwriting

Davis and Rawlins (2009) define handwriting as a skill of fine motor control concerned with movement patterns which is learned by daily practice until the basic movements become automatic to form legible letters, words and numbers. In the FP 50 minutes per week is allocated for grade 1, 20 minutes for grade 2 and 30 minutes for grade 3 learners. Learners learn to form letters, words and numbers through guidance, the teachers' modeling and teaching, and by using patterns to help to form letters in the correct way.

Teachers' responses:

Teacher A: "I try to do handwriting every day, but sometimes it is difficult, because the time is not enough each day to fit all the work in".

Teacher B: "I do not do patterns with the learners. I only understand now how important it is after the workshop. I will try it".

Teacher C: "Learners do handwriting lessons. I sometimes do patterns also. I try to fit handwriting in my planning".

Teacher D: "All the children do not have pencils and books. It is difficult without stationary, but I try".

Teacher E: "Learners do not know how to leave a space between words. They also do not know where to start writing on a page in my grade 1 class. I have many learners in the class and cannot help each one individually. My learners can write, but do not form all the lower case letters correctly".

Teacher F: "Learners do not hold their pencils correctly. The letters are not the correct size. They find it difficult to write on the right line."

Teachers are challenged to do handwriting lessons, if learners do not have pencils and paper to write. Some children do not know how to hold pencils correctly and it takes much time to teach big numbers of learners to hold pencils in the correct way, pay individual attention to learners during handwriting lessons to form letters the correct way and to make sure that everyone writes on the correct lines. Some teachers also did not understand the value of patterns, until I

conducted a workshop at one of the schools to explain the importance of handwriting lessons. More challenges regarding handwriting are that the time to teach handwriting is not explained in the FFL document and ten minutes per day as prescribed in the FFL document for grade 1 and 2 is not enough time to teach handwriting.

4.4.2 Opportunities in the implementation of the FFL

In spite of the many challenges there are quite a few opportunities that emerged from the FFL in Literacy that were perceived in a positive way.

4.4.1.2.1 Learners' Performance

The FFL was launched to improve learner performance in the crucial areas of reading, writing and numeracy in all South African schools. When teachers followed a balanced literacy programme, covering all sections in the FFL, following the prescribed methodologies to teach reading and writing, learner performance shows opportunities for positive change.

Responses from teachers:

Teacher A: "When you trained me in the balanced literacy approach, which include the methodologies prescribed in the FFL, my learners read every day and write more. I still use everything and learners work on the worksheets I copy from the workbooks. The teachers' guide helps me to plan and cover all the work. When my learners go to grade 2, they can read and write".

Teacher B: "All my learners can read and write at the end of the year, but it is difficult to work with learners in grade 2 when they did not learn to read and write in grade 1 following the balanced literacy programme. They are unable to read and write and I have to start with grade 1 work. You trained me how to do it, but now I have to catch up in grade 2. When the learners go to grade 3, they do not do the balanced literacy approach, because there are no books and the teachers were not trained".

Teacher C: "I still use the books and follow the methodologies you taught me when I did the ACE course through Read Educational Trust and Toyota Teach, but the books are not enough. My learners can read and write."

Teachers who received training from READ Educational Trust in the Balanced Literacy Programme (BLP) (2008), which is prescribed in the FFL, said that learners' performance in reading and writing has improved (please refer to appendix 7). If the FFL programme is followed, opportunities for daily reading and writing exist, which help to improve learner performance through daily practice.

4.4.1.2.2 Milestones and Assessment

The Milestones in the FFL Assessment Framework FP, (South African DoE, 2008) is divided in four terms under the assessment tasks for oral, phonics, reading, handwriting and writing. An assessment checklist is developed to help teachers to see exactly what has to be assessed and a final rating scale is included: 1. Not achieved, 2. Partially achieved, 3. Satisfactory achievement, and 4. Outstanding achievement. A holistic rubric is included and teachers can make notes to indicate how many of the sections were achieved. Under each assessment task, clear directives were given.

Teacher A, B, C, D, E said:

Teacher A: "I have no problem to assess my learners, because I have a good document to guide me".

Teacher B: "When I follow the document, it is easy. It is just difficult with the big number of learners in the class".

Teacher C: "Too many learners make it hard, but it is easy with the document to see what learners should be able to do at the end of each term". The ratings are easy to do".

Teacher D: "I do assessments in learners' books when learners write phonic tests on Fridays".

