

**A Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)
programme as preparation for Foundation Phase
teachers: The experiences of novice teachers
in KwaZulu-Natal primary schools**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education
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By

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Declaration

I, Dimakatso Kortjass, declare that this Master of Education (Higher Education) dissertation is my own work and that all sources have been appropriately acknowledged. This dissertation has not been submitted to any other institution as part of an academic qualification.

The research was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education under the supervision of Ms R. Searle and co-supervisor Dr C. Bertram.

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate the extent to which novice Foundation Phase (FP) teachers who are former Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students, perceive the programme as adequate for preparing them to become Foundation Phase teachers. Traditionally, the PGCE programme focuses on Senior and Further Education and Training (FET) teachers and it is clear what disciplinary knowledge these students bring from their undergraduate degrees. The disciplinary content knowledge that FP students bring to the PGCE is less clear. Students with at least one major (third year level) subject and two subjects at first year level, from the subject areas like Languages, Psychology and Sociology, are accepted into the PGCE FP programme. The PGCE focuses primarily on developing teaching skills. This study also seeks to determine in what ways the undergraduate degree was of help in preparing them to become Foundation Phase teachers.

Individual interviews were conducted with six participants, who were practicing teachers, from a group of thirty six students who completed the PGCE in 2008/2009. The study is underpinned by Grossman's theory about teacher knowledge and teaching. Five of the participants who were teaching in rural schools perceived the programme to be adequate. They said that they acquired knowledge of psychological, sociological and linguistic foundations of reading and writing; process and instruction; and that they gained knowledge on how to plan for and use a wide range of curriculum materials. However one teacher, who was teaching at an urban school, indicated that the programme was not very useful in preparing her for Foundation Phase teaching. Rather, she perceived the knowledge she gained at the school where she taught after completing the PGCE as being relevant. She cited that she received support mainly from her mentor teacher who was her Head of Department. These findings seem to suggest that novice teachers learn more in well-resourced schools where there is good support and mentoring, whereas in poorly resourced schools that lack instructional mentoring, teachers tend to rely more on what they learn in formal programmes like the PGCE.

Keywords: Initial teacher education; teacher training; novice teachers; foundation phase; attitudes; teacher knowledge; pedagogic content knowledge

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents, Moses and Smangele Kortjass who would have been very proud of my achievement.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BEd	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CK	Content Knowledge
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EDPD	Education and Professional Development
ETDP SETA	Education and Training Development Programme Sector Education and Training Authority
FET	Further Education and Training
FFL	Foundations for Learning
FP	Foundation Phase
GET	General Education and Training Band
GPK	General Pedagogic Knowledge
KEC	Knowledge of Educational Context
LO	Learning Outcome
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
PGCE	Post-Graduate Certificate in Education
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The main aim of this research is to investigate the extent to which selected students believe that one South African Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme prepares the Foundation Phase (FP) teachers for their work. In this chapter I discuss the rationale behind this study and then present the focus of the study where I outline the key and the sub-questions which this study seeks to answer. Lastly, I present a brief overview of the thesis structure.

1.2 Background and context of the study

The traditional PGCE in South Africa is a one year teacher training course which follows a three or four year undergraduate degree where students have gained grounding in specific disciplines. Traditionally, the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme has focused on Senior and Further Education and Training (FET) teachers and there are very clear requirements on what students need to have to qualify for different teaching specializations. The assumption is that the students come into the programme with disciplinary content knowledge from their undergraduate degree as the PGCE focuses primarily on developing teaching skills. This is because teachers at these levels tend to teach their disciplines, Therefore a pre-requisite is that students should have majored in two teaching subjects. Entry requirements however are different for Foundation Phase trainees who have to teach across the range of disciplines in their classrooms. So the PGCE FP qualification, students come with a range of tertiary degrees. The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN, 2011c) PGCE handbook clarifies that students with “at least one major (third year level) subject and two subjects at first year level, from the subject areas: Languages, Psychology, Sociology, Mathematics and Sports Science are accepted into the PGCE FP programme” (UKZN, 2011c P.6). Unlike the Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree, where students go through a four year programme tailored for FP teachers, the PGCE FP students go through a comprehensive one year programme where students are developed in discipline knowledge and pedagogic knowledge in an integrated fashion. The full time students

study for one year and the part-time students study for two years. One of the issues with the PGCE FP is the 'content knowledge' that the students bring to the course.

The Foundation Phase in South Africa is the initial phase of the General Education and Training Band: (Grades R, 1, 2 and 3) followed by the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) and the Senior Phase (Grades 7-9). The key role of the FP is to lay a solid foundation for young learners so that they will be able to acquire knowledge, skills and values for future learning. These include "the acquisition of language, perception-motor skills required for learning to read and write, basic numeracy concepts and skills, problem-solving skills and a love of learning" (Department of Education, 2001 p.6). It plays a role in bridging informal learning into formal schooling learning; especially Grade R. The South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE, 2010) report indicates that Grade R lays the foundation blocks for Grade 1-3 learning. It states that "skills required for future learning, such as those developed as part of emergent literacy and emergent numeracy, need to be developed" (SAIDE, 2010 p.13). According to the National Education Policy Act (Act No 27 of 1996), in South Africa, learners in the Foundation Phase could range between 5 and 10 years of age. (SAIDE, 2010 p.31).

Research indicates that learners in South African primary schools do not perform well in literacy and numeracy (Fleisch, 2007). The fundamental skills of reading, writing and numeracy need to be taught during the early years of schooling. This makes the FP a specialized area that needs a special focus. Therefore, it is important that the training of FP teachers is rigorous so that they will be better equipped to carry out their roles in helping primary school learners with a good foundation. It is paramount that the FP teacher trainees understand the importance of early years of schooling in a child's life. "They need to understand the link between all the developmental domains, how development is facilitated through play-based learning, and the role of mediation in early childhood teaching" (SAIDE, 2010 p.18). However, there are also factors associated with FP which are not explicit in circumstances, in which FP teachers find themselves. In the context of challenges facing the teaching and learning environments FP teachers may find themselves fulfilling the roles of caregivers. Morrow (2007 p.102-103) states "we can say that the constitutive functions of schools are, broadly, to provide both teaching and caregiving for the young".

It would appear that the training of FP teachers by Higher Education Institutions in South Africa has become a mammoth task. Sibaya & Sibaya (2008) argue that it is challenging for training institutions to prepare teachers for the rigours of teaching in South African schools. FP teacher trainees need more time to develop skills and competences, which are different from Intermediate and Senior Phase teacher trainees. For example, they need to: be able to facilitate learning through play; to acquire reading instructions methodologies; to learn to develop resources suitable for young learners; to practise chalkboard writing as learners are still learning handwriting and correct letter formation to develop activities that will enhance the development of learners' fine motor skills; to identify barriers to learning or remedial instruction; and similar aspects. It appears to be an enormous challenge for a programme like the PGCE FP to prepare teacher trainees with the required knowledge, skills and attitudes for their work in the time available.

A good quality FP programme will seek to ensure that the student teachers are well prepared to carry out their roles as FP teachers. Fraser et al. (2005), contend that there are various factors which influence the attainment of any training programme, one of which is the quality of the programme itself. The South African White Paper on Education and Training specifically covered the need for good quality education and training as "quality is linked to the capacity and commitment of the teacher, the appropriateness of the curriculum, and the way standards are set and assessed" (Department of Education, 1995 p.12). Subsequently, the *Norms and Standards for Educators* was formulated and adopted as national policy in 2000. This policy 'laid the foundation for providing definitions of competent teachers as well as appropriate teacher education programmes' (Department of Education, 2000a). However, a new policy (Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications, 2011), has been promulgated that will supersede the *Norms and Standards for Educators* and will be implemented as from 2013. The *Norms and Standards for Educators* clearly stipulates that teacher education have to ensure that the abilities of teachers to teach competently are developed and also outlines the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that characterize professional and competent teachers (Department of Education, 2000a). For FP it states that "a study of the three learning programmes as prescribed by the national curriculum must include disciplinary bases of content knowledge,

methodology and relevant pedagogic theory” (2000a p.27). It is against this background that I explore the crucial issue of whether the knowledge, skills and attitudes that novice teachers have gained through the PGCE FP programme and their undergraduate degree were perceived as of help in preparing them for their roles as Foundation Phase teachers.

1.3 Motivation of the study

The motivation for the study comes largely out of my interest in the Foundation Phase teaching. I have been trained as a Foundation Phase teacher and have also taught in primary school as well as at a College of Education in the Primary education department. The Higher Education Institutions have become the main source of training teachers training to the education system in South Africa after the former colleges of education were integrated into the universities and technikons (Paterson & Arends, 2009). While the training of Further Education and Training (FET) and Senior Phase teachers was offered at the universities through the PGCE and BEd programmes, Foundation Phase teachers have been previously trained only at Colleges of Education. Rhodes University offered both the Bachelor of Primary Education (Junior Primary) which is equivalent to the Bed (FP) and the PGCE (FP) since the 1980s. I am interested to learn the effectiveness of the training of FP teachers at the Universities through the PGCE programme. Teachers are essential drivers in providing a quality education system and they contribute to learners’ educational achievement (Arends & Phurutse, 2009). FP teacher trainees need to develop expertise of early literacy, particularly reading competence, early numeracy and life-skills and it is worth exploring to what extent this can be done in a one year PGCE programme.

According to the Council on Higher Education (2010), International literature identifies the following typical weakness of conventional pre-service programmes and practices:

- They are made up of separate modules taught by individual academics in different departments that rarely connect to one another and build on one another’s achievements.
- The relationship between taught modules and work-based learning is weak.
- The programme is fragmented, the pedagogy is weak, and there is no articulation with modules of the students’ first degree.

- The students' subject knowledge is poor – they often cannot explain basic concepts of the discipline in which they majored. (p. 48)

These potential weaknesses have been considered in this study as they relate to the PGCE Foundation Phase. PGCE students come to the programme with different initial degrees. They have not covered Learning Areas such as Literacy and Numeracy in their first degrees. Feiman-Nemser (2001) notes that separate courses taught by individual staff members in different departments do not build on or link to one another; nor do they provide a coherent preparation for teaching. This is different from the BEd FP programme which is integrated. At the onset, teacher trainees complete a variety of modules that focus on the Foundation Phase. Contrary to the PGCE FP, the teacher trainees are exposed to only teaching specialisation FP modules in that one year. The content knowledge that the PGCE FP students acquired in their first degrees, in the Psychology and Sociology courses, is based on how children learn; children's behaviour and cognitive development. The PGCE FP students spend one year in the programme, which limits how much material can be covered.

Research in the United States, led by Linda Darling-Hammond (2000), suggests that the longer the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme the more confident and competent the teachers are. The traditional teacher education programmes has been criticised for providing inadequate time “within a 4-year undergraduate degree, which makes it hard to learn enough about both subject matter and pedagogy” (Darling-Hammond, 2000 p.169). In other countries, 1- or 2-year graduate programmes have been developed to address this. These programmes included an intensively supervised internship in a school affiliated with the university (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

1.4 Becoming a teacher in South Africa

The Department of Education (2007b) states two broad pathways that will lead to the first professional qualification for teachers. Using the nomenclature of the forthcoming Higher Education Qualifications Framework (Department of Education, 2007b p.13):

the first pathway is the 480-credit Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree which will include the equivalent of a year's supervised practical teaching experience and will be

pegged at level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF, 1997); and the second is an appropriate 360-credit first degree (for example, BA/BSc/BCom/BTech) followed by a 120-credit Advanced Diploma in Education. In line with the HEQF, the latter will replace and be equivalent to the current PGCE, the Higher Diploma in Education (HDE), and postgraduate Diplomas in Special Education.

The *Norms and Standards for Educators* (Department of Education, 2000a p.24) defines the PGCE as:

a generalist educator's qualification that 'caps' an undergraduate qualification. As an access requirement candidates are required to have appropriate prior learning which leads to general foundational and reflexive competence.

The key emphasis of the qualification is to nurture practical competence reflexively grounded in education theory. The PGCE programme should aim at strengthening subject content knowledge and developing proper pedagogical content knowledge in order to prepare competent teachers within one year full-time or two years part-time study (Department of Education, 2000a).

The PGCE programmes focus mainly on developing teaching skills, and not content knowledge of the learning areas the students intend to teach. Students entering the programme are expected to have attained the suitable level of subject content knowledge in the Bachelor's degree. The initial degree will therefore determine the subjects that the students will qualify to teach. For example, The UKZN (2011c) PGCE Handbook states that, for GET and FET level, students with "at least two recognized degree subjects suitable for teaching purposes, one to at least second year level and the other to at least first year level" (p.6) would be accepted into the programme. Subsequently this would mean that students would have two or three of these subjects as their majors when they enrol in the PGCE programme. However, the PGCE FP students will have the subjects mentioned above when they enter into the programme. On the other hand, the FP students will have subjects like Psychology and Sociology in their initial degrees. According to the national curriculum, the elective modules for the PGCE FP are Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. This means that these three learning programmes are expected to include punitive bases of content knowledge, methodology and relevant pedagogic theory.

Department of Education (2000a) describes the development of teacher competences as an overarching concept for the three interconnected competences: “practical competence which is the demonstrated capability to deliberate a variety of options for action, make decisions (knowing how)” (p.32) to facilitate teaching; foundational competence, which underpins action taken (knowing what) and enables teachers to demonstrate knowledge of their subject; and reflexive competence, which is the demonstration of the skill to incorporate presentations and decision-making for adaptations. Reflection enables the teacher to be aware of the limitations of his/her knowledge of the subject matter (foundational competence) and to improve his/her way of teaching (practical competence). These competences need to be integrated so that educators know *what* to do, *why* it should be done, *when* to do it and *how* to do it in practice (Department of Education, 2000a).

Morrow (2007) suggests that, Teacher Education curricula comprise the following components: “foundational knowledge and skills; content-area and methods knowledge; and practice at classroom teaching” (p.82). He further elaborates that the “foundational knowledge and skills is made up of education-related topics to philosophy, history, psychology, and sociology of education” (Morrow, 2007 p.82). The knowledge of content and methods describes how teachers teach and assess their subjects. Teaching practice in the classroom focuses on supervision and support of teachers.

Most Higher Education Institutions in South Africa offer the PGCE course to Senior and Further Education (Grades 7 to 12) teachers and very few offer it to the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4-6). However, in other countries like Britain, the PGCE primary programme is one of the largest in the north of England, taking on graduate students of high-quality across the country. It would seem important to grow the PGCE FP in South Africa as it was reported that there was also shortages for the Foundation Phase in the education system (Department of Education, 2007b). This observation is also confirmed by Green et al (2011) that HEIs “do not produce enough Foundation Phase teachers and thus fall short of the national and provincial needs” (2011 p.109). Foundation Phase is an important level as it sets up the foundations for learning at other levels.

This level lays the foundation for the ability to, as well as appreciating reading, the ability to work with numbers and to be able to write (Green et al, 2011).

Findings emanated from the study which investigated Foundation Phase teacher provision by public universities in South Africa revealed that “twenty-one (21) public universities offer initial teacher education programmes, either, the BEd, the PGCE or both. Only 13 out of the 21 universities offered Foundation Phase initial education programmes” (Green et al, 2011 p.114).

Table 1 below shows the number of institutions that offer Foundation Phase initial education programmes (Green et al, 2011)

Higher Education Institutions
1. Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)
2. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU)
3. North West University (NWU)
4. Rhodes University (RU)
5. University of Fort Hare (UFH)
6. University of Free State (UFS)
7. University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)
8. University of Pretoria (UP)
9. University of Stellenbosch (US)
10. University of Venda (UNIVEN)
11. University of Witwatersrand (WITS)
12. University of Zululand (UNIZULU)
13. University of South Africa (UNISA)

1.5 The University of KwaZulu-Natal Post-Graduate Certificate in Education

The Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal offers a teacher education programme that leads to Post-Graduate Certificate in Education, a one year full-time and two years part-time programme informed by the Norms and Standards for Educators. This programme prepares one group of educators to teach at the Foundation Phases and another group to teach at the Senior and Further Education Training phases. It is offered at two campuses of UKZN, namely, Edgewood and Pietermaritzburg campuses.