Teacher E: "My learners could not read in the beginning of the year, but now they can read, because I follow the FFL document and implement most of the activities."

The teachers feel that the Literacy Milestones document is clear and easy to implement. Teachers see this as an opportunity, because the milestones help them to understand the content prescribed in the FFL expected to be taught. (Please refer to appendix 7). They said that the

milestones give good direction with assessment tasks and teachers know exactly what to look for and on what level learners should be when assessments are done.

Teachers feel that literacy assessments are well-planned and they are able to help each learner achieve his or her full potential. The assessment tasks create the opportunity for teachers to determine the learners' developmental stage of reading. Teachers maintain that reading is assessed for the following reasons: to assess the progress that learners have made; to find out if the reading programme is at the correct level for the intended learners; to find out which learners are struggling with reading and with which reading skills (phonic, word recognition and comprehension) they are struggling. The information obtained from assessment creates opportunities for teachers to evaluate their literacy resources and general approach to teaching literacy. It also creates the opportunity to enable them to evaluate what the learners do during the Reading and Writing Focus time, e.g. whether the teacher should spend more time being a model in or focus more on reading skills in Shared Reading or in Word and Sentence level work. Another opportunity for teachers is to evaluate their own teaching style. Through evaluation teachers are guided whether they should spend more time with specific learners in Guided Reading time, or give learners more time of practice in Group Reading, Independent Reading and Writing time. Teachers will then also discover whether they should introduce a reading homework programme for additional practice, or an intervention programme for learners who have barriers to learning. Unfortunately, teachers could not present me with much evidence of assessment in their files. Learners' written work is marked with a red pen and tests of written words were marked out of 5 or 10. I did not see any reports or proof of assessment, except tests in learners' exercise books.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the administration and the analysis of data gathered for the study. Data was gathered through observations, interviews and document analysis and includes the presentation, and interpretation of data. Reports on challenges and opportunities experienced by teachers in the implementation of the FFL with special reference to the LLP in disadvantaged contexts was discussed and analyzed.

The following chapter will present the discussion of findings and recommendations relevant to the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research study was to explore what the Foundation Phase (FP) educators' challenges and opportunities they experience in the implementation of the Foundations for Learning (FFL) in the Literacy Learning Programme (LLP). The research study intended to provide all stakeholders a degree of clarity of the needs in the understanding of and the challenges and opportunities accompanying the implementation of the FFL in the LLP.

This chapter will present discussion of results of the educators understanding, the challenges they face and the opportunities in the implementation of the FFL in the LLP. The findings in this research study are important, because they can provide some indication of how the Foundation Phase (FP) educators can be assisted in dealing with the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the FFL in the LLP and what their understandings are regarding the FFL in Literacy. Recommendations to assist teachers as well as possibilities for further research and limitations experienced during the fieldwork will be discussed.

5.2 DISCUSSIONS

The summary and discussion below with reference to 1.2 Rationale for the study on page 1, provides information on some of the main findings of teachers' understandings, challenges and opportunities during their practice of the implementation of the FFL for LLP.

5.2.1 Challenges and difficulties teachers experienced in understanding the FFL in the LLP.

The study confirmed that teachers experience various challenges and difficulties in understanding the FFL in the Literacy Learning Area. Most teachers who were interviewed welcomed some aspects of the FFL. However, there were strong feelings about many aspects of

the prescribed document. Some teachers interviewed felt that they had to make changes to their teaching approach as a result of the implementation of the FFL.

Comments were mainly made on training and support, because many teachers do not understand the document, they did not find the document user friendly and they do not know how to use the FFL document. Teachers indicated that they experience feelings of being overwhelmed, threatened and de-motivated by all the changes that seems to be too much to understand.

5.2.2 Teachers' understandings of the requirements of the FFL document as the source of information

It is clear that without training of the FFL or more information, teachers do not know how to implement the FFL, because the document on its own does not reflect the knowledge they need and does not give a method for implementation. In some cases teachers have not seen the document to understand the requirements.

The reaction of most of the participants was that they have heard of the FFL document but were unfamiliar with it, because most participants do not have a copy of the document.

It was found that those who had a copy of the document were in management positions. Senior staff of schools was informed about the FFL campaign during a meeting and some during a workshop by the Department of Education (DoE) but the rest of the educators were not trained or properly briefed about the content and use of the document. Participants are also confused about the requirements and application of the FFL campaign. Language complicated matters for those who are isiZulu speaking.