Students enrol for eight 16 credit modules, of which, three are core Education and Professional Development modules which are essential for all phase specialisations. These core modules include topics such as: “Roles of a Teacher; Education Policy; Curriculum; Classroom

Management; Teaching Skills - Lesson Planning, Approaches to teaching and learning, Reflective Practice; Assessment; Discipline; Development of modern education systems; Teaching for diversity, inclusion and social justice; Identifying and minimising barriers to learning and teaching” (UKZN, 2011c p.20). These modules aim to provide students with the knowledge and competences necessary for training to become a teacher. There are two School Experience modules which are fundamental for all Phases. These provide students with different contextually practical learning experiences. The programme includes three teaching specialisation modules for FP, GET and FET phases, which students have to select from a list of subjects specific to their phases.

The teaching specialization modules are yearlong modules. Assessment is continuous with a summative examination at the end of the year. The table 3 below illustrates the PGCE programme structure:

Table 2

Foundation Phase	3 Core Educational and Professional Development Modules 2 School Experience Modules 3 Learning Area Specializations: Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills
GET	3 Core Educational and Professional Development Modules 2 School Experience Modules 3 Learning Area Specializations
FET	3 Core Educational and Professional Development Modules 2 School Experience Modules 2 Teaching Specializations

In 2008 the first batch of students registered for the PGCE FP in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and completed their studies in 2009. This was the first group of educators who were exposed to the new teacher education programme, which was designed for Foundation Phase educators.

1.6 Focus of the study

The focus of this study is to ascertain the extent to which the novice teachers who have been trained at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in a one year professional Post-Graduate Certificate in Education programme feel that they were prepared to become Foundation Phase teachers.

The study seeks to determine to what extent the competences and knowledge that novice teachers had gained through the PGCE programme and their undergraduate degree were of help in preparing them to become Foundation Phase teachers.

1.7 Research Questions

Key question

To what extent do Foundation Phase teachers think the Post Graduate Certificate in Education programme adequately prepared them for their roles as Foundation Phase teachers?

Sub-questions

1. What knowledge, skills and attitudes do Foundation Phase teachers consider important for their work?
2. How do novice Foundation Phase teachers believe they acquired the knowledge, skills and attitudes they are using in their classrooms?

1.8 Overview of the study

This study has five chapters. Chapter one presents an overview of the study. Chapter two discusses the literature review which informed the research topic. Chapter two is laid out as follows: firstly, the initial teacher education is discussed, followed by novice teachers after which a discussion on Foundation Phase teachers and teacher knowledge is outlined. The literature review in this study has mostly international studies as this area has not been extensively studied in the South African context as yet.

Chapter three presents the research design for this study and the methodology that was used in collecting data and also outlines some limitations of this study. Chapter four presents the findings of the research. It highlights all the findings extracted from the data during the

interviews. Chapter five provides discussion and analysis of the key themes that emerged, concludes and suggests some recommendations.

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, the background, context and focus of the study were explained. Reasons were also given as to why the researcher was interested in undertaking this research. A brief explanation of the teacher training programmes guided by the teacher education policies in South Africa was given.

In the next chapter, literature that informs this study in terms of the initial teacher education programme and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes for Foundation Phase will be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I provided an orientation, motivation and a background to this study. I outlined the main aim of this research as an investigation of the extent to which the UKZN Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme prepares Foundation Phase (FP) teachers for the classroom. The review of literature in this chapter aims to highlight the ways in which an initial teacher education programme prepares teachers, with a special focus on the literature on teacher knowledge: what teachers need to acquire in order to carry out their work. Additionally, it examines the literature regarding novice teachers and Foundation Phase teachers.

This literature review will focus on the following aspects:

- Initial Teacher education
- Novice teachers
- Teacher knowledge

2.2 Initial Teacher Education

According to UNESCO initial teacher education (or initial professional education of teachers) is defined as

the programme of studies which leads to qualified teacher status according to the official standards of a country. It is the basic or first level of qualification for a teacher or the pre-service programme (before a trainee teacher begins work as a teacher) (SAIDE, 2010 p.6).

It is important for initial teacher education to offer opportunities that will ensure that teachers are well prepared to teach when they start their teaching professions. In many countries, programmes for initial teacher education take place in Higher Education Institutions. Prior to 1995, in South Africa, Colleges of Education were primarily responsible for initial teacher education, especially of primary teachers (Reeves & Robinson, 2010). Universities were normally responsible for the training of secondary and high school teachers. Since 2001,

however, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have taken over teacher education. The implication of the move, specifically for the Foundation Phase, needs to be explored. This, especially, in the light of the plans of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to re-opening colleges; in particular, the former Ndebele College Campus in Mpumalanga (Foundation Phase) as well as in a college in KwaZulu-Natal and in the Eastern Cape” (Nzimande, 2012).

There are presently two routes to qualify as a teacher in South Africa. The first is the four year Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree which aims to satisfy both academic and professional demands by integrating the academic components of the programme with work-based learning. The assumption underpinning the BEd design is that subject knowledge as well as teacher knowledge and practice are integrated into a four year degree. The second route is the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme that ‘caps’ an undergraduate qualification with an additional year of study. The aim of this programme is to strengthen subject knowledge and build up proper pedagogical content knowledge, promote teacher trainees’ “self-reflexivity and self-understanding and convey an understanding of teaching as a profession” (Council on Higher Education, 2010 p.41).

There is an assumption that students come into the programme with the disciplinary content knowledge acquired in a Bachelor’s degree. “Both pathways are of equal status and will lead to registration as an educator by the South African Council of Educators (SACE)” (Department of Education, 2007b p.14).

In some countries, there are programmes where a teacher is trained by working in a school under the responsibility of an accredited experienced practitioner (Smith & Hodson, 2010). In South Africa such programmes are funded by Education and Training Development Programme Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) and are called learnership programmes. The Foundation Phase is recognised as one of the priority areas by the Department of Education and therefore funding has been allocated to teaching programmes. Students can apply for *Funza Lushaka* bursaries if they select one of these priority areas.

2.2.1 Principles underpinning teacher education programmes

From 1995 to 2000, new policies were developed by the Department of Education which aimed at bringing change to the South African education and training system (Parker & Deacon, 2004). The Norms and Standards for Educators were introduced as curriculum policy for teacher education in 2000. As a result, teacher education programmes were reconstructed in terms of their approach. However, the new policy, Minimum Requirement for Teacher Education Qualification (MRTEQ) (2011) that required a revision of curriculum for Teacher Education programmes within the next year or two, will replace the Norms and Standards. I will use five principles underpinning teacher education programmes as outlined in the CHE (2010) as a lens to shed light on the performance of initial teacher education programmes. The document states that good initial teacher education programmes are expected to:

- have conceptual coherence;
- have a strong link between taught modules and work-based learning;
- be designed to encourage and develop critical reflection and self-reflexivity;
- constitute students as learners positioned to engage fruitfully in continuing professional development and to adapt to changes in curricula and new trends in education; and
- give students a broad understanding of education as a practice and competence as novice practitioners. (CHE, 2010 p.59)

I will now elaborate on these principles. The first principle, **conceptual coherence** offers a view of what is being taught; a rationale for teaching specific modules; the development in learning; and explores the role of the teacher. Feiman-Nemser (2001a) defines this principle as the “cornerstone of a coherent programme that provides a guiding vision of the kind of teacher the programme is trying to prepare” (2001 p.1023). She argues that the conceptual coherence makes it easier for teacher trainees to develop a better understanding of how to teach. The trainee teacher is given a concrete foundation in order to understand the design and progression of the modules as well as that of the school experience. Furthermore, Reeves & Robinson (2010) believe that it is important that the curriculum is not delivered as a series of fragmented and disconnected components. This principle is significant, since it introduces students to the important components in the field of education discussed above. Morrow (2007) argues that it is

important “to develop a strong and properly grounded conception of teaching and an effective grasp of the definite ideals of the professional practice of organising systematic learning” (p.84). Since teaching is about organising systematic learning, then the concept of teaching is extremely important. The primary purpose of the PGCE is to develop levels of professional practice in teacher trainees through the core Education and Professional Development modules (discussed in Chapter 1).

Teachers in the field find it difficult to transpose what was learned from the programme into another environment in order to tackle, for example, issues of reading which provide a significant problem. Fraser et al. (2005) emphasize that the mere accumulation of knowledge is not sufficient; and a need for performance in authentic contexts. The Foundations for Learning campaign was implemented to improve the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children.

“The campaign is a national response to national, regional and international studies that have shown over a number of years that South African children are not able to read, write and count at expected levels, and are unable to execute tasks that demonstrate key skills associated with Literacy and Numeracy” (Government Gazzette, 2008 p.4).

The second principle of a good ITE programme emphasizes “a strong link between taught modules and work-based learning” (CHE, 2010 p.59). Trainee teachers need to be given opportunities to test the theory they have learned and apply the knowledge gained (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b). According to Chireshe & Chireshe (2010) a good initial teacher education programme has to “produce teachers who are be able to put theory into practice by applying theoretical knowledge acquired in the lecture room to classroom teaching” (p.511). Ultimately, a good initial education programme will produce teachers who have an integrated understanding of education and the pedagogical application of knowledge.

A weak connection between university courses and school experiences indicates that there is overall lack of coherence in the training process. Teaching is regarded as the most valuable part of teacher preparation. Feiman-Nemser (2001b) argued that

“when the people responsible for school experiences do not work closely with the people who teach academic and professional courses, there is no productive joining of forces around a common agenda and no sharing of expertise” (p. 1020).

What Foundation Phase student teachers learn in the PGCE programme *has* to link with what they find in schools. Since 1998 teachers in schools have been grappling with the implementation of various school curriculum policies from Curriculum 2005, National Curriculum Statements (NCS) as well as Foundation for Learning (FFL). As of 2012, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) has been implemented to replace the National Curriculum Statements and all supporting documents developed so far to assist teachers in understanding the curriculum, in order to offer teachers a consolidated document for each Learning Area with all the requirements for that particular subject.

Robinson (1999) reiterated the importance of institutionalising a process of continuous conversation and communication between the university and the schools. She argues that teachers in the schools who assist teacher trainees during teaching practice should be recognized and rewarded for their work. In her study of teacher trainees on a Postgraduate Certificate in Education mathematics course in their first year of teaching, Ensor (2000) notes that the teacher trainees were unable to put into practice what they have learned during teacher training. The PGCE teacher trainees learn theory in their core modules which they will need to apply when they teach. Most of this theory is broad and do not apply specifically to PGCE Foundation Phase teachers. In order to achieve coherence, it would be helpful for FP teachers to be exposed to theory pertinent to FP in the core modules as well as in the specialisation modules.

The third principle is that an initial teacher education programme should “be designed to encourage and develop critical reflection and self-reflexivity” (CHE, 2010 p.59). This third principle of teacher training means that the teacher trainees need to have developed skills that will enable them to reflect on their practices. Robinson (1999) reported that the intention of the teaching practice at UWC was “to facilitate a process of reflection for the students” (p.195) and not just to focus on the assessment of the trainee classroom performance. The dialogue between schools and universities is crucial in that practising teachers can provide support and helpful advice to teacher trainees and schools can be “the sort of environments which support critical

inquiry and reflective practice” (Robinson, 1999 p.200). Smith & Hodson (2010) found that there is little participation or talk of ‘critical reflection’ in higher education regarding trainee teachers. However, the PGCE programme at UKZN attempts to provide teacher trainees opportunities to reflect critically throughout the programme. In preparing teacher trainees to teach, the PGCE programme aims to develop teachers who can think and reflect on their teaching practice. For example during their first and second week at the beginning of the PGCE programme they do an observation assignment which gives them an opportunity for critical reflection. They are also given an opportunity to write a journal in the Education and Professional Development 610 module (EDPD 610) as well as during their specializations. Teachers need to have an understanding of why they are doing a particular thing in the classrooms (Bertram, 2010).

The fourth principle for sound teacher training states that a good initial teacher education programme is expected to “constitute students as learners positioned to engage fruitfully in continuing professional development and to adapt to changes in curricula and new trends in education” (CHE, 2010 p.59). This principle views teachers as learners who will continue to develop throughout their profession. Indeed, Morrow et al. (2004) suggest that “continuing teacher development is understood to be inclusive of initial teacher development” (p.7). Initial teacher education forms an important foundation for teacher competence and professionalism. The PGCE needs, therefore, to provide students with a foundation for an ongoing professional development. The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa aims to ensure that “teachers are able to continually enhance their professional competence and performance” (Department of Education, 2007a p.9). The curriculum, therefore, must not only prepare teachers for the present school system, but also give them the basic knowledge and ability to adapt to changes in policy and circumstances. Initial teacher education is concerned mostly about ensuring teacher trainees learn to teach. Subject advisors from the Department of Education are invited to speak to teacher trainees to talk about professionalism in the core modules at UKZN. There has not been enough focus on FP development of teachers; nor has it gone deep enough. One of recommendation made by teacher trainees to improve the teacher education programme is “building a culture of professionalism among students so as to overcome their lack of commitment, their expectations of entitlement and their “search for certificates rather than knowledge” (Robinson, 1999 p.199).

The fifth principle suggested by CHE is “Giving students a broad understanding of education as a practice and competence as novice practitioners” (CHE, 2010 p.59). In the light of this principle, in addition to a deep understanding of subject discipline developed in the undergraduate degree, teacher trainees need knowledge of specific methods in order to teach those subjects. The programme, therefore, needs to orient them enough in order for them to execute their expected roles.

CHE (2010) notes that initial teacher education programmes should also aim at helping students to “cultivate a practical understanding of teaching and learning in a diverse range of South African schools” (p.48). They need to have knowledge in the area of educational theory, phase and subject specialisation, policy and practice. Teachers should also be good, active South African citizens with the appropriate attitudes and skills to educate a variety of learners in a variety of contexts. It is important that these programmes should produce teachers who have an in-depth knowledge of current national regulatory frameworks and their underlying principles and philosophies. Teachers need to be familiar with the Norms and Standards for Teacher Educators (2000), the National Curriculum Statements for GET and FET and its assessment guidelines, and other policy documents of this kind as they provide guidelines of the “knowledge, skills and values that are seen as the hallmarks of a professional and competent educator” (Robinson, 2003 p.19). And since the BEd programme and the PGCE give the graduate a licence to teach for life, programmes must also provide a basis for ongoing professional development.

2.2.2 Initial Teacher Education for Foundation Teachers

In the past, the Foundation Phase teacher qualification would usually have been a diploma, and more recently a BEd degree. The training of primary school teachers was carried out mostly by the provincial colleges of education. Most South African universities focused on the training of High School teachers (Green, et al., 2011). The capacity of the system to train Foundation Phase teachers has declined as a result of making teaching a graduate profession. Morrow (2007) viewed the standard of teaching especially in higher education institutions as of very poor quality. He argues “it is interesting that when we think of how higher education can cope with ‘ill-prepared students’ we think in terms of Academic ‘Development’ or ‘Support’ Programmes before we think of quality of the teaching in our institutions” (Morrow, 2007 p.71). One of the

mistakes made in the restructuring of education in South Africa since 1994 has been the focus on matriculation performance. However, over the past few years the government and the Department of Education have re-evaluated their stance and are now more focused on Foundation Phase teaching. The evidence of this can be attributed to the interventions like the introduction of the Foundations for Learning Campaign. The Foundations for Learning Campaign was launched in 2008 as a call to all South Africans to focus on reading, writing and numeracy. The early years of schooling are important ones; during which the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are taught (SAIDE, 2010). The foundation for future learning is built through these skills.

Initial teacher education for Foundation Phase also requires knowledge of the official curriculum that has been adopted for FP schools (Akyeampong, Pryor, Westbrook, & Lussier, 2011). The Foundations for Learning programme clarifies what is needed to be learned so that teachers are able to help learners to improve their reading, writing and numeracy, as well as being a guide for teachers on how to teach skills such as how to read, make sense of new words and solve problems. These skills require that all teachers know good practices of teaching reading and writing to young learners, which should therefore, be integrated into the curricula of Initial Teacher Education programmes for FP teachers. Therefore, it is imperative that teacher trainees are fully prepared in their initial training so that they will find it easy to teach, plan the curriculum, manage the classroom and diagnose learners' needs (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

The focus in this study is on two learning areas of the Foundation Phase: Numeracy and Literacy. It is therefore important to investigate how the FP teacher training curriculum prepares teachers for their roles in helping learners to master these. These are skills as many studies (national and international) have shown that South African children are “really struggling with numeracy and barely coping with the demands of learning to read and write” (Fleisch, 2007 p.7).