It is also important to note that participants tend to teach the way they were taught. As a result of the difficulty in understanding the document and campaign, they tend to go back to their known ways of teaching and the way they were taught. People are often blind to new possibilities. It was said, "We teach the way we do because of how we were taught ourselves. Our Practices are influenced by our educational and life beliefs". Criticos, Long, Moletsane and Mthiyane (2008) said that the copying of the way teachers were taught when still at school could result in poor practice. Teachers need to choose to keep good influence and modify poor influences.

A study by Churchill, Williamson & Grady (1997) from the University of Tasmania revealed that teachers hold positive feelings about changes affecting the caring professional domain and show a pattern of negative feelings about changes affecting the organisational domain of their work. Fear of the unknown factor was also highlighted in this research. Anxiety receded as they became more familiar with the innovation and they became more confident. An acceptance of the inevitability of change, was commented on by one teacher. She stated, that change is always with us. She said that she is prepared to look at the changes and to give it a go.

Many participants admitted that they experience anxiety when facing the new challenges. Uncertainty and changes which cause paranoia and a feeling of being threatened result from the way they were taught in the past. Going with the new flow they become more confident.

Some participants experience nostalgia for the past: Teachers referred to “a golden age” in which the quality of teachers’ work lives was supposedly much better, less stressful and problematic, than today. Teachers think that we need to get back to a point where they value the people in the system and the people who are doing the job. They feel that in the past they used to get more help and they are concerned for the loss of focus on the classroom, because of the load of peripheral “stuff” being done by the teachers.

A sense of survival and coping in the face of current change, expectations and considerable cynicism about the real motives behind and the results of, educational innovations characterised both teachers’ feelings about educational changes and the impact which they claimed such changes had had on the quality of their working lives. Teachers reported difficulties in understanding and accepting new processes, procedures and expectations associated with educational changes of all varieties but in time can come to terms with the new requirements of the innovations.

Churchill, Williamson and Grady (1997) confirmed that in certain cases teachers believed that educational-change initiatives were often promoted by people who were more interested in advancing their own careers than in achieving improvements in education and little in the way of tangible benefits for teachers or learners. They also felt that soon the current change initiatives would be replaced by other initiatives. As a result of the many changes in education, teachers got tired of too much change for the sake of change.

5.2.3 Teaching approaches in the LLP

Participants claimed that the most important changes they identified with were in their approach to the content of the curriculum, e.g. understanding of the methodologies and the meaning of Shared Reading, Reading Aloud, Word and Sentence Level work, Group reading, Guided reading, Shared writing and Word and Sentence Level Work, Sight Words, the FFL document, time keeping and planning and the fact that without the necessary resources, teaching is a huge challenge. There was a general feeling of being swamped by change and survival in a sea of change while still being rendered accountable for what happens in their classrooms. Thus most Participants resorted to traditional teaching styles. Teachers do not understand the methodologies, so the feeling of being swamped by change and despair is better understood. Teachers indicated that they need more direction and guidance in the use of the FFL document as well as workshops in the different Literacy and reading methodologies.

5.2.4 Resources to support practice during teaching

Reaction from participants about the use of recommended resources was different. It was noted that most teachers do not make their own resources for their classrooms and need guidance in this area. They are not willing to pay for the resources needed in their classrooms, because there is a lack in ownership and a feeling of despair. This is because many resources are destroyed by community members through vandalism. In addition old dilapidated buildings, without windows result in destruction of materials through wind and storm.

Schools do not have posters, paper, enough books, stationary or pens for teachers to use to make resources. It is important to note that there is a shortage of big books for Shared reading, little books for Group and Guided reading and only a few books for Reading Aloud or Independent Reading. Only a few old and not conducive books are displayed in reading corners for Independent Reading and Reading Aloud, because there are only a few second hand books donated by people from ex Model C schools. Schools also did not receive the ordered readers and big books from the DoE.

Participants expressed that some teachers received training by Read Educational Trust and book packs with posters but these are not enough for all the classes to use. These packs consist of alphabet charts, birthday charts, weather charts, numbers word charts, colour word charts and

vocabulary charts of the body, the family, farm animals, fruit and action charts. It was found that schools do not have graded readers, lists of reading words per reader, systematic programmes which includes phonemic awareness, phonic development or sight words.