It is pertinent to recognise that the training of Foundation Phase teachers in how to teach reading effectively will impact positively on learning in other learning areas (SAIDE, 2010). There is also large emphasis placed on the integration of Learning Areas in the FP (Department of Education, 2000b). It is fundamental that teachers know and understand the needs of children,

“including an understanding of how to facilitate learning through play, a critical understanding of the NCS, emergent literacy and numeracy facilitation” (SAIDE, 2010 p.1).

2.3 Novice teachers

In this study, novice teachers are defined as newly qualified teachers who have recently joined the profession and have less than three years of teaching experience. It is believed that initial teacher preparation will enable the teacher trainee to adjust easily and become accustomed to the teaching conditions at his or her first school placement. However, the shift from being a teacher trainee to being a classroom teacher in most cases is a dramatic one (Arends & Phurutse, 2009). Feinman-Nemser (2003) notes that some aspects of teaching efficiently are best learned on the job rather than in teacher preparation. This implies that the transition from teacher trainee to practising teacher needs to be handled carefully. This study aims to ascertain the extent to which the novice FP teachers who have been trained in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal believe they have been adequately prepared for their teaching roles.

The *Norms and Standards for Educators* describe the development of the overall professional competences of educators in terms of an overarching concept of the three interconnected competences: **foundational competence**, which underpins action taken (knowing what) and enables teachers to demonstrate knowledge of their subject; **practical competence**, which is the demonstration of the ability to consider a range of possibilities in order to take decisions (knowing how) to facilitate teaching i.e. it is about the performance of the teacher in the classroom; and **reflexive competence**, which is the demonstration of the ability to integrate performance and adaptation (Department of Education, 2000). Reflection enables the teacher to be aware of the limitations of his/her knowledge of the subject matter (foundational competence) and to improve his/her way of teaching (practical competence) (Morrow, 2007). These competences need to be integrated so that educators know *what* to do, *why* it should be done, *when* to do it and *how* to do it in practice (Department of Education, 2006; Fraser, et al., 2005; Parker & Deacon, 2004). Novice teachers need to acquire these competences in order for them to adapt well to the teaching profession.

The challenge that novice teachers face also relates to the insecure nature of teaching itself. Arends & Phurutse (2009) observe that teaching is to a large extent an uncertain practice. They argue that teachers cannot be absolutely confident in advance about how a lesson will develop and what learners will gain from it. While teacher trainees will have been prepared in terms of curriculum guidelines, this does not necessarily guarantee success in teaching. Arends & Phurutse (2009) contend that the uncertainty of teaching practice has to do with the fact that teachers deal with many (and often conflicting), goals at the same time, and this creates significant challenges to all teachers particularly novice ones. They argue that novice teachers found the transition from university teacher trainee to practising teacher difficult. It is important for Initial Teacher Education programmes to keep up with classroom realities, especially for Foundation Phase teachers.

Teacher roles have expanded over the past few years. The fourth role from the seven roles stipulated in the *Norms and Standards for Educators*, is the ‘**community, citizenship and pastoral**’ role. It states that “Within the school, the educator will demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners” (Department of Education, 2000 p.14). Morrow (2007) argues that research in South Africa shows that some teachers now spent more time on pastoral care. This puts more pressure onto novice teachers, who are still trying to adapt to the schooling system. Initial Teacher Education programmes need to provide teacher trainees with a profound understanding of knowledge and provide development in such a way that they are able to deal with school, classroom and community challenges effectively (Morrow, 2007).

Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggests that pre-service teacher education could benefit novice teachers by means of induction programmes, which will build on and broaden their work. This will focus “on laying a basis for the foundation of teaching and preparing novice teachers to learn in and from their practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Fraser et al (2005) found it troubling to observe that in many respects, it seems pre-service and novice teachers are required to carry out the same tasks and roles as experienced teachers. In many instances, novice teachers are expected to adapt into the school system without any recognition that they are still growing in the teaching profession. Darling-Hammond (2000) notes that there is a need for programs that “extend

beyond the confines of the traditional 4-year bachelor's degree" which will collaborate with the schools to provide support for the new professionals and extend the professional development of veteran teachers.

2.4 Conceptual Framework: Teacher Knowledge

Teacher knowledge provides the conceptual framework in this study and a lens with which to engage the data. Teacher knowledge is an appropriate concept to use as a framework in this study since the study seeks to understand the types of knowledge that Foundation Phase teachers say they have gained in the PGCE. Fleisch (2007) states that "researchers have recognised that what teachers 'know' is one of the most important factors that influence schools classrooms and learner performance" (p.123). Grossman (1990) argues that recent research has changed its efforts to clarify in detail the knowledge base of teaching. It would appear that what teachers know is an important element in their being able to carry out their work effectively. Initiatives aimed at improving learners' achievement have also focused on ensuring that teachers possess sound subject knowledge.

Shulman (1987) defines seven categories of teacher knowledge: "knowledge of content; knowledge of pedagogy; knowledge of curriculum; knowledge of learners and learning; knowledge of contexts of schooling; pedagogical content knowledge; and knowledge of educational philosophies, goals and objectives" (p.127). A number of researchers (Adler, Slonimsky, & Reed, 2002; Grossman, 1990; Morrow, 2007; Shulman, 1987; Turner-Bisset, 1999) have generated a number of models of teacher knowledge. While researchers vary in their definitions of different components, this study will focus on Grossman's four general areas of teacher knowledge: "content knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of context" (Grossman, 1990 p.5). Grossman's model of teacher education best captures what I want to address. For example, while Shulman defines seven categories of teacher knowledge, she captures four. Grossman found the pedagogical content knowledge to be a broad category and therefore included curricular knowledge, knowledge of students' understanding and knowledge of instructional strategies, which Shulman identified as separate categories. In the next section, I describe in more detail what these types of knowledge

are, and explain how they may be appropriate for the knowledge needed for Foundation Phase teachers.

2.4.1 Content knowledge (CK)

Reeves and Robinson (2010) argue that the content knowledge is not well-defined for GET teachers. It is important that at the end of the day FP teachers should have a good grasp of content knowledge.

Teachers' knowledge of the content has been shown to be significant by many researchers such as Grossman (1990), Turner-Bisset (1999) and Morrow (2007), to name just a few. Grossman (1990) identifies content knowledge as very crucial for teachers. She describes content knowledge as "referring to knowledge of major facts and concepts within a field and the relationship among them" (1990 p. 6). This is problematic for FP teachers who come to the programme with different degrees. They argue that teachers need to be grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, methods and procedures pertinent to the discipline, learning area or phase of study. Grossman (1990) holds a view that that content knowledge "includes knowledge of the content of a subject area as well as knowledge of the substantive and syntactic structures of the discipline" (p.6). She describes substantive structures of a discipline as different paradigms in a field that affect how the field is organized. "The syntactic structures of a discipline include how knowledge claims are evaluated by members of the discipline" says Grossman (1990 p.7). This view is supported by (Shulman, 1987 & Turner-Bisset, 1999) who contend that substantive knowledge and syntactical knowledge are aspects of content knowledge. Furthermore, Turner-Bisset (1990) suggests that academic disciplines could be usefully depicted as comprising substantive and syntactic elements. Therefore, it is important to note the relationships between knowledge of facts and concepts within a field.

Grossman (1990) found that teachers' knowledge of the content to be taught also influences what and how they teach. Shulman (1986) argues that knowing a subject for teaching involves more than knowing its facts and concepts. Ball et al (2008) note it is important for teachers to be aware of the organizing principles and structure and the rules for instituting what is appropriate to do and say in a field. They maintain that it is not enough for teachers to understand something,

but they must also understand *why* it is so. Furthermore, they expect teachers to understand the significance of a particular topic is to a discipline while another may be rather insignificant.

Since this study focuses on the knowledge and attitudes that the novice Foundation Phase teacher has acquired through the PGCE programme, it is important to look at the content knowledge that FP teachers need to have in preparing them for their roles as FP teachers. Researchers have different views on the content knowledge needed by FP teachers for the learning areas outlined earlier. Moats (2009) argues that “teachers must have considerable knowledge of language structure, reading development, and pedagogy to differentiate instruction for diverse learners” (p.379). Cunningham et al (2004 p.142) recognised “three domains of knowledge in the area of early literacy: Children’s literature, phonological awareness, and phonics”. The phonological awareness and phonics domains have been shown to be critical to reading acquisition. These knowledge domains are particularly significant for those teachers who have learners that need more support in developing early reading skills as a result of problems with language and literacy (Cunning et al, 2004). Teachers must always try to build the language skills of the learners.

Reeves and Robinson (2010) contend that FP teachers need a firm foundation in Literacy, and Numeracy so that they will be able to help young learners acquire a solid foundation in their primary education. “A failure to acquire this foundation will doom them to a lifelong disadvantage” says Reeves and Robinson (2012 p.14). They need to understand the subject matter thoroughly in order to help learners to transmit this knowledge and use it in various contexts. Zimmerman et al, (2007) note that the purpose of teaching the Literacy module to FP student teachers is “to equip them with knowledge and skills to teach and promote language development including reading and writing” (p.25).

However, Reeves and Robinson (2010) argue that the problems originate from the change in the curriculum. They are concerned about the fact that FP content was not prescribed in the outcome-based model that was adopted in South Africa in 2002. This created a sense of uncertainty for the teachers and there was therefore a lack of subject knowledge development. It created problems for Foundation Phase teachers in understanding and articulating the content

knowledge for FP. Feiman-Nemser (2001) notes that new curriculum frameworks and standards documents represent this teaching in the form of subject specific goals and principles. However, this means that in practice it must be worked out by teachers themselves (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Recent research has put forward suggestions with regard to the importance of support that teachers need to attain the disciplinary knowledge necessary to help children, even in the development stages of literacy acquisition. For example, at the foundation phase level, Cunningham et al (2004) found that “a high percentage of first grade teachers serving low-income communities had not mastered the knowledge base necessary for beginning instruction in reading” (Cunningham et al, 2009 p.493). Emphasis needs to be placed on teachers’ employing systematic reading methods in order to benefit early readers: starting with sounds, words, pictures, and then sentences. Knowledge of systematic phonics and how it should be taught should be the focus and the emphasis of the ITE and primary curriculum. As it stands now, the curriculum does not emphasize this.

The NCS (2003) for the Mathematics Learning Area Numeracy states that Mathematics Learning Areas are consolidated into five learning outcomes “(LO1: Numbers, Operations and relationships; LO2: Patterns, functions and algebra; LO3: Space and shape; LO4: Measurement & LO5: Data handling)” (p.12). FP teachers need to have a sound knowledge of the contents of these learning outcomes.

Van de Walle (2004) contends that teaching mathematics effectively requires that teachers need to understand what learners know and need to learn and then challenging and assisting them to learn it well. He argues that learners’ experiences that teachers provide every day in the classroom determine what learners learn. To provide high-quality mathematics education, he claims that

“teachers must (1) understand deeply the mathematics they are teaching; (2) understand how children learn mathematics, including a keen awareness of the individual mathematical development of their own students; (3) select instructional tasks and strategies that will enhance learning” (Van de Walle, 2004 p.3).

Teachers must have a broad education that provides a framework for old learning and facilitates new understanding - and not just a depth of understanding with respect to the particular subjects taught (Grossman, 2004). This view is supported by Reeves & Robinson (2010) who contend that primary teachers also require broader knowledge beyond the grade level that they teach. They argue that “they need knowledge of the scope or trajectory of disciplinary knowledge across the whole of schooling” (Reeves & Robinson, 2010 p. 27).

FP teachers need to demonstrate understanding and appreciation of how young learners construct their knowledge. Teachers also need to see the connection of ideas across fields and to everyday life. This kind of understanding, according to Shulman (1987), provides a foundation for ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ that enables teachers to make ideas accessible to others.

2.4.2 General pedagogical knowledge (GPK)

Turner-Bisset (1999) defines *general pedagogical knowledge* as knowledge about teaching which one gains from practice. It is general in the sense that it is not specific to the teaching of particular subject matter content. Shulman (1987) referred this “type of knowledge to broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter” (p.127). Knowledge and beliefs relating to learning and learners, knowledge of general principles of teaching, knowledge and skills related to classroom management, and knowledge and beliefs about the aims and purposes of education are all incorporated of GPK (Grossman, 1990). Teachers need to be able to discipline learners in a manner that is appropriate. Teachers must have a range of regular practice and strategies for creating procedures in the classroom, managing events in the classroom, facilitating activities, and act in response to learner misbehaviour. Knowledge of teachers regarding classroom management and lesson presentations is integrated with knowledge and beliefs about learners, learning and teaching (Grossman, 1990).

Feiman-Nemser (2001a) suggests that for teachers, pre-service is the “time to start developing a basic repertoire for ‘reform-minded’ teaching” (p.1018). This means that teachers have to be familiar with a range of good curricular materials as well as, - learn several instructional and assessment strategies to enhance learners’ understanding. She states that “the focus should be not on variety for its own sake, but on helping teacher candidates figure out when, where, how and

why to use particular approaches” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a p.1018-1019). While these apply to FP teachers, they also need general pedagogic knowledge of facilitating learning through play.

2.4.3 Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)

The concept of Pedagogical content knowledge was first introduced by Lee Shulman (1986) and his colleagues in their thinking about teacher knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge is specialised knowledge needed for teaching the subject. Shulman (1987) identified pedagogical content knowledge as

“it represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems or issues are organized, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 127).

It embodies the amalgamation of content and pedagogy into understanding the organization and representation of particular topics for teaching (Shulman, 1987). An example would be the way a Mathematics teacher would teach fractions. Ball et al (2008) claim that this theory was provoked by the fact that there is content knowledge unique to teaching a kind of subject-matter-specific professional knowledge. They argue that the continuing appeal of the notion of pedagogical content knowledge is that it bridges content knowledge and the practice of teaching. Shulman’s work has been a starting point in this field to emphasize the importance of a teacher trainee to understand difference between subject content knowledge, curricular knowledge and the category of pedagogic content knowledge (Shulman, 1987).

The effect of the notion of pedagogical content knowledge is explained by numerous educationists who have taken on the idea, required to validate its significance in teaching, restructured it and evaluated it. Examples of assimilation of the idea are found in the work of Grossman (1990) and Turner-Bisset (1999), to name a few. Grossman (1990) defines pedagogical content knowledge as composed of four central components. The first component consists of “knowledge and beliefs about the purposes for teaching a subject at different grade levels” (Grossman, 1990 p.8). Teachers’ objectives for teaching a particular subject matter need to mirror the notions of teaching a subject. The second component of PCK includes “knowledge of students’ understanding, conceptions, and misconceptions of particular topics in a subject

matter” (Grossman, 1990 p.8). Teachers need to have prior understanding of the knowledge of learners regarding a topic that might be confusing. A third component of PCK “curricular knowledge which includes knowledge of curriculum materials available for teaching particular subject matter, as well as knowledge about both the horizontal and vertical curricular for a subject” (Grossman, 1990 p.8). Teachers draw upon the knowledge of material and subject matter dealt with in a particular grade as well as the organization of the curriculum. They consider also what learners already know and what they could learn in the future. The final component of PCK includes “knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching particular topics” (Grossman, 1990 p.9). Teachers draw on their knowledge of using various teaching strategies for teaching a particular subject matter. Experienced teachers may have more knowledge of this than novice teachers.

Shulman (1987) argued that it was necessary for a teacher to have knowledge of subject matter and general pedagogical strategies. However, these are not sufficient for capturing the knowledge of good teachers. To capture the complicated ways in which teachers think about how particular content should be taught, he argues for ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ as the “content knowledge that deals with the teaching process, including the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others” (Shulman, 1987; Banks et al, 2005). If teachers were to do well, they would have to tackle both aspects (of content and pedagogy) simultaneously, by embodying “the aspect of content most germane to its teachability” (Shulman, 1986). Likewise, Morrow (2007) notes that the teacher needs to know how to make the content accessible to the learners she is teaching, and this requires an articulated conceptual understanding of the content.

Cunningham et al (2004), contend that although many researchers have studied pedagogical practices in literacy and a great deal of theoretical literacy practices have been discussed there is very little empirical data on the disciplinary knowledge teachers possess in the field of reading and how this disciplinary knowledge is linked to practice. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 2002) for the Language Learning Area comprises of “six Learning Outcomes: listening; speaking; reading and viewing; writing; thinking and reasoning; and language structure and use” (p.6-7). PCK for FP teachers would mean that they are able to

teach with all the six learning outcomes in mind and that if they possess knowledge of children's literature, phoneme awareness, and phonics, then they should be able to provide instruction in phonemic awareness (UKZN, 2011a). They should be able to teach phonics to learners so that they will be able to recognise and say the sound that a letter or a group of letters (blend) makes, which is an important skill because it is one of the building blocks of reading, spelling and writing.

Effective Foundation Phase teaching relies on teachers' understanding of Numeracy and what learners know and what they need to know in order to structure learning opportunities appropriate to their needs, to support and encourage their learning. Different learners learn in different ways and teachers have to be conscious of this as they prepare teaching activities. The Numeracy teacher needs to have a wide range of teaching strategies that s/he can use effectively to ensure that all learners learn successfully, particularly those with barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2003). The NCS states that the distinctive qualities and scope of the Maths Learning Area are consolidated into five learning outcomes (LO1: Numbers, Operations and relationships; LO2: Patterns, functions and algebra; LO3: Space and shape; LO4: Measurement & LO5: Data handling). Therefore the Foundation Phase teacher needs to provide learners with opportunities to work with number cards, number charts, geometric patterns, numeric patterns, recognising and describing shapes and objects (UKZN, 2011b). The teacher should, therefore, use a variety of materials when teaching Numeracy. PCK for Numeracy also includes knowledge about the common mistakes made by FP learners and how to address these.

Grossman (1990) holds the view that teachers construct their knowledge of a subject from a variety of sources. Classroom teaching affords teachers experience of teaching and helps them to progress in the development of pedagogical content knowledge.

2.4.4 Knowledge of educational context (KEC)

According to Grossman (1990) teachers build upon their understanding of the particular contexts in which they teach. She contends that teachers' knowledge should be context-specific so that it will be beneficial for classroom practice. Therefore, it must be adapted to their particular learners

and the difficulties of their environments. According to Grossman (1990) knowledge of context includes:

“knowledge of the districts in which teachers work, including the opportunities, expectations, and constraints posed by the districts; knowledge of the school setting, including the school “culture”, departmental guidelines, and other contextual factors at the school level that affect instruction; and knowledge of specific students and communities, and the students’ backgrounds, families, particularly strengths, weaknesses, and interests (Grossman, 1990 p.9).

Turner-Bisset (1999) contends that teaching contexts have a major impact on teaching performance, and that there are a variety of contextual issues that affect progress and classroom performance. She notes that

“these included the type and size of school; the catchment area; the class size; the extent and quality of support for beginning teachers; the amount of feedback teachers receive on their performance; the quality of relationships in the school; and the expectations and attitudes of the headteacher” (p.46).

A high proportion of teachers in South Africa work in dire conditions. They teach children who experience many difficulties as a result of poverty and other unfavourable conditions. Morrow (2007) maintains that we need to consider the conditions under which South African schoolteachers work:

The HIV prevalence rates, the Poverty index, the levels of adult illiteracy and widespread unemployment, the lack of functioning and maintained school buildings and equipment, the failure of the delivery of stationery and books, the breakdown of school feeding schemes, the increasing linguistic and other diversities of learners, never mind the levels of gang-related activities are indicators of harsh and inescapable realities faced by many schoolteachers on a daily basis (p.96).

The underlying assumption of this position is that prospective teachers need to be well prepared for their roles, including the ‘community, citizenship and pastoral role’ as stipulated in the *Norms and Standards for Educators*. Feiman-Nemser (2001) argues that “prospective teachers

must develop a pedagogical stance based on knowledge of child development and learning” (p.1018). She also acknowledges the fact that more and more teachers find themselves teaching learners whose socioeconomic conditions differ distinctly from their own. Most teachers are aware that there is a need to develop the tools and disposition to learn about learners, their families, and communities and to build on this knowledge in teaching and learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). They recognise that they must do more than teaching to support learners with different needs. The South African context provides children with many challenges. They are faced with poverty; some are orphans, some are affected by or infected with HIV and some live with family members other than their parents; with grandmothers, for example. Ramdutt (2010) notes that circumstances surrounding poverty affects children emotionally and places constraints on the possibilities for meaningful participation in learning. This statement indicates that teachers are required to go beyond teaching the subjects to demonstrate acts of caring that show they are aware of the problems of learners. “Teachers therefore have to take on the responsibility of not only delivering the curriculum but playing the role of a social worker” (Ramdutt, 2010 p.16).

2.5 Conclusion

This literature review looked at the current initial teacher training programmes in South Africa, the BEd (an integrated professional degree with specialisations for a particular phase) and a general degree followed by a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. For South African teachers to implement good quality education, strong Initial Teacher Education programmes are an important basis for teacher competence.

In this chapter I have shown that the concept of teacher knowledge was appropriate in order to understand the types of knowledge identified by Foundation Phase teachers as having been learned in the PGCE programme. Since I wanted to understand how teachers acquired the knowledge, it was important to look at the concept of teacher learning. The fact that novice teachers struggle with adjusting into the context of teaching is one of the driving forces behind the motivation for this research. In the next chapter I discuss the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study explores the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired by Foundation Phase (FP) teachers by means of the KwaZulu-Natal Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme. It aims to understand the kinds of FP teacher knowledge teachers say that they acquired from the programme as well as from their first degrees. The study also explores the experiences of FP teachers in their early years of teaching in order to get a sense if the PGCE programme prepared them adequately for their roles as teachers.

In this chapter I describe the research design and methodology employed in this study. I begin with a discussion of the paradigm, approach and methodology used in this research; the sources of data and sampling and data collection methods utilized. Information about the participants I selected and the description of the documents used as data source is also discussed. The chapter concludes by touching on ethical issues, the notion of validity and reliability and data analysis.

3.2 Research paradigm

The study is located in an interpretivist research paradigm with its significance on participants' experience and interpretation of events. The interpretive paradigm supports the belief that reality is created by subjective perception, therefore predictions of research outcomes cannot be made. According to Henning et al (2004), the interpretive paradigm seeks to yield descriptive analysis and emphasise "deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena (p.21). This is in line with the focus of this study as its aim is to obtain an understanding of the perceptions of novice Foundation Phase teachers. Particularly, this study focuses on the understanding of graduates of the PGCE of their acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes in use in their classrooms.

As outlined in Chapter One, this study aims to answer the key question: To what extent do Foundation Phase teachers think the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education programme adequately prepared them for their roles as Foundation Phase teachers?

The key two research questions this study aims to answer are:

1. What knowledge, skills and attitudes do Foundation Phase teachers consider important for their work?
2. How do novice Foundation Phase teachers believe they acquired the knowledge they are using in their classrooms?

As an interpretivist researcher, I aimed to get a deep understanding of the perspectives of novice FP teachers. Nieuwenhuis (2010) argues that “the ultimate aim of interpretivist research is to offer a perspective of a situation and to analyse the situation under study to provide insight into the way in which a particular group of people make sense of their situation or the phenomena they encounter” (2010 p.60). The interpretive paradigm is “characterised by a concern for individual, aims to understand from within the subjective world of human experiences” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2009 p.21). A group of novice teachers who have completed the PGCE FP programme were chosen to get an understanding of the ways in which the programme had prepared them for their roles as Foundation Phase teachers.

Interpretivists assume that reality is socially constructed. Henning et al (2004) contend that the “foundational assumption of interpretivists is that most of our knowledge is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents and other artefacts” (p.21). They argue that “enquiry is always value laden and that such values inevitably influence the framing, focusing and conducting of research” (Henning, et al., 2004 p.21). This statement brings about all aspects of this study. “Because of its emphasis on created or intentional reality and its focus on discovering the ‘multiple perspectives of all the players in a social setting’”, interpretivist research is appropriate for providing an opportunity for primary teachers to voice out issues affecting them in primary schools and as professionals within the education system. The interpretive research was employed in this study, to explore the experiences of novice FP teachers in their first years of teaching. Through interviews, descriptions of their roles as novice FP teachers have been generated. These descriptions

provided considerable data from which perceptions regarding teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes could be identified in themes and categories. These could be used to inform the Higher Education institutions and also for on-going skills development of educators teaching in Foundation Phase.

I tried to maintain some distance between myself and the participants in the process of conducting this research. This proved to be difficult, as I was the one conducting the research. As Henning et al (2004) rightly put it; I was the ‘methodologist-in-action’ - the idea of the researcher detach from the subject of the research is not in sync with interpretive philosophy (Henning, et al., 2004). As I was studying individual perception and experience, I was using my human mind with its own particular values and social construction to do so. It was impossible to separate myself entirely from what was being investigated. As a researcher, I was the instrument through which the data was collected and analysed.

The interpretive paradigm commonly points to the use of qualitative research methods, both in collecting and in analysing the data. In this study, employing a qualitative orientation was well suited to the research. Qualitative methods specifically enabled me to gain an understanding of perceptions, knowledge skills and competences of the novice Foundation Phase teachers under study.

3.3 Qualitative research approach

I chose to use a qualitative research approach because of its emphasis on the quality and depth of the information provided. The study therefore provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of teachers’ experiences. Nieuwenhuis (2010) suggests that qualitative research is often considered as research that attempts to gather rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the aim of developing an understanding of what is being studied. He posits that “one of the greatest strengths of the qualitative approach is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions it yields” (Nieuwenhuis, 2010 p.60).

I studied the perspectives of six Foundation Phase teachers who had completed the PGCE FP course at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and were teaching in primary schools. Half of the

teachers chosen were teaching at rural schools and the other at urban schools. This gave some evidence on how context shaped their teaching experiences.

As this study involved only a few research subjects, interviews proved to be the most suitable research instrument. Interview questions were developed to guide the gathering of relevant data.

3.4 Sampling

“Qualitative research is based generally on non-probability and purposive sampling rather than probability of random sampling approaches” (Nieuwenhuis, 2010 p.79). A purposive sampling method was employed to select the participants, as the participants selected were the only group of students who had completed the PGCE FP programme.

In selecting teachers these steps were followed:

- A letter was written to the Deputy Dean to request access to the students’ records.
- A list of students who passed the PGCE FP course in 2008 and 2009 was requested from the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) office at UKZN.
- Purposeful sampling was employed to select the participant.
- Contact was made with Foundation Phase educators who had begun their teaching careers during 2009 or 2010.

3.5 Profiling the Novice Foundation Phase Teachers

In the following section I present the profile of the participants involved in this study. All the participants in this study were females. The novice FP teachers in the study hold an undergraduate degree and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualification. The intention is to describe their experiences in the early years in the teaching profession after completing the PGCE programme.

3.5.1 Foundation Phase Teacher 1 (Nomusa)

Nomusa is a female teacher who has been teaching for over a year. She teaches Grade 1 at a township school which has limited resources. She has 34 learners in her class. She obtained her bachelor’s degree at the University of Zululand and majored in Industrial Psychology and IsiZulu. She is currently studying towards an Hons Degree in Psychology with UNISA. The

interview took place at her friend's house as they were studying together. The interview lasted for about an hour.

Nomusa did not intend to become a FP teacher, but enrolled in the course because of the majors in her initial degree. She revealed that she is now passionate about teaching young learners because she loves them, as is evident in her statement:

I love children. I think that is why I enjoy it the most because I love spending time with children and talking to them.

3.5.2 Foundation Phase Teacher 2 (Vuvu)

Vuvu is a female teacher and has been teaching for almost two years. She teaches at a school situated in a rural area and has 32 learners in her class. There are very limited resources in her school. Vuvu completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication at UNISA and her majors were Industrial Psychology and Communication. My meeting with Vuvu took place at a restaurant after negotiating a venue that was convenient for her. I picked her up from where a taxi had dropped her and drove to the restaurant which was near the taxi rank. This was convenient for her because she was going to catch a taxi after our meeting.

Her interest at first was in a career in journalism rather than teaching. She developed an interest in teaching while she was doing the PGCE programme at UKZN and now enjoys it. She expressed her enjoyment as a teacher of the intellectual growth that developed when in the teaching profession:

But when you started doing it you developed interest. You developed interest in teaching and you could see that you will be able to apply what you've been taught. So it develops interest to teach. You seem to forget that you wanted to be a journalist in the first place.

What I liked most about teaching is that your brain doesn't just relax. There are things that always challenge you. You need to know the approach that you will use if you teach a certain concept. If that doesn't work, then you will use a different method. You don't just relax, it's challenging, and one learns so many things.

3.5.3 Foundation Phase Teacher 3 (Gcina)

Gcina is a very young teacher and has one year of teaching experience. She is teaching Grade 1 in an urban ex-Model C school which has adequate resources. There are 37 learners in her class. Gcina obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her majors were Sociology and Psychology. She is currently studying towards an Honours Degree in Psychology.

The interview, which lasted for about an hour, took place on a Saturday in my car at a shopping centre parking lot. She was very keen to do the interview. From the outset, she displayed enthusiasm, warmth and friendliness. She arrived a bit late for our meeting because of the Prize giving day that was taking place at her school, which had taken longer than expected. Upon my meeting with Gcina, she was blissful about the achievement of her learners on that day.

Like today at prize giving. Seeing children getting their reports and certificates, and those who've passed. It's like, you know, just seeing them cross that milestone from being little babies and now going to Grade 2. It's wonderful.

3.5.4 Foundation Phase Teacher 4 (Happy)

Happy is teaches Grade 3 at a primary school in the rural area. She indicated that even though the school where she teaches is in the rural area, it was well-resourced, with a library, computer laboratory and other facilities. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree at UNISA, with Communication and Psychology as her majors. There are 42 learners in her class. The interview with Happy was conducted in my car at the parking lot of another shopping centre in Durban. This arrangement suited us both perfectly, as she felt that it would save time instead of sitting at a noisy restaurant and where we would have to order drinks and there would be disturbances. Happy pointed out that she taught at High school before she enrolled for the PGCE programme. She switched to the Foundation Phase because her majors in the initial degree did not qualify her to enrol for the PGCE Senior Phase of FET Phase.

Teaching young children makes me feel that I have an input in the child's life. Children are really suffering. If I see a child that is hungry, and be able to give that child food. There are other things that make me happy that I contribute towards the life of the child over and above teaching him.

3.5.5 Foundation Phase Teacher 5 (Phumi)

Phumi has been teaching for over a year at a primary school in a semi-urban area. She teaches Grade 1 at school with standard resources. She has 43 learners in her class. Phumi holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and Honours degree, which she obtained at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In her bachelor's degree she majored in IsiZulu and Legal Studies. She is now studying towards her Master of Education degree.

The interview which lasted for about an hour took place at the UKZN Edgewood Campus at her request, as she had a job interview with the Language Department there. We sat in one of the corridors where there were tables and chairs. It was quiet as the university had not opened for the academic year.

Phumi also enjoys teaching young learners:

Their experiences, seeing them succeed. You get that pride and joy that this is what I've done and I've achieved something good and then at the end of the year you see parents coming to say thank you, giving you presents and stuff. I'd say that's enjoyable.

3.5.6 Foundation Phase Teacher 6 (Lulu)

FPT 6 teaches Grade 1 at a rural school. She teaches at a well-built school in the rural area which has limited resources. She has 30 learners in her class. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her majors were Sociology and Criminology. She had taught for over ten months. The interview with her which lasted over an hour took place at a restaurant in one of the hotels in Durban. This was convenient for her as the public transport was easily accessible in the CBD area. It was a bit noisy, but we managed to complete the interview.

She shared her sentiments about the joy she exudes when teaching young children.

I realised that I enjoyed teaching the young learners. So far, I'm enjoying it. I will enjoy it for the rest of my life. It fulfils me to make a difference at young learners' lives."

Many participants had not initially chose Foundation Phase as their career of choice.