As schools do not have enough resources for literacy, it is very difficult for learners to learn to read and for teachers to teach reading. Only a limited number of charts are available and teachers have to borrow these from each other to use during teaching time. There are so many classes, and the numbers of learners per class are so high, that they find it difficult to share the books and resources.

Most learners do not have stationery, because schools were not provided with stationery for learners. Parents cannot afford to buy the necessary stationery. Reaction to the FFL workbooks from the DoE, were that these books are not enough for each learner. The workbooks arrived a few weeks after schools re-opened for the new year and are written in IsiZulu. The fact that learners were taught in English and have to be re-taught in IsiZulu is another challenge and proved to be very time-consuming.

At one school there is no playground and the area outside is too small for the number of learners. Although the school has a library the number of books are limited. It is also difficult to move from one class to the next, because of the layout of the schools. Security at both schools is not good although schools are fenced.

It was found that classroom walls are very dirty and dusty. There are no cleaners at schools, therefore learners' work cannot be displayed and posters cannot stay on the walls. Many classrooms have broken windows or windows that cannot open and close properly.

It was noticed that some chalkboards are old and dirty and need to be painted. Learners find it difficult to read from boards like these. The lack of basic physical resources, such as sufficient desks and chairs for learners and teachers in the overcrowded classrooms was observed, which makes group work and writing difficult. Only a few classes have old, dirty and too small mats which make it almost impossible to do mat work.

5.2.5 Mentoring and Training:

International literature makes it clear that it is impossible to successfully implement change in an education system if serious investments are not made in the professional development of teachers (Hargreaves, 2003). Some participants were trained in the Balanced Literacy Approach which includes methodologies of teaching Literacy by Read Educational Trust and still implement this approach. These teachers were trained in the following methodologies: Reading Aloud which includes Listening and Speaking, Shared Reading and Shared Writing, Group Reading, Guided Reading, Independent reading and writing, Reading for enjoyment and Drop everything and Read time (DAR), Word and Sentence Level Work, which includes, phonics and spelling, sight words, vocabulary, language, writing, handwriting.

A request from several teachers was for workshops in planning, reading methodologies, handwriting lessons and writing lessons, time keeping and allocation and as set out in the FFL document as well as making resources. They feel that by studying the document only is not enough. They feel neglected by the fact that the use of the document was never properly explained to them. Educators expressed that they did not receive any classroom visits for guidance, monitoring or mentoring by the DoE and feel that it is taken for granted that they know how to implement the FFL in the LLP.

5.2.6 Time Frames

Most of the participants claimed that they do not understand how to implement the prescribed time frame as part of the requirements of the document. Participants expressed the opinion that the document expects too much work to be covered per day and the descriptions in the FFL document are vague.

As there are too many learners per class, teachers find it difficult to adhere to the time frames and the fact that many of the learners are weak and need more time to grasp the work compounds the problem.

5.2.7 Language

Participants are concerned about the fact that little is said about language in the FFL, although the NCS document makes it clear that the Languages Learning Area Statement follows an

additive approach to multilingualism, so that learners could become competent in their additional language, while their home language is maintained and developed (DoE 2002). Lesson plans were distributed to schools and schools were issued with literacy workbooks for learners.

5.2.8 Teaching of handwriting

Most teachers said that they try to fit the handwriting in as part of their planning. After I conducted a workshop at one of the schools, teachers said that they understand now that certain patterns belong to certain letters and they had not realized the importance of patterns. Teachers said that they understand now that letters should be formed in the correct way to improve handwriting by following the correct methodology.

However, participants feel challenged because of the time allocated for teaching children to do handwriting. FP learners still need individual help to learn how to hold pencils, handle paper and form patterns and letters, which is very time consuming.

5.3 OPPORTUNITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FFL

In spite of the many challenges there are quite a few opportunities that merged from the FFL in Literacy that were perceived in a positive way, e.g. learner performance and the milestones and assessment.

5.3.1 Learners' performance

The FFL was launched to improve learner performance in the crucial areas of reading, writing and numeracy in all South African schools. When teachers follow a balanced literacy programme, covering all sections in the FFL, following the prescribed methodologies to teach reading and writing, learner performance shows positive change.

Participants who received training from READ Educational Trust in the Balanced Literacy Approach, which is prescribed by the FFL, said that learners' performance in reading and writing has improved when the correct methodologies were followed. They said that more support from

the school management team, district officials, parents, the wider community, teacher trainers and Literacy experts from NGO's or the DoE is essential.