3.6 Data collection methods

3.6.1 Interviews

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews which were recorded digitally. Nieuwenhuis (2010) argues that semi-structured interview schedules define the line of inquiry. He notes that the researcher must pay special attention to the responses of the participant so that new emerging lines of inquiry connected to the phenomenon being studied can be recognised and explored. Probing questions were asked depending on the value of information given by the interviewer to the research questions. Questions of clarity and/ or elaboration were asked when the need arose. The interview schedules were planned and developed in advance. This involved translating research objectives into the questions which made up the main body of the interview schedule. This was done in such a way that the questions adequately reflected the research aims of study. A variety of questions were asked, including experience and behaviour questions; opinion and value questions and feeling questions and knowledge questions (Nieuwenhuis, 2010) (See Appendix D, the interview schedule). Leading questions were avoided. A scenario was also presented to the participants, to allow them to give a descriptive view of their teaching experiences thus far. During the interviews, participants were asked the same questions in the same order. The interviews provided evidence of the knowledge and competences gained by the teachers during the PGCE programme that had prepared them to become Foundation Phase teachers.

The interviewees articulated their lived experiences as novice FP teachers. This study notes the particular strength of the interview, that if you want to know something about people's activities, the best way of finding out is to ask them. Nieuwenhuis (2010) argues that, "the aim is always to obtain rich descriptive data that will help to understand the participant's construction of knowledge and social reality" (p.87). According to Cohen et al (2009) the interview is a "flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard" (p.349). While non-verbal communication is important, the researcher needs also to use his/her own non-verbal cues, such as maintaining eye contact and keeping an upright posture. Every attempt was made by the researcher to follow these guidelines.

Interviews need to be salient and relevant to the interview participants and circumstance (Cohen, et al., 2009). The interviews were held at different places after school hours because the teachers

come from different schools. The place for the interview was chosen by the interviewee. In most cases a restaurant was used and in some cases the interviews took place in my car to avoid interruptions. Four of the interviewees preferred to answer in IsiZulu and two responded in English.

The researcher transcribed the recordings very carefully to ensure that the information transcribed reflected exactly what had been said during the interviews. The major advantage of an interview is that it is flexible and it is possible for either the interviewer or the respondent to ask questions for clarification. In cases where the interviewees responded in IsiZulu, the interviewer translated the interviews into English. For comments and verification purposes, the researcher then asked the participants to check interview transcripts. When asked how these should be sent to them, four participants requested that the interview transcripts be posted and two participants requested that they be sent via email. Only one participant responded with comments via email.

The interviews were the only sources of data. To gain more insight on what the Foundation Phase teachers gained in the PGCE programme, curriculum documents and course outlines for the three learning areas in the Foundation Phase were used as sources of data. Interview instruments were developed to guide the gathering of relevant data. The research instruments were designed in such a way that they covered both the evaluation and exploratory aspects of the research.

The interview instruments addressed the following:

- profile of the participants;
- novice teachers' credentials;
- their perceptions about their knowledge
- novice teachers' assessment practices; and
- opinions about their teacher training
- experiences in their first year(s) of teaching

In addition to the above, the research participants were also given the opportunity to raise other matters relating to the skills, knowledge and competencies of novice teachers.

3.6.2 Documents

Documents are helpful in rendering more visible the phenomena under study (Prior, 2003). Cohen et al (2009) argue that documents must be studied in their context, in order to understand their meaning at the time.

The following documents were used:

- National Curriculum Statements
- Foundations for Learning (DoE)
- UKZN Course outlines for FP modules (Literacy, Numeracy & Life Skills) and PGCE handbook

The documents were used in this study as data source to fill in gaps and served to corroborate the evidence from other sources. More clarity was needed as to whether the participants had indeed gained the knowledge, skills and attitudes they had claimed to have acquired during the PGCE FP programme.

3.7 Analysis

Teacher knowledge as described by Grossman (1990) was used as a conceptual framework in this study. According to Cohen et al (2007) “qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, while noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (p.461). This view is also supported by Niewenhuis (2010) who states that, “qualitative data tries to establish how participants make meaning of specific knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon” (p. 99).

Data was analysed deductively using Grossman’s (1990) teacher knowledge domains. This process involved summarising what the participants said in terms of common words and phrases. It also involved identifying themes and patterns that were emerging in an attempt to answer my research questions. I set out to interpret, describe the interview data while discovering patterns and commonalities, differences and similarities (Niewenhuis, 2010). I fitted the analysis procedures with the methodological position of my study and consistently and coherently managed the analysis (and interpretation) process according to the principles of the study design.

3.8 Ethical Issues

It is essential to understand the ethical and legal responsibilities of conducting research given that most educational research deals with human beings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Conducting research in an ethical manner improves the quality of research and contributes to its trustworthiness (Rule & John, 2011). Ethical clearance was obtained through appropriate channels at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (see certificate as Appendix B).

Each teacher that participated in this study was given an informed consent form which explained to the subjects the whole purpose of the study and the usefulness of their contributions to the study. The ethical issues were discussed with the teachers before they completed consent forms. This form can be found in Appendix C.

The research was undertaken in an ethical manner to ensure that the rights of the participants were protected, their autonomy respected, anonymity was ensured and that the research study would not harm participants. To ensure confidentiality, participants will be given pseudonyms in the presentation of the findings.

3.9 Trustworthiness in qualitative research

For any qualitative research “trustworthiness is imperative. Credibility, applicability, dependability and confirmability are identified as key criteria of trustworthiness and these are constructed to parallel the conventional criteria or inquiry of internal and external validity, reliability and neutrality respectively” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Lincoln & Guba (1985) claim that since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is adequate to establish the latter [reliability]. Validity in this study has been ensured through:

- Selection of an appropriate methodology for answering the research questions. I felt that the methodology used would be able to answer the research questions.
- The interview responses provide a deeper understanding on what knowledge, skills and attitudes do the FP novice teachers considered important for their work and how they believed they acquired the knowledge they are using in the classroom.

- Selection of appropriate instruments for gathering data. The interview responses provided a deeper understanding on how the PGCE programme has helped them or has not helped them.
- Teachers were allowed to use whichever language they were comfortable with, so that language use did not limit their responses to questions and thereby hinder the results of the study.

In general, it is accepted that by engaging numerous methods of data collection, in this case interviews and document analysis will lead to trustworthiness.

3.10 Limitations of the study

While qualitative studies allow for the collection of rich descriptive data and emphasise quality and depth of the information provided, it also has some limitations. This study was on a small scale because few participants were interviewed. Results therefore may not be generalized. It is also gender biased towards female participants. This might have an impact of the teacher dispositions emphasized by participants. The purpose of the study was to provide a rich understanding and deep insight which can inform bigger quantitative studies in the future.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, research design and methodology were discussed. The interpretive paradigm was discussed as appropriate, since I needed a research approach that was helpful in understanding people's meaning. I chose the qualitative research approach which was sensitive to teachers' subjectivity in the context of the first years of their teaching experiences. Having discussed the techniques used to gather data in this study and the methods that were used to analysed the data, the next chapter presents the findings and discussion.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the analysis of findings from the interviews I held with novice Foundation Phase (FP) teachers in relation to the knowledge, skills and attitudes they considered important for their work, and describes how they believed those were acquired. The data presented are obtained mainly from the interview transcripts excerpts. Course outlines obtained from the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) – Early Childhood Development (ECD) discipline and the Department of Education (DoE) curriculum documents were used to get a clear understanding of the intended curricula in learning area specialisation: Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. However, literature has already confirmed that teachers require different kinds of knowledge in order to perform their role as teachers.

As discussed in Chapter 3, each FP teacher participant in this study holds an undergraduate degree and a PGCE FP. They enrolled for the PGCE FP as they did not have majors in any school subjects and therefore could not study to become teachers in other phases like the Senior Phase or the FET Phase. Their majors in their undergraduate degree were courses such as Sociology and Psychology. Novice FP teachers in my sample highlighted different kinds of knowledge that they thought important for FP teachers.

In the following section, I discuss the themes which emerged from the data in order to answer the following questions:

1. What knowledge, skills and attitudes do Foundation Phase teachers consider important for their work?
2. How do novice Foundation Phase teachers believe they acquired the knowledge they are using in their classrooms?

These two questions feed into the key research question of this study, which is: To what extent do Foundation Phase teachers think the Post Graduate Certificate in Education programme adequately prepared them for their roles as Foundation Phase teachers?

4.2 What knowledge, skills and attitudes do Foundation Phase teachers consider important for their work and how did they acquire the knowledge they are using in the classroom?

To address the two critical questions, I will present data that indicates what the Foundation Phase teachers believed was important in order to teach this phase and the different sources from which they drew this information.

In the following section I describe the knowledge and skills and attitudes that emerge from the teacher interviews. The teachers identified the following kinds of knowledge to be important for Foundation Phase teachers, which I list in order of what they considered to be most important:

1. knowledge of the background of learners
2. teacher attributes
3. teaching strategies for Literacy and Numeracy
4. planning, assessment and classroom management
5. knowledge of content

4.2.1 Knowledge of the background of learners

Home background, parental involvement and emotional support of learners

All six participants foregrounded as important the fact that FP teachers need to have a thorough knowledge of the background of the learners. This seemed to be the most important knowledge to them, as they talked about it more than other types of knowledge.

The respondents felt that they needed to understand their learners in order to teach effectively. For example, they talked about teaching children who were orphans and who still needed motherly love, because most of them are raised by their grandmothers and did not get enough love at home.

Gcina who teaches at an ex-model C school, stressed that it is important to possess knowledge of the background of the different learners in your classroom as this helps one to relate to individual learners because they have different needs. She said:

These children vary and they come from very different backgrounds you can't relate to one as you'd do to all of them you know...

She contended that as FP teachers, they have to draw upon the particular context in which they teach, and must adapt to each specific setting and to individual learners. As a novice FP teacher, it was a bit difficult for her to interact with learners from different backgrounds.

Teachers in this study also felt that they needed to support these learners in many different ways. One teacher spoke about the challenges of dealing with children whose families are not able to buy them things. Nomusa said:

Some you find they don't have the uniform and they wear clothes that they wear at home. I had to give one learner my child's uniform because he did not have one.

Learners in Foundation Phase are still learning about themselves and coming to terms with who they are as individuals (SAIDE, 2010). Nomusa said:

...you also need to give them space to do things on their own. Especially Grade 1 learners because they are still trying to find their feet.

Absenteeism was raised by one teacher as a concern in teaching Foundation Phase learners. Lulu felt that if parents were involved in children's education, they would value the importance of education and ensure that learners do not miss school. She talked about absenteeism and how it affected learners in her class.

Absenteeism is very high. Sometimes the child will be absent from school because he has to look after his siblings when the parent has gone to the clinic. When they have been absent from school for a long time, say for a week, when they come back they don't know anything because no one helps them at home. Then I have to start afresh and follow them. I could see that if they had come everyday it would have been better.

Lulu believed that in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the FP, parents should participate in the process by helping their children with school work and by supporting them to do well at school. There is large literature that supports this position (Greene & Tichenor, 2003; Ngidi & Qwabe, 2006; Sreekanth, 2010). The support and involvement of

parents in the child's learning ensure more successful engagement with materials and with learning. Lulu felt that parents' involvement in their learners' education and their understanding of the importance of not missing school could make a huge difference in the improvement of learner performance. She said:

When they have been absent from school for a long time, say for a week, when they come back they don't know anything because no one helps them at home. Then I have to start afresh and follow them. I could see that if they had come everyday it would have been better. The other thing is that parents do not help children at home. We know that in their homes they only have grandmothers who are illiterate.

Some of the learners whom these teachers teach, live with their grandmothers. Sometimes it is difficult for grandmothers to help children with their homework as they are illiterate. The teachers need to understand this and find ways of helping the learners in this situation. These teachers felt that they needed to be equipped to deal with these kinds of learners.

Nutrition, health and safety

Four of the six Foundation Phase teacher participants talked about poverty, which was identified as a serious challenge in teaching young learners. These teachers knew that if learners are hungry, they are unable to concentrate. They felt obliged to take some responsibility for dealing with the problem. They think it is important to know about socio-economic backgrounds of the learners. Nomusa explained,

Some of them would come to school hungry and you find that they do not have even the energy to listen to you. Then you'll ask them what is wrong. The child will tell you that he is hungry. Who do you live with? I live with my grandmother. It is really difficult.

Likewise, Vuvu stated:

Sometimes you have to give them something from your own lunch so that they can concentrate.

The Department of Education introduced a feeding scheme in schools in order to provide learners with food, especially for those that had no food at home. While this proved to have a positive impact, two of the Foundation Phase teachers needed to ensure that their learners actually got the food that was provided. Nomusa said:

We have a feeding scheme at school. So, as a teacher you will have to do something. Here at school, the grade R teachers dish up for their grade R learners. Then the grades 1 to grade 7 learners queue for their food. So, if your learner tells you that he did not get food then you will need to go to ask from Grade Rs.

Vuvu also felt that the feeding scheme was important:

So as time went on, the feeding scheme was introduced at the school. Then it became better, that even though a child will leave home hungry but he will eat at school and in that way he will be able to concentrate.

Some of the learners really benefitted from the feeding scheme. As these teachers have indicated, in some cases, this is the only meal the learners will have for the day.

These teachers became aware of a wide range of issues affecting the learners and felt that they needed to be prepared for the kinds of learners that they were going to find in schools and not just for the ideal school situation. They became aware that teachers need to love children, need to be compassionate, need to 'go the extra mile' in caring for the learners. The respondents were also faced with the issue of how to respond to these learners. They believed that a Foundation Phase teacher needs to do the things they are doing.

The findings revealed that teachers in this study acquired the knowledge of the background of the learners from the PGCE programme. All six Foundation Phase teachers in this study indicated that, to some extent, their initial degree *did* help them by preparing them for their roles as teachers. The respondents also got some of their knowledge from other teachers and from their work environment.

Lulu's majors were Sociology and Criminology. She explained that the first degree helped her to overcome challenges. In her first degree, she regarded Sociology as the most helpful for her teaching:

If you come across challenges you are able to overcome them because you know what you've learnt. So it helped as a step forward. Especially, Sociology, which deals with human behaviour.

She reckoned that she was able to overcome learners' problems. She stated that she was able to understand social problems, like being aware that there are learners with HIV in your classroom.

She said:

For example, during break time that he [the learner] needs to take ARVs. You understand very well that it is not only about just learning but also about what's happening in the lives of the learners.

Phumi explained that she gained knowledge of the history of education and of the different roles that they have to play as teachers which involved more than just teaching in the PGCE programme.

Another interesting part [In the Core modules] is the seven roles of a teacher that one needs to be aware that in the classroom you will be expected to do more than just being an educator.

When these teachers completed the PGCE programme, they needed to have acquired knowledge of the background of the learners, so that they will be able to deal with the realities of school life. To prepare for this, the importance of the different roles of the educator could have been emphasized, in particular the ‘community, citizenship and pastoral role’ of the educator. The *Norms and Standards for Educators* ((Department of Education, 2000a) describes the roles of a teacher as “learning mediator; interpreter and designer of learning programme and materials; researcher and lifelong learner; community, citizenship and pastoral role; assessor; and learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist” (p.13-14). These roles are “meant to serve as a *description* of what it means to be a competent teacher” (Morrow, 2007 p. 97).

This knowledge of learners’ background that these FP teachers emphasize could be related theoretically to Grossman’s “knowledge of educational context”. As discussed in Chapter 2, Grossman (1990) refers to this knowledge of the context as

knowledge of the districts in which teachers work, including the opportunities, expectations, and constraints posed by the districts; knowledge of the school setting, including the school ‘culture’, departmental guidelines, and other contextual factors at the school level that affect instruction; and knowledge of specific students and communities, and the students’ backgrounds, families, particularly strengths, weaknesses, and interests (p.9).

4.2.2 Teacher attributes

This section deals with the personal traits that the Foundation Phase teachers felt were important in dealing with young learners. Results from the data revealed that FP teachers spoke about a number of personality attributes like, patience, caring and confidence, that they relied on and used when teaching young learners. Based on their experiences as novice teachers, what surfaced as important to them is the *kind of person* a FP teacher should be. Generally, in the South African context Foundation Phase is about caring and nurturing. Jansen (2001) notes that in

South African classrooms, teachers deal with emotional trauma of learners with various troubles. When asked about the kinds of knowledge that a FP teacher needs to possess, the participants talked about patience, for example. This provided a challenge for me as a researcher, as I was trying to understand what *knowledge* they felt was important. When I asked questions about the characteristics of a good FP teacher, I would get responses like, “I love the children”. This seems to be something specific to Foundation Phase, where teachers play their roles as caregivers and giving children opportunities to develop holistically.

The role of being a mother

Four of the teachers felt that it was important to be a mother figure to the young learners. In this instance, Nomusa saw herself as playing the role of the mother, therefore she sets out to love and support her learners. She described her role as follows:

You have to be a mother, a teacher and everything to them. So you have to fill in that gap and be a mother. I had to give one learner my child's uniform because he did not have one.

The role of being a mother also seemed to be important for Phumi. She felt that as a FP teacher, she needed to provide love, as some learners do not get enough love from their parents. She said,

You're going to be a parent, you are going to be a friend, you've got to be a mother because some of them they do have parents but they don't get enough love.

Phumi said,

So you are more than a teacher to these children. That's what I have realised. I think I have played my part because during the holidays I have invited two kids to come over to spend some time with me at home because I could see that they are not getting enough love and care from parents.

Four of the teachers talked about learners whose parents are absent, and how problematic this was for them. Happy explained:

In our school we have children who do not have mothers and fathers, who are orphans. Some of them even write letters and ask you to be their mother. So, teaching young learners make you really feel that you are the parent.

Lulu said,

The sons and daughters [learners' parents] have left home to work in the cities and have left their children with grandmothers.

Two of the teachers felt that they played the role of a mother to the learners there were

teaching. Because Foundation Phase learners are still young, the participants felt that the children were at the age where they still need their mothers, and so, said Nomsa,

... you have to fill in that gap and be a mother. You have to be a mother, a teacher and everything to them.

These statements highlight how Foundation Phase teachers viewed their roles as parents. They also felt the needed to take over the role of the mother once the child is at school. For example, if the learner does not have a uniform, the teacher feels obliged to get that learner a uniform. By filling the gap, the teacher also takes into consideration that some learners do not have mothers; therefore she needs to fill that gap and be a mother to those learners. They felt that they had be a mother figure because the learners are at that age where they still very dependent on their mothers; and FP teachers need to relate to them in that way. Teachers felt that teaching in the FP makes you feel like a parent because the learners are still very young. They think this is necessary to the creation of a safe and supportive environment in which the young learners' growth is nurtured. Feeling safe and supported contribute to confident, outgoing youngsters and affects the way they learn.

Patience, empathy and love

Gcina and Nomsa indicated that in carrying out their roles as FP teachers, they had to be patient. These teachers attached a great deal of importance to Foundation Phase teachers being tolerant with the young learners. They indicated that since they [teachers] come with different backgrounds with different initial degrees, dealing with young learners was something fairly new to them. They felt that that was a fact that needed to be addressed while in training – as Gcina put it, “I think the first thing that they [teachers] need, they need to be taught is patience”. I think it would not be easy to teach ‘patience’, but maybe it could develop as one gains experience and observes other experience teachers teaching.

Empathy was also brought up by one of the teachers as an important trait needed by FP teachers. Gcina felt that “... *you have to really be empathetic.*” This teacher also emphasized the importance of being a person that is friendly and welcoming so that a child will not be afraid to come to you with a problem.

Nomsa and Vuvu talked about children needing affection at the homes. Nomusa explained:

They don't get more attention in their homes. So, as a teacher you have to play that role, the role that will require you to give that love that the learner does not get at home.

All FP teachers interviewed stressed the importance of loving children. In other words, they acknowledged that they would not be able to accomplish their tasks if they did not love children. They stressed the fact that effective teaching of the young learners is built on the teacher's fostering her love, empathy, patience and caring. The work of Ramdutt (2010) is helpful in understanding the importance of care in South African context, where young children are faced with many dilemmas. She notes that caring within teaching is important to consider. It is at this age that the foundations of character and values are laid, and which if they are not getting from home they need to get from other important folk in their lives – i.e. teachers. These are the kind of qualities that these teachers feel are important for a Foundation Phase teacher.

Confidence

Confidence was also one of the personality traits mentioned by all FP teachers as needed to teach effectively. Phumi said,

It [The PGCE programme] also helped boost my confidence and made me realise that I really want to be involved in the teaching of young kids.

These teachers felt the need to build confidence in order for them to teach well. They realised that it did not matter if they were teaching FP but they had to be confident.

In identifying the source of these personal attributes, four FP teachers talked about developing these during the teaching practice period, and one teacher pointed out that she got help from her HoD.

Lulu believed that the teaching practice helped her to develop confidence. She stated that it was not that easy, even though they dealt with Foundation Phase learners.

The teaching practice helped me to build confidence to stand in front of the class because it does not matter if it is a Grade One class, you get scared of learners. Mentors were also of big help. Even now I phone them to tell them how appreciative I am of their help.

Gcina attributes her gaining confidence to her HoD. She said

But I think the way that I've learnt is that is through my HoD. If I'm not sure about something I'll go back to her. That's how I acquired the bit of confidence that I have now.

It would appear that these personal traits should be taken into account in the training of these teachers. Some might be difficult to teach, but through mentoring and watching other teachers teach they can be developed.

Personal attributes appeared to be important. This is not one of Grossman's categories, but it emerges as key for these teachers. Respondents felt that these were important in dealing with young learners. As FP teachers, it was important for them to be affectionate and caring. These teachers took the caring of a child as a moral responsibility for them (Ramdutt, 2010).

4.2.3 Teaching strategies

In trying to analyse this data it was very difficult to say whether teachers were speaking about the knowledge of content or the knowledge of teaching methods.

When asked to identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes that FP teachers considered important for teaching, two teachers discussed *how* they taught, rather than speaking about what they considered important. For example, Nomusa stated:

Then I decided to use the method on how I was taught and combined it with the one I have just learned [in the PGCE]. You also need to have different teaching styles because it takes time for them to grasp. You need to have different ways of attacking. On my side, I think it is right to use old method and OBE (new method), teacher centred and learner centred. You need to apply both of them.

This statement shows that this teacher felt that the old method (teacher centred) and the new (OBE) method are both important. Nomusa indicated that the old method she used, is the method of how she was taught at school. It would appear that Nomusa decided to mix the method because she felt that both methods are appropriate in dealing with diverse learners in her class. What emerged from this teacher's response touches on what Makhanya (2010) states in her study, which revealed that teachers did not use the methods that they were taught at college, but they taught in the way in which they themselves were taught in primary schools. She (Nomusa) also thought that one needs to know a variety of teaching styles in order for learners to understand. However, these teaching styles are not specified.

Teaching strategies for Literacy

According to the PGCE FP course outlines for Literacy, student teachers are exposed to different methods of teaching reading. For example, they need to teach reading using the following methods and strategies: the story method; reading aloud; guided reading; shared reading; paired reading and independent reading. They also learn other methods like phonic, sentence, whole word and look and say methods as well as different theories of reading, like behaviourist and psycholinguistic views. However, when asked about which methods they used in teaching reading they could not reference these methods.

Nomusa's response to the question on how they teach reading showed that she could not state clearly the method she used as taught in the PGCE. Nomusa said:

I use different methods. The first thing I make alphabet in Zulu. You know how I do it. When the learner sings, then I say to him/her. Please go and write father's sound (umsindo kababa).

The method that Nomusa used in her class is in contrast with the specifications of the FP curriculum, and is not part of the curriculum for PGCE FP programme.

Three teachers did use some of the methods taught during the PGCE course, even though they were not able to articulate them clearly. What Lulu describes below points to the phonic programme she learned in the PGCE FP programme, without actually naming the method.

First of all as a teacher, I demonstrate. Maybe I will write on a piece of paper and read or ask the learner to read. Firstly, we write sounds of mama, baba and there are methods that we use to teach 'b'. You can't just say u 'b' lo (this is 'b'). I would say a tall man with a big stomach. This is 'b', so it is easy to grasp because I said 'b' is a tall man with a big stomach.

Similarly, Phumi did not label the type of method she uses when teaching reading, it was evident, though, that the method she described was the phonic method. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

That's how we were taught in the PGCE that you must start from pictures then they start with sounds e.g. ma me mi mo mu then you join u 'ma' nomunye u 'ma' can you see 'mama' then they start reading word for word. Then from words they start reading two lines 'Mama ima'. Then from there we start using Masihambisane. I read the word they read the word and then they read the whole sentence. That's how we continue reading and that's how it develops. So that's how we go about it in reading.

When teaching reading, Vuvu shared knowledge on a variety of teaching strategies to ensure that learners were able to read. Vuvu revealed that although some learners take a while to grasp the idea, the approach she uses seems to work. She said,

For reading skills I use big books, where there will be pictures which go with words. So that when a learner sees the picture then he must say the word then we revise the story that involve the sound that I want to focus on, on that day.

I introduce the sound then the words. I ask learners to give me words with that sound. I write them down, then they learn how to write them. How do we start if we want to write a particular sound. We then add in words with that sound and read them.

Happy was specific in identifying the strategies she uses in teaching children to read. She indicated that she used paired reading and reading aloud. It seems, though, that she has difficulty in teaching her learners to read. She said,

I have tried other methods because if you ask them all to read some don't read, rather I ask them to read as a group or in pairs. You find that some will just slip through. You can only catch them when you ask them to read individually, and you find that they can't read. I use other methods that we've learnt about, like paired reading, class reading (reading aloud), etc. Sometimes you find that if you use that particular method doesn't work either.

Unlike the other teachers in this study, who teach IsiZulu Home Language, Gcina teaches English Home language. She articulated well how she teaches reading to her grade 1 learners.

So we introduce them to words like 'I' and 'look' and words like before we have story books they don't have words just picture books where we just discuss the picture to arouse their vocabulary and their imagination, when they go home they talk about these pictures. What can you see, you know, a lot of descriptive words and so forth. We go through that and reading groups. We have like six children in a reading group. We don't read collectively as a class. So in my reading period I'll have like assistant teachers come in and they'll take six children, six children, and I will be left with six. And then we just rotate those children as the weeks go on. Like I'll have another six in a different week and we just gradually teach them words and then but initially we just have like one sentence a page with the big picture. We read a sentence, we discuss the picture, we read again. But before we read a sentence we always look at the pictures so that children could try and think what the words would be saying. And it becomes easier for them to start reading.

This excerpt shows that this teacher has the knowledge and skills to teach the language effectively. She also understands the purpose of teaching that particular subject material. For example, she says that when they discuss the picture with the learners, the aim is to increase their vocabulary and to arouse their imagination. While Gcina was still in the process of developing a

range of teaching strategies (Grossman, 1999), through the help of her HOD, she showed competence in employing good strategies for teaching children how to read. In line with the NCS, guidelines for the teaching and learning of literacy; that language development involves a gradual process of improvement; Gcina noted that they teach words to learners gradually - but they start with a big picture and one sentence per page. Learners are also given opportunities to predict - where they look at the pictures and guess what they think the words will say. Prediction is an important skill for FP learners and this becomes easier for them to start reading.

It is evident that this teacher is different from other teachers in this study, as she was more able to articulate the details of her practice as a teacher. This could be the result of working in a school where a systematic reading programme is followed and support from the school was accessible. However, teaching the skills of reading in a systematic way is not expressed as clearly with the other four participants. Perhaps they were simply not able to articulate the methods very well. On the other hand, this data may support the arguments from studies that indicate that novice FP teachers working at schools employing structured and systematic ways of teaching reading often adopt the methods in that school. The school context and support/mentoring play an important role that impacts on teacher practice. There was no evidence with the other teachers that they received this support from their colleagues. Because those schools did not offer a strong programme of reading support, those novice teachers had to rely solely on what they had learned in the PGCE programme.

Teaching strategies for Numeracy

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the PGCE course curriculum outline for teaching Numeracy specifies the important aspects of that subject that a Foundation Phase teacher needs to teach. For example, they need to know the Mathematics curriculum, which is contained in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). They also need to know learning theories associated with teaching Mathematics in the FP, like constructivism and behaviourism theories.

An analysis of the data in this study shows that in response to the question on what key knowledge and competences a FP teacher needs in order to teach Numeracy successfully; the FP teachers in this study drew on their knowledge for teaching Numeracy. Gcina emphasised the importance of knowing the content expected of the lessons of FP Mathematics teachers.

She drew upon her knowledge of which resources to use when teaching a particular concept. Again, this teacher also thought that teachers needed to possess knowledge of students' understanding, conceptions and misconceptions of particular topics of a subject matter, which Grossman identified as a second component of pedagogical content knowledge. For example, Gcina said that one needs to be clear what 'big' means and what 'thick' means, because something that is 'big' is not 'thick'.

The National Curriculum Statements (NCS) emphasize the critical role that FP teachers need to play in integrating the learning areas and explaining clearly the concepts of Mathematics. They need to make certain that children gain and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives (DoE, 2011). The excerpts below show how FP teachers explain Mathematics concepts when teaching Numeracy.

Lulu discussed the importance of using concrete objects when teaching young learners. She thought that it makes it easier for them to understand better. She said,

For example, in Numeracy if you say $1+1 = 2$. The child will not understand. You must make use of concrete objects. I will take a pen and put it here. Here's 1 and I add it 1-understand. For the Intermediate child, it's easier because he knows that 1 and $1 = 2$. The grade one child must take and put. Can you see now that there is 2. Put the sets and add them so that you get what I want. The PGCE programme taught me how to teach so that the learner will be able to understand well.

Phumi thought that the skill of explaining is important. She asserted that as a FP teacher, you need to assist your learners, one step at a time until they understand. She said,

You have to explain to them 'between' it's the middle number that's missing. If I say 5 and 7 then you leave a space and you write at the top between. So you need to be there with them or maybe move them closer to you or you sit with them or next to them to assist them.

The issue of moving from concrete to abstract seemed to be important for Happy as well. She contended that learners learn better if they see and touch objects. Therefore she sets out to use concrete objects in her class when teaching Numeracy.

The approach that I use when I teach 'shapes', is that of a discussion. For example what do you think if you see something like this? Where have you seen it before? We were told to use games, like snakes and ladders. I use counters every day. Like maybe I'm teaching money, you bring the money. Most of the time I like to bring visuals (concrete objects). They learn better when they see something. Mostly, I use charts, games and sometimes I create my own resources, where I would cut and write.

Gcina believed it is important to learn the Mathematics concepts by starting with the concrete and moving to the abstract. She said,

When we teach the first concept that we teach like 'big' and 'small'. So maybe i'll have like a big ball and a tennis ball or I'll have like a big bottle of water and a small bottle, like concrete things. It works better if you use concrete things.

Vuvu pointed out that one needs to be cognisant of the fact that Foundation Phase teachers are building foundation to the young learners. They need to possess knowledge of different strategies in order to help the young learners develop.

The grade 1 teacher should have different techniques so that she will be able to attend to the learners' different needs. You teach them sounds, numbers, how to hold a pencil for the first time. You teach them how to write, where to start, where to end. This is where you teach them basics before they move to the next grade.

The teachers in this study drew on their knowledge of general teaching strategies from different sources, like the PGCE programme, during Teaching Practice and from the schools where they teach.

The following excerpt shows that Vuvu believed that the PGCE programme helped her. Since teachers need a lot of resources in teaching in the Foundation Phase, she developed new creative skills:

We were even taught on how to create your own resources. The PGCE has really helped me, I learned to be creative.

Phumi explained the important role mentors played in helping them teach young learners. She said that they learned various teaching methods during TP. She explained:

Our mentors helped us a lot, teaching us how to teach young learners. We learnt at the university and also during practicals, and other educators showed us other methods. We learn a lot during TP practicals, where educators will show us and you'll see that it's easier if I explain this way.

Gcina indicated that she had gained knowledge of teaching strategies from the Head of Department (HoD) at the school where she teaches. Gcina's HoD is reflected as being instrumental in the process of her gaining pedagogical content knowledge. She felt that the PGCE programme did not prepare her enough with regard to the teaching strategies specific for FP:

I'm still growing on my competences. But I think the way that I've learnt is through my HOD. Like in my first year in Sherwood, every second day I used to walk out of my classroom to my HOD. Her class is next door. She would say feel free if you actually need anything just pop in whenever. And I go to her and ask what, 'does this concept mean again?'. 'How do I say this?' I'd go back to my children and walk with them. If I'm not sure about something I'll go back to her. My HOD had a lot to do [with the fact] that I'm still in the profession.

Gcina continues to learn informally on her own. She said,

I do read about things, and I look on the internet and I google, how to make my lessons more lively, how to make just the classroom life more interesting.