5.3.2. Clarity of the content of the Milestones and Assessment

Participants reacted positively to the Literacy Milestones in the FFL Assessment Framework FP document, because they are very clear. They said that because the document is divided into the four terms under the assessment tasks for oral, phonics, reading, handwriting and writing, it helps with understanding of assessment. Some Participants said that the final rating scale and the assessment checklists are helpful to see exactly what has to be assessed. The holistic rubric which is included in the document, help teachers to make notes to indicate how many of the sections were achieved and the clear directives given under each assessment task makes it easier to understand.

Teachers said that the Milestones in the FFL Assessment Framework for FP helped them to understand the content expected to be taught. They said that the Milestones gave good direction with assessment tasks and Participants know exactly what to look for and on what level learners should be when assessments are done.

As teachers could not present me with much evidence of assessments in their files, it was difficult to come to a conclusion. They do follow the direction from the Milestones in the FFL Assessment Framework for FP document but very little was evident in their files. Learners' written work is marked with a red pen and tests of written words were marked out of 10 or 5. At the time of the study, I did not observe any reports or prove of assessment, except tests in learners' exercise books, as already mentioned in Chapter 4.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study focused on teachers' experiences, their understanding of the FFL and the challenges and opportunities in implementing the FFL in the LLP.

- The study reveals that there is a dire need for support from the DoE.

- There is a need for regular workshops and training conducted by the DoE in the strategies to ensure effective implementation of the FFL campaign. The services of experienced and competent FP educators, lecturers and non-governmental organizations with the focus on literacy, e.g. Read Educational Trust to help with workshops and training so that maximum benefit can be derived by FP Educators is vital.
- Monitoring and mentoring by the DoE or non-governmental organizations for guidance would be a valuable tool in the implementation and understanding of the FFL campaign.
- A closer relationship with the DoE to guide teachers was established through the study.
- Documents should be available for all educators with the necessary requirements and explanations to give guidance to fit in with the daily programme.
- The FFL document does not reflect the knowledge needed for implementation. It is recommended that the document be revised to become more user-friendly.
- Resources, like books and posters should be provided by the DoE for teachers to implement the different methodologies in literacy and for learners to do reading and writing.
- Learners' resources, like stationary, exercise books and reading books have to be supplied.
- There is a need for training and workshops in the Balanced Literacy Approach, because most teachers were not trained in the different methodologies of literacy, therefore they cannot apply the prescribed methodologies.
- Workshops in making own resources should be conducted.
- There is also a need for workshops in teaching handwriting.
- To prevent damage and loss of resources, the need for better infrastructure and security in schools are needed.
- Schools need to be properly furnished and resourced with the much needed prescribed and recommended resources.
- Training sessions for parents and members of the community in taking ownership of schools is recommended. Communities and parents should be involved in the upkeep of schools and take

ownership of schools by joining forces with educators, learners and management to make schools a place of learning and pride.

5.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research should be done with the focus on possible training programmes for teachers to help them with the understanding and the implementation of the FFL. Ways to train parents and communities to become more involved should also be researched and programmes could be developed to strengthen the hands of educators and develop more expertise and competency in educators.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although this study has achieved its objectives, several limitations exist.

Due to time and financial constraints this study was limited to a small sample. Only two schools in two locations namely, one school in a rural area and the other in a township in Kwa Zulu Natal could participate in the study.

During cluster group interviews, teachers influenced each other and gave answers to please the researcher. The researcher also had to explain the different methodologies to which teachers would answer that they implement them but during classroom observations it came to light that these methodologies were not implemented.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the findings of the study and established that the aims of the research study were achieved. It provides information on how FP teachers can be assisted to deal with the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the FFL in the LLP and what their understandings are regarding the FFL in the LLP. It also highlights the needs regarding resources

and the influence a lack of resources and weak infrastructure has on teaching. Recommendations for future studies were made and the limitations of the study were listed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

1. Ethical Clearance Certificate

Appendix 2

2. Consent Letter to School Principals and

School Governing Bodies:

Permission to conduct in research at schools.

CONSENT LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

Dear Principal and Chairperson of the Governing Body:

I am currently researching the status of the implementation of the Foundations for Learning in schools. The main focus of the study is to explore the challenges and opportunities teachers face in the implementation of the Foundations for Learning in the Literacy Learning Programme.