Theoretically, this knowledge of teaching strategies for Literacy and Numeracy could be related to Grossman's 'pedagogical content knowledge'. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Shulman and Grossman contend that pedagogical content knowledge goes beyond knowledge of the subject matter to the element of subject matter knowledge for teaching. It is the knowledge of how to teach specific content knowledge to a specific group of learners, for example, how to teach Foundation Phase learners how to read. Shulman (1987) argues that learners' interest and abilities have to be considered when topics and problems are presented to them.

4.2.4 Planning, assessment and classroom management

Another key domain of knowledge that the respondents identified was that of lesson planning, assessment and classroom management strategies. An analysis of the data shows that some FP teachers drew on their general knowledge about teaching and learning, rather than that which is specific to a particular learning area.

Lesson planning

Drawing on her experience as a novice teacher Gcina pointed out it was important to possess a sound understanding of lesson planning and had been hoping to acquire this knowledge in the PGCE programme. However, she felt that the PGCE programme did not provide enough preparation in that one year. She described her predicament as follows:

I'll have to say when it comes to like lesson plans and preparation all of those things. That's been challenging for me because with PGCE although I did get as much as I could in that one year but there was not enough time to prepare us for exactly what you will find in the classroom.

Foundation Phase teachers in this study indicated that they acquired this knowledge from the PGCE programme, in the schools during school experience as well as in their first years of teaching. Nomusa learned a lot from the PGCE programme. She explained that she acquired knowledge of developing lesson plans. She stated,

It [PGCE Programme] also helped me a lot because they [lecturers] used to give us policies to develop lesson plans. That's how I got to use these policies.

Vuvu explained how she valued the importance of teaching practice. She felt that she had learned a great deal from observing her mentor teacher present lessons. While observing the lessons, she noted how the lesson was introduced and progressed. This enabled her to apply what she had learned from her mentor. She said,

The teaching practice helped me a lot because, it was important to go to the field and observe the teacher teaching, how she introduces the lesson and progresses with the lesson. You see you learn all these things from the teacher while observing. Then you apply what you've learned from you mentor.

Happy has also worked well with her HoD. She has helped her HoD to understand the new curriculum documents and the terminology associated with them. In this case the HoD learned from the teacher.

We worked together and I showed her how to do the lesson plan and we also compared it with the one supplied by the department.

Five teachers in this study felt that the PGCE adequately prepared them for developing lesson plans and presenting lessons. However, one teacher felt that the PGCE did not prepare her adequately because of the limited time of the PGCE programme. This teacher felt that one year was not enough.

Assessment

Teachers in this study also considered knowledge of assessment and providing feedback as important for FP teachers. Gcina expressed disappointment that she was not taught how to assess learners' books in the PGCE programme. She said

Like, you are not taught that here's a book, students let's mark this book and see how you mark it, this is how you assess the book when you marking it. So I had a real big problem because I didn't know how to assess a book and how to comment because and you know because after marking you need to comment, you need to say something to a child and I

didn't know what comments to use because it's been a while since I was in school myself and you know now you have to start again and learn those things.

Phumi remarked that assessment has to help the learner. She said,

The PGCE has helped me a lot because one of the important things is to know that how the assessment that you are conducting is going to help the child. Don't just assess critically something that will not help the child. I create my own assessments.

This statement echoes what Feiman-Nemser (2001) believes about assessment, that “the focus should not be on variety for its own sake, but on helping teacher trainees figure out when, where, how and why to use particular approaches” (p. 1018-1019). It appears as if even though other teachers felt that the PGCE programme prepared them well, one teacher felt that she was not well prepared to assess learners.

Classroom management

All six FP teachers revealed that they divided the learners into smaller groups and gave them group work. Knowledge of classroom management also forms an important part of general pedagogic knowledge needed by teachers. Working this way also allows them to identify learners with difficulties. Vuvu explained

I identify slow learners when I teach them in small groups. I am able to identify that ok, this one is struggling, then I will group them together (those who are struggling) and I will help them.

Since a collection of routines and approaches for establishing classroom procedures are important in the Foundation Phase, Phumi shared her thoughts on how she addresses learners with reading problems:

So like every day because you have reading times in the morning and in the afternoon. So in the afternoon I make sure that I focus on the weaker learners.

Nomusa found that both the majors in her first degree, IsiZulu and Psychology, were a big help. She does not state clearly though, how IsiZulu major helped her to teach in the FP. She believed that Psychology was useful as it helped her to identify learners with learning difficulties and assisted her to help learners overcome them.

The Psychology helps me with learners with difficulties. I am able to diagnose the problem and to address it.

Likewise, Nomusa learned a lot from the PGCE programme. She explained that she acquired knowledge of dealing with learners with learning difficulties. She stated,

I didn't know about learning difficulties, like dyslexia. I learnt this from Edgewood [The UKZN Education campus].

All Foundation Phase teachers regard the acquiring skills to manage the class size as important. Gcina, who has 37 learners in her class, also elaborated on the challenges of attending to learners who need more attention, and how difficult this is if you have a large number of learners:

You know some children you find that they even slip under the radar because you find that there's a child who needs more attention and then you can't and because there's just you in the classroom. It's not easy to help all of them. This year's children, because some of them have never had experience in grade R and some of them language was a huge barrier.

Lulu also felt that FP teachers need to know how to manage the class size. She pointed out that a big class size was a challenge for her. Lulu has 30 learners in her class. She felt that as a FP teacher, it is important that you know individual learners in your class and this takes longer if the numbers are large. She said,

What's challenging is the large class numbers because you have to attend to each child and especially in January or February when they start classes. You have to make sure that you know them all.

Happy shared the same sentiments. She has 42 learners in her class.

You find that the size of the class has an impact in teaching and learning. Children are not the same anyway, we know that.

Phumi indicated that dealing with large class numbers made it difficult to attend to each young learner's specific needs. Phumi said,

What's challenging is the large class numbers because you have to attend to each child and especially in January or February when they start classes

Therefore in the context of primary schools, FP teachers felt that they needed to be equipped in the PGCE programme with the skills to deal with large class size. As Foundation Phase teachers, they are aware of the need to vary their approach when teaching specific topics or assessing competence amongst learners with various skills levels. Since learners have different learning styles FP teachers planned lessons and assessment in different ways to accommodate the various needs of the learners.

Grossman (1990) referred this type of knowledge as the general pedagogic knowledge which includes

knowledge and beliefs concerning learning and learners, knowledge of general principles of instruction such as small-group instruction, knowledge and skills related to classroom management and knowledge and beliefs about the aims and purposes of education (p. 6).

The teachers emphasized that in order to teach effectively, knowledge of factors that affect the instruction as well as knowledge of specific learners and communities (Grossman, 1990) is crucial. Most of them seem to be satisfied that they were adequately prepared for lesson planning and assessment. However, they still experience challenges with large class sizes.

4.2.5 Knowledge of concepts

The last kind of knowledge that the respondents identified as being important, was knowledge of concepts within the learning areas that they had to teach. From the data, it emerged that since most PGCE Foundation Phase students come from different backgrounds and majored in different subjects in their initial degrees, they had to learn new content regarding learning theories in education as well as subject matter content for Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills.

A number of studies have revealed that even when teachers major in their teaching subjects, they often have trouble explaining fundamental concepts in their disciplines (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In responding to the question about what kind of content knowledge is important for FP teachers, five participants in this study could not clearly define the content knowledge needed by FP teachers in order to carry out their work. Gcina was clear: *“So you need to know your concepts. You need to know exactly what you talking about”*. She asserts that in order to teach effectively in the Foundation Phase, you need to have a good grasp of the content knowledge. Gcina stated that *“You need to know what ‘long’ is, what ‘tall’ is, what do you mean by ‘short’. What do you mean by ‘big’? Because what is ‘big’, something that is ‘thick’ is not ‘big’. What is ‘thin’?”*

One participant responded that FP teachers need to possess the knowledge of content needed to teach in the Foundation Phase. Nomusa emphasized the fact that FP teachers do not possess knowledge of certain content areas of Numeracy, of which data handling is one of them:

... Foundation Phase teachers don’t teach data handling. No knowledge of data handling.

According to the PGCE programme Foundation Phase teachers need to know all the content areas for the Mathematics Learning area in the Foundation Phase. Vuvu clarifies that,

The teacher should have a deep knowledge of the learning outcome you need to focus on when teaching Numeracy. And which milestone are you going to focus on. So it's a huge knowledge.

The Foundation Phase teachers raised the importance of acquiring good content knowledge for Numeracy. However, they did not say much about the content knowledge for Literacy. These teachers were not able to articulate clearly the content knowledge needed. They seem to focus more on understanding the learners than knowing the content.

The data indicate that the novice teachers in this study gained the knowledge of concepts from the initial degree as well as from the PGCE programme in the Numeracy specialization module. One teacher stated that she learned some concepts from the DoE workshops.

One participant (Gcina) indicated that she gained a lot from the PGCE Numeracy module and not so much from the Literacy and the Life Skills modules.

And I will say that with my Maths lectures, Numeracy at Edgewood, there's a lot of things I did acquire there. There's a lot of things I did gain. Somethings that I didn't know that I got and there's quite a few notes that I kept until now because I refer back to them. It was like Literacy where I had more of a challenge. You know that I didn't know that in Grade 1 Life Skills encompasses EMS, NS and other Learning Areas. You know that I didn't know that. Not once did the lecturer tell us that Life Skills is little bit of everything. We never got exposed to different learning areas within Life Skills.

Happy mentioned that when they attended DoE workshops they learned some concepts:

We attended Numeracy workshops which focused on how to teach data handling because we focus on addition, subtraction, multiplication. We [Foundation Phase teachers] don't do data handling. There will be someone who would come to the school to check if you teach data handling. We will be given a lesson with a learning outcome that you would teach. He checks if you teaching right and afterwards he will tell you where you went wrong. This is how you can deal with this and so on. Then he also comes back the following week.

The knowledge of concepts is as identified by Grossman (1990) as content knowledge is very critical for teachers. She describes this kind of knowledge as “referring to knowledge of major facts and concepts within a field and the relationship among them” (p. 6).

Although in most models of teacher domains, content is key. However, this domain was not mentioned very significantly by the respondents. It raises a question if the teachers think they do not need any content knowledge to teach in the Foundation Phase.

4.3 Other issues emerging from data

The physical conditions of the schools were raised by some of these teachers as a concern.

Two FP teachers talked about the poor conditions of the schools in which they taught and how it affected teaching and learning. Vuvu explained how serious this was:

... we are in the rural area. The roof in our classroom leaks and when it rains learners won't be able to write because their exercise books will get wet. We do not have windows and if it's windy, the wind gets in and the dust in to the learners eyes. We get disturbed and we do not have the door.

Phumi indicated that even though the conditions of the school were not good, they were managing well.

Class conditions are not good. There are holes, compare to other schools, but it's good.

On the contrary, Gcina has been fortunate to teach at a well-resourced school where the conditions are better. She explains,

Everyone has enough space to write on and their own chairs. We have a mat where we go to the mat for a story time, when discussing a new concept, or before they go to do their own work. There's a board, OHP, we have a sink in the classroom I have big cupboard where I store my things, I have a nice big teacher's desk, nice chair, enough chalk. Enough. I was very lucky.

These teachers also felt that the conditions of the schools need to be good so that they will be able to perform their jobs well.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented findings based on data from six novice FP teachers. To some extent, Grossman's framework, which I used to present the data, helped to categorise the knowledge of the Foundation Phase teachers. However, the respondents described a strong focus on the knowledge of educational context, and personality traits which were not dealt with extensively in the framework. The findings show that all six FP teachers emphasized that the knowledge of the background of the learners was important so that they will know what to do in such contexts.

Five of them felt strongly that even though they experienced some challenges the PGCE programme did prepare them for their roles as FP teachers. One teacher expressed some disappointment regarding her preparation from the PGCE programme and felt that she was not adequately prepared.

In this chapter, sources of knowledge acquisition and other personal attributes associated with FP were also discussed. The study indicated that teachers learned formally from the PGCE programme; initial degrees; during teaching practice and informally at the schools at which they teach.

The following chapter, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings of the data, conclusions and recommendations following from this study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This study explored the extent to which novice Foundation Phase (FP) teachers believed that the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme prepared them for their work. The teachers who participated in this research project were in their first years of teaching and possess undergraduate degrees and the PGCE. The focus of the study was to determine how and where these novice teachers thought they got the skills that they needed as they faced their classes and this was used to reflect on the PGCE FP curriculum. The study generated data through qualitative interviews and document analysis. The data was obtained from six Foundation Phase teachers who are teaching learners in grades 1-3. This chapter presents a discussion of the key findings in answering the questions the study sought to address.

5.2 Discussion of findings

In order to answer the main question: To what extent do novice Foundation Phase teachers think the Post Graduate Certificate in Education programme adequately prepared them for their roles as Foundation Phase teachers? I had to probe using the two critical questions:

1. What knowledge, skills and attitudes do Foundation Phase teachers consider important for their work?
2. How do novice Foundation Phase teachers believe they acquired the knowledge they are using in their classrooms?

In response to the first question, there are five themes that emerged from the interview data:

- knowledge of the background of the learners
- teacher attributes
- teaching strategies for Literacy and Numeracy
- planning, assessment and classroom management
- knowledge of content

5.2.1 The knowledge of the background of the learners

The teachers in this study stressed the importance of knowing the learners. These teachers seem to think that before you teach young learners this knowledge is crucial because teaching and learning always takes place in a social context (Hannel, Felix, & Paul, 2006). It makes sense to them since the learners are still young, and many are growing up as vulnerable in difficult social conditions. South African literature (Bhana, Morrell, Epstein, & Moletsane, 2006; Jansen, 2001; Maarman, 2009; Wood & Goba, 2011) has shown that teachers in many rural and township schools encounter learners who come from environments where unemployment, poverty, AIDS and absent parents are prominent. This knowledge of the learners is in line with Grossman's "knowledge of educational context". She argues that teachers should draw upon their understanding of the particular contexts in which they teach (Grossman, 1990). Shulman (1986) describes this type of knowledge as the knowledge of school, classrooms and locale where learning takes place.

5.2.2 Teacher attributes

These teachers seem to emphasize 'WHO you are' as more important than what you know. They are of the opinion that a FP teacher needs to be sensitive and caring. For these teachers, the notion of care in the South African context is important. Noddings (1992) also suggested that there is a need for schools to be caring places and for teachers to model caring behaviour for learners. This makes sense considering the South African context where there is a lot of suffering. According to Hoadley and Ensor (2009) there is a relationship between teachers' social class position and schooling practices. They seem to suggest that 'teachers reproduce the practices associated with that social location' (p.876). Their study showed that teachers in working class schools understood the purpose of teaching as caring, whereas in the middleclass schools, teachers understood teaching as knowledge work. What is coming out from the respondents is that they think that being a FP teacher takes more than knowledge. It appears that they are immersed in the real situation where they are faced with real needs; therefore, they focus on social issues. Perhaps this has led to the teachers placing less emphasis on teacher knowledge and more on teacher disposition. This study cannot make this claim, but it is an issue that needs to be researched further. From the literature on the hidden work of caring teachers, Bhana et al (2006), pointed out that the "teachers' pastoral care work tended to extend into, and infringe on

formal curriculum” (p.15) and that there appears to be a thin line between care work and curriculum requirements. Their study found that in poor schools teachers spent far more time on care work, as there are no other support services available, like a school councillor. This links to Hoadley and Ensor’s (2009) idea of ‘professional dispositions’, that is, how teachers “think and speak about their subject knowledge, students, pedagogic practice and the relationship between themselves and their students” (p.877). In this study, teachers spoke more about issues affecting learners and less about teacher knowledge. In their study, Hoadley and Ensor (2009) aimed to establish a link among ‘teachers’ own social class backgrounds, their professional dispositions and their pedagogic practice’. The study suggested importance of “social class, not just of students and parents, but of teachers, as a key factor in teacher education” (Hoadley and Ensor, 2009 p.885).

Among the issues affecting the learners is the AIDS pandemic which has created environments that are quite multiplicative, where teachers put emphasis on an ethic of care (Bhana et al, 2006). One of the teachers in this study mentioned that she had to take the responsibility of reminding a learner in her class who was HIV positive, to take ARV treatment. Some teachers in this study indicated that in some instances they had to give learners food from their lunch or buy them shoes or uniform. This is similar to what have been found in other studies where school teachers gave learners bread, peanut butter and food (Bhana, et al, 2006).