This study is part of an M.Ed. degree under the supervision of Dr Mashiya (031 260 3670) and Dr H. Ebrahim (031 260 3483) at the Edgewood campus of UKZN.

The Foundations for Learning (FFL) was launched in March 2008 by the Naledi Pandor, the Minister of Education. Pandor (2008). Pandor noticed through studies that performance in reading and numeracy in international assessments was appalling. In order to secure data for this study, I will be conducting a focus group interview.

Furthermore, curriculum development specialists, textbook writers and teacher education institutions will benefit and gain a better understanding of the experiences of the Foundations for Learning in literacy. The final goal is that all learners would perform better in Literacy which affects all learning and all learning areas. The final outcome of the study will be made available to all participants.

One of the criteria for completing my degree is to conduct a research study. I wish to do that study in your school and I request your permission to go ahead. You have the right to withdraw at any stage. Your identity as well as that of your school is protected and you will be referred to in anonymous terms in presentations and publications that result from the focus group interview. The data will be audio-taped and/or written as field-notes and then transcribed.

My details are as follows:

Joan Gouws

Manager: Protec INK branch

Altech Multi Media Centre for Learning

Kwa Mashu Teachers' Centre,

Dalmeny Road,

Ntuzuma

Mobile: 0741070740 Email: joaniegouws@gmail.com

CONSENT FORM

I, _____

(full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....

...../...../2011

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT/S

DATE

Appendix 3

3. Consent Letter to Teacher Participants:

Consent to participate in research

CONSENT LETTER TO TEACHERS

Dear Participant:

I am currently researching the status of the Foundations for Learning in schools. The main focus of the study is to research the challenges and opportunities teachers face in the implementation of the Foundations for Learning in the Literacy Learning Programme.

This study is part of an M.Ed. degree under supervision of Dr Mashiya (031 260 3670) and Dr H. Ebrahim (031 260 3483) at the Edgewood campus of UKZN.

The Foundations for Learning (FFL) was launched in March 2008 by the Naledi Pandor, the Minister of Education. Pandor (2008). Pandor noticed through studies that performance in reading and numeracy in international assessments was appalling. In order to secure data for this study, I will be conducting a focus group interview. You will be required to answer questions or comment on themes related to the study.

Furthermore, curriculum development specialists, textbook writers and teacher education institutions will benefit and gain a better understanding of the experiences of the Foundations for Learning in literacy. The final goal is that all learners would perform better in Literacy which affects all learning and all learning areas. The final outcome of the study will be made available to all participants.

Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any stage. Your identity is protected and you will be referred to in anonymous terms in presentations and publications that result from the focus group interview. The data will be audio-taped and then transcribed.

My details are as follows: Joan Gouws

Manager: Protec INK branch Altech Multi Media Centre for Learning,

Kwa Mashu Teachers' centre,

Dalmeny Road,

Ntuzuma

Mobile: 0741070740

Email: joaniegouws@gmail.com

CONSENT FORM

I, _____

(full names of Participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....

...../...../2011

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT/S

DATE

Appendix 4

4. Interview Schedule

4. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

4.1 Challenges encountered in the implementation of FFL

4.1.1 Teachers' understandings of the FFL, as the sources of information:	
What is your understandings of the FFL?	
4.1.2 Teaching Approaches in the LLP:	

<p>What teaching approaches do you apply to teach literacy?</p>	
<p>4.1.3 Resources:</p>	
<p>What challenges do you experience regarding the prescribed resources in your school, for yourself as the teacher as well as the learners?</p>	
<p>4.1.4 Mentoring:</p>	
<p>What is your understanding of the FFL after training, workshops and mentoring?</p>	

4.1.5 Time Frames:	
What is your understanding regarding the implementation of the prescribed time frames in planning?	
4.1.6 Language:	
Explain the challenges you experienced regarding Language.	
4.1.7 Handwriting:	

How often and how do you teach learners to write?	

4.2 Opportunities in the implementation of the FFL

4.2.1 Learners' performance:	
Explain changes in your learners' performance since you followed the prescriptions of the FFL?	
4.2.2 Milestones and Assessment:	
What opportunities with assessment and planning have you experienced since using the milestones document?	

Appendix 5

5. Observation Schedule

5. OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

5.1 Challenges encountered in the implementation of FFL in the LLP

<u>Headings</u>	<u>Comments and notes</u>
5.1.1 Understandings, requirements and source of information:	
Evidence of understanding of the requirements of the FFL as the source of information in the practical implementation of prescribed activities during lessons.	
Do the lessons correspond with the lesson plans?	
What are the challenges experienced?	
5.1.2 Teaching of reading methodologies:	

5.1.2.1 Implementation of Shared reading, using a big book and understanding that it is a whole class activity.	
Shared Writing and written activities after a Shared Reading lesson:	
Challenges in Shared Reading and Writing:	
5.1.2.2 Word and Sentence level Work: Are phonics, sight words, vocabulary and language taught in context of the shared reading lesson and out of context using flashcards?	
Is there understanding of the importance and methodology of teaching phonics, sight words, vocabulary and language lessons?	
Challenges in Word and Sentence level Work lessons:	

<p>5.1.2.3 Evidence of Group, Guided and Independent Reading and Writing lessons:</p>	
<p>Challenges experienced in Group, Guided and Independent Reading and Writing lessons:</p>	
<p>5.1.2.4 Evidence of Handwriting lessons? Do learners copy writing patterns, letter formation and words and sentences? Are the correct formation of letters and patterns modeled during these lessons?</p>	
<p>Challenges in the implementation of Handwriting lessons:</p>	
<p>5.1.3 Resources:</p>	
<p>7.5.1.3.1 Teacher resources</p> <p>Are there the necessary resources for teaching reading and writing?</p>	

Are resources utilized during lessons?	
5.1.3.2 Learner resources Do the learners have the recommended resources for reading and writing?	
Challenges encountered regarding resources:	
5.3.3 Infrastructure:	
School grounds, buildings and classrooms: Conducive, safe, clean and neat?	
Size, wall space, chalk boards, enough tables, chairs and desks in classrooms?	
Challenges experienced with infrastructure:	

5.4 Time Frames:	
Understanding and correspondence of prescribed time frames and implementation during lesson time:	
Challenges regarding timeframes:	
5.5 Language:	
Understanding of Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT):	
Challenges experienced regarding LOLT:	

5.6 Handwriting:	
How are lessons presented regarding letters formed, patterns and words and sentences?	
What are the challenges regarding Handwriting lessons?	

5.2 Opportunities in the implementation of the FFL

<u>Headings</u>	<u>Comments and Notes</u>
5.2.1 Learners' performance	
5.2.2 Clarity of the content and the Milestones	
5.2.3 Assessment	
5.2.4 Teaching of handwriting	

Appendix 6

6. Document Analyses Schedule

6. DOCUMENT ANALYSES

Documents	Yes/No	Comments/Notes
6.1 <u>Teacher's Files:</u>		
Planning		
Assessment		
Minutes of meetings		
Documents from the DOE		
FFL document		
Lesson plans		

Milestones		
6.2 <u>Learners' Books:</u>		
Workbooks from the DOE		
Work books or Learners' books for Written activities, Handwriting, Phonic, Spelling, Language or Writing books?		
Learner's activity files: photocopied activities, written activities, lists of sight words		
Personal dictionaries		
6.3 <u>Learners' written work:</u>		

Does the Written Work correspond with lessons taught?		
Shared Writing and written work after Shared Reading lessons:		
Word and Sentence Level work: Evidence of phonics, spelling, sight words, vocabulary and language?		
Evidence of written activities based on the class work during Group, Guided and Independent Reading and Writing.		
Handwriting lessons: evidence of copying writing patterns, letter formation, words and sentences.		
Writing: evidence of own writing using a writing frame.		

Listening and speaking: Evidence of the new vocabulary in personal dictionaries.		
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Appendix 7

7. Opportunities Schedule

7. OPPORTUNITIES SCHEDULE

7.7 Opportunities in the implementation of the FFL

Headings	Notes and comments
7.1 Learners' performance:	
7.2 Clarity of the content of the Milestones and assessment:	
7.3 Any other opportunities:	

Appendix 8

8. Letter of Appreciation

Letter of Appreciation

Dear Participant

Thank you for participating in this study. I have thoroughly enjoyed the time that we have spent in our conversations and classroom visits. I have learned a great deal and I have gained a deeper insight in the challenges you experience on a daily basis.

The research findings will be available to you as soon as possible. You are most welcome to have a look at it as a copy of the report will be available from me.

Regards

Joan Gouws

Appendix 9

**9. Letter from the Department of Education:
Approval of application to conduct research.**

Appendix 10

10. Letter from the Department of Education: Permission to interview learners and educators.