5.2.3 Teaching strategies for Literacy and Numeracy

One of the things these teachers say they learnt in the PGCE programme is teaching strategies of Literacy and Numeracy. This kind of knowledge is in line with Grossman’s pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Grossman (1990) argues that teachers need to draw upon knowledge specific to teaching particular subject matters. In confirming that the PGCE programme adequately prepared them, the respondents indicated that they acquired different teaching methods which are in the National Curriculum Statements. What also emerged from the study was the fact that some teachers could not articulate reading strategies. In other instances, what they have stated in response to the question about how they teach reading is in contrast with what is stipulated in the curriculum. Nevertheless, most of them still regarded the PGCE programme as helpful. It is

interesting to note that there is one teacher who felt that the PGCE programme did not prepare her adequately in this regard and indicated that she got help from her HOD.

5.2.4 Planning, assessment and classroom management

Lesson planning, assessment and classroom management strategies emerged as another key domain that the teachers felt it was important. This kind of knowledge is in line with Grossman's general pedagogic knowledge. Grossman (1990) argues that this kind of knowledge also includes skill and knowledge related to the management of the classroom as well as knowledge and beliefs about the aims and purposes of education. The respondents indicated that the PGCE FP programme prepared them for this with the exception of one teacher who felt that she was not well prepared in this regard.

5.2.5 Knowledge of content

Another type of knowledge these teachers mention is content knowledge. Grossman (1990) argues that content knowledge "includes knowledge of the content of a subject area as well as knowledge of the substantive and syntactic structures of the discipline" (p.6). The content knowledge that the respondents talked about mostly is learning theories which is related to the field of education. This is not surprising since education is new to them. They learned about different policies in their core modules, which are generic to all PGCE students and not just Foundation Phase. They also learned different theories in their specializations modules. In Numeracy they learned about constructivism and behaviourism.

These teachers also studied the FP curriculum and became familiar with the National Curriculum Statements which comprise both Mathematics and the Home Language. In Literacy they learned about emergent literacy, behaviourist and psycholinguistic views of the language structure. Most respondents seemed satisfied that they were adequately prepared. But it interesting that they did not talk about the content knowledge that a FP teacher needs to teach Numeracy, or Literacy. They speak only of education content. This raises questions about whether these teachers understand the subject content knowledge for FP teachers. It appears that the content knowledge for GET Phase teachers, under which the Foundations Phase falls, is not clear. This confirms Reeves and Robinson's (2010) view that the content knowledge for GET teachers is not clearly defined. They argued that FP content was not stipulated in the outcome-based model that was

implemented in South Africa in 2002. Hence, teachers found themselves unsure of the content and consequently a lack of subject knowledge development. This then created problems for Foundation Phase teachers in understanding and articulating the content knowledge for FP. Feiman-Nemser (2001a) noted that serious questions have been raised on the subject of the adequacy of teachers' subject content knowledge and that various studies have revealed that "even when teachers have majors in their teaching subjects they often have difficulty in explaining basic concepts in their disciplines" (p. 2001).

5.3 Acquisition and learning

In response to the second question about how the FP teachers acquired the knowledge, skills and attributes that they considered important, it appears that most of the respondents say that they acquired their knowledge formally, on the PGCE programme. One teacher mentioned that she also acquired knowledge informally from her HoD at school. Wilson & Demetriou (2007) argue that the process of teacher learning involves reflection and action through which teachers develop skills and acquire knowledge and expertise. Their main argument is that teachers acquire knowledge both formally and informally. Eraut (2004) contends that informal learning identifies the social importance of learning from other people and takes place in a range of settings than formal settings. It would appear that the teachers in this study acquired the right disposition through experience.

As explained in Chapter 1, the PGCE Programme is a professional qualification undertaken by students after completing an initial degree. Most of the novice FP teachers in this study considered the PGCE programme as the most significant source of their knowledge, skills and attitudes. These were regarded to be relevant and applicable and these teachers expressed the view that the programme gave them an opportunity to develop as teachers. Five of the six Foundation Phase teachers in this study believed that the PGCE programme was very useful, while one felt that it was not as beneficial as expected.

Teaching practice (TP) is an integral part of the PGCE Programme, during which teacher trainees are given the opportunity to put theory into practice. Chireshe & Chireshe (2010) emphasized the importance of producing teachers who able to put theory into practice by applying theoretical knowledge the teacher trainees obtained in the lecture room to classroom

teaching. During the teaching practice period, PGCE students are placed in different schools and are assigned mentors and tutors to supervise them. Mentors are school-based teachers who work with student teachers in their specialisations and tutors are university based who liaise with school mentors in the supervisions of the students. In this formal mentoring process, both mentors and tutors assess teacher trainees and assessment is given in order to facilitate professional growth. Mentors work with students on a day-to-day basis and, ideally, are people who can offer knowledge about the culture of the school. All Foundation Phase teachers in this study viewed the TP as beneficial. They all seem to be satisfied about the teaching strategies they acquired when they were involved in the teaching practice and working with their mentors. The placement of students in schools during Teaching Practice is done by the university. In most cases, the schools are not far from the University, whereas when they start teaching, they are placed where there are vacancies, mostly in the rural areas.

The findings also highlight the crucial role played by teacher education, in this case the PGCE FP, as the source of teacher knowledge in rural contexts where there is hardly any support and mentoring for novice teachers when they start teaching. Novice teachers in these contexts solely rely on formal programmes, like the PGCE, for appropriate knowledge and skills for Foundation Phase teaching. It is therefore important that such programmes be strengthened, in particular through listening to practising teacher's voices about what they see as lacking in the programme. This points to a need for more large scale studies like this to inform the curriculum in teacher education. Since the PGCE FP programme accepts students with a range of undergraduate degrees, the disciplinary content knowledge that they come with, need to be reinforced and taken into account in the PGCE FP programme. It appears that the undergraduate degree did not provide these teachers with sufficient content knowledge. Their majors in their undergraduate degree were courses such as Sociology, Psychology and Languages. In the Sociology and Psychology courses they learn content that entail how children learn, learning difficulties and human behaviour.

5.4 Reflection on the framework

In this study I used Grossman's framework, which helped me to understand teacher knowledge of the respondents. The four domains in Grossman's framework that the study focused on were: content knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge and

knowledge of context. There were more similarities in the three domains, pedagogic content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of educational context with what the teachers describe as important. However, the study revealed that this framework had limitations in terms of FP teaching. FP teachers felt that the focus should be more on knowledge of educational context and include teacher disposition as a key aspect of what FP teachers needed. Grossman's domains of teacher knowledge emerged from studies of high school teaching, so the framework, to some extent did not speak to FP. It appears that a framework which is more Phase specific might be useful. The extent to which the respondents foregrounded the context, proved to be important knowledge for this phase and they felt unprepared for the context. Any framework for the FP would need to consider this element.

5.5 Implications of the study

Even though the PGCE programme was of help for these teachers, there encountered some challenges during their first years of teaching, which were beyond the programme.

5.5.1 Socio-economic issues

All schools are located in a broader social context which impact on teaching and learning. It would appear that teachers will not be able to do their job well because of issues like poverty, unemployment and absent parents in the communities where they teach.

Even though their task is to teach, FP teachers also need to understand what the constitutive functions of schools are, generally, to afford both teaching and caregiving for the young (Morrow, 2007). The respondents focused on the importance of a FP teacher's character. They seem to see themselves more as caregivers than as knowledge workers. These teachers described the sacrifices they made to care of their learners in the context of their poorly resourced schools. For example, they mentioned that, even though there was feeding scheme at the school, they had to make sure that their learners actually get the food. This resonates with the work of Bhana et al (2006), which indicates that in spite of lack of training and support teachers are confronted with, they *do* perform their care work. This is also in line with the role of 'community, citizenship and pastoral role' stipulated in the *Norms and Standards for Educators*. Jansen (2001) reckons that these roles experienced by teachers are "complex, difficult, demanding, ambitious, unrealistic, and impractical given existing demands on teachers" (p.245). Similarly, Morrow alludes that the

'seven roles' in the *Norms and Standards for Educators* ignore the reality of the conditions in which the majority of teachers in South Africa work and, in this way, inflate the conception of their workload (Morrow, 2007).

5.5.2 Teacher education

The teacher education programme for FP needs to ensure that the student teachers are well prepared to carry out their roles as FP teachers. Programmes like the PGCE are crucial, even though they are not perfect. There is a demand for programme like these in the rural areas, where expertise in the Foundation Phase is essential. To support teacher trainees, the PGCE programme should have a component in the core modules that will be specific to FP. The issues that could be dealt with could include understanding of the relationship between parent, families, the community and school, dealing with abused learners, hungry learners and learners who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. Even though these issues also affect learners in higher grades, FP learners are more vulnerable and need more care. As it stands, the content for the core modules is the same for FP, Senior Phase and FET students. Therefore the PGCE programme need to provide the FP teacher trainees with a profound understand of knowledge and provide development in such a way that they are able to deal with school, classroom and community challenges effectively (Morrow, 2007).

5.6 Limitations

This study was on a very small scale because six participants were interviewed. Results therefore may not be generalized. The purpose of the study was to provide a rich understanding and deep insight which can inform bigger quantitative studies in the future.

Participants were not able to articulate the content knowledge as it is not well-defined for GET teachers. Hence there was little evidence with the second sub-question.

More research is needed to take these issues forward. This is something that speaks to bigger studies.

5.7 Recommendations for further research

Based on the analysis of the data findings in relation to training of FP teachers through the PGCE programme, I make recommendations that point toward policy and research.

5.7.1 Recommendations for policy

Whilst most teachers felt adequately prepared to teach, they also say that they encountered challenges regarding several socio-economic issues that affected the learners. At policy level, decisions need to be taken concerning how FP teachers teaching in disadvantaged communities could be supported by government. At present, there is no provision made in the curriculum for addressing to the emotional needs of learners (Bhana, et al 2006). Teachers do not have adequate training to deal with these issues. The Department of Basic Education and the Social Development Department could design support programmes for teachers to help these teachers respond to socio-economic issues affecting them. The schools need to employ structures to guide their new teachers through Induction programmes.

5.7.2 Recommendations for research

The purpose of the study was to explore the issue of whether the knowledge, skills and attitudes that novice teachers have gained through the PGCE FP programme were perceived as of help in preparing them for their roles as Foundation Phase teachers.

It appears that these teachers did not focus much on the important content knowledge that Foundation Phase teachers need to have and therefore there is a need to research this further as to understand why these teachers did not see the knowledge as a primary factor. Perhaps we also need more research into the knowledge base for FP teachers, and more research into what is the content knowledge base that FP teachers have, and how they draw on this knowledge base to teach numeracy, reading, writing and life skills.

Grossman (1990) and Shulman (1987) were concerned with different kinds of teacher knowledge that teachers need to possess and not on the affective issues. The notion of care and 'being a mother' for Foundation Phase teachers, needs to be researched further in South Africa.

5.8 Conclusion

The data analysis indicates positive comments about UKZN, the institution where the Foundation Phase teachers studied for the PGCE. The data showed that five participants felt that the PGCE programme adequately prepared them for their roles as Foundation Phase teachers and one felt that the programme did not prepare her adequately. This one teacher taught at a well resourced school where she received support from her HoD.

In this study, the novice FP teachers maintained that PGCE programme remained the most significant source of their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Five teachers did not mention learning at school where they were teaching. The findings point to the importance of the school context as an important learning for some teachers while others finding formal programmes, like the PGCE useful. These findings seem to suggest that novice teachers learn more in resourced schools where there is good support and mentoring, whereas in poorly resourced schools that lack instructional mentoring, teachers tend to rely more on what they learn in formal programmes like the PGCE.

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APPENDIX A

Date: 15 July 2010

From: School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal

To: The Deputy Dean
Initial Teacher Education Sector
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Dear Madam,

RE: POST-GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION FOUNDATION PHASE

I am currently engaged in a research study on the "Post-Graduate Certificate in Education Foundation Phase". I would appreciate your permission to access PGCE students' records for students who have completed the PGCE FP/ECD course at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2008 and 2009.

The title of my project is, 'A Post Graduate Certificate in Education programme as preparation for Foundation Phase teachers: The experiences of novice teachers.' The project is supervised by Carol Bertram (Tel: 033 2605349) a lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN and Ruth Searle (Tel: 033 2606250) a lecturer at the School of Higher Education, UKZN.

Should you have any queries please contact me at: 0829342621 or Telephone: 033 260 5252.

Sincerely



Ms Makie Kortjass

APPENDIX B



26 January 2011

Ms D Kortliss
School of Education and Development
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS

Dear Ms Kortliss

**PROTOCOL: A Post Graduate Certificate in Education programme as preparation for
Foundation Phase teachers: The experiences of novice teachers in KwaZulu-Natal primary
schools**

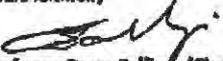
ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0006/2011 M: Faculty of Education

In response to your application dated 21 January 2011, Student Number: 204523782 the
Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned
application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

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

Yours faithfully


Professor Steve Collins (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE

SC/sn

cc: Prof. R Searle (Supervisor)
cc: Mr. N Memela

Postal Address: **Witsville**
Telephone: **031 260 2300**
Facsimile: **031 260 2304**
E-mail: **unif@uqn.ac.za**
Website: **www.uqn.ac.za**
Founding Campuses: **Edgewood** **Howard College** **Marina** **Medical School** **Westmead** **Witsville**

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

PGCE project: A Post Graduate Certificate in Education programme as preparation for Foundation Phase teachers: The experiences of novice teachers from in KwaZulu-Natal primary schools.

The aim of this project is to record the experiences and views of teachers regarding their experiences of teaching after graduating with the PGCE Foundation Phase. The project is supervised by Ms Ruth Searle (Tel: 033 2606250) a lecturer at the School of Higher Education, UKZN and Dr Carol Bertram (Tel: 033 2605349) a lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. I am a Masters student at UKZN, and this project forms part of my studies.

You have been identified to participate as you are a novice teacher with one or two years teaching experience. I would like to conduct an interview with you which should last approximately 45 – 60 minutes. I will record your views in writing and also tape record the interview. The data will be anonymous i.e. it will not be possible for it to be linked to your name. The data will be used in my research report. You will *not* be disadvantaged if you choose not to participate or if you choose to leave/ withdraw from the study at any stage.

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 free to leave/ withdraw from the project at any time, if I want to.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

APPENDIX D INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

This is an enquiry about your experiences of teaching at the primary school and about the knowledge, skills and competences that you have acquired in order to be a Foundation Phase teacher.

Biographical Data / Personal Particulars

Kindly fill in the blank spaces or tick the appropriate box.

1. Initials: _____ Surname: _____ Title: _____

2. Academic Qualification: B.A. _____

1. Majors: _____

2. Name of the university: _____

5. Professional Qualification: PGCE Foundation Phase _____

6. Age in years:

20 -24	25 -29	30 – 34	35 - 39	40+
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7. Work experience in months:

0 -6	6 -12	12+
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8. Subjects you are teaching and classes:

Subjects	Grade /Class
e.g. IsiZulu	Grade 3

1. The size of the class: _____

2. Resourcing of the school: _____

In-depth Interviews with teachers

1. Tell me about your experience of being a Foundation Phase teacher this year.
2. What have been the best things about your teaching experience this year?
3. What have been some of the challenges? Describe the conditions in your classroom.
4. What kind of knowledge do you think a Foundation Phase Grade 1 teacher needs? Please give me some concrete examples. How and where did you acquire this knowledge?

5. What do you understand is your main role as a FP teacher? What is it that makes teaching in the FP different from other phases?
6. Two key learning areas in the FP are Literacy and Numeracy. Tell me how you teach your children to read. Where did you learn about this method?
7. How important do you think it is to teach phonics to a child?
8. What do you do when a child's reading skills are not developing well? How do you diagnose the problem?
9. Please give me an example of the phonic programme that you use in your classroom.
10. Please name the resources that you use in your classroom when you teach Numeracy.
11. What kind of approach do you have in teaching Numeracy?
12. What do you think are the key knowledge and competences that a FP teacher needs to teach Numeracy successfully? Tell me about how you learnt this knowledge and developed the competences.
13. How did the PGCE programme help you to select and/or design materials and resources appropriate to teach Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills programmes?

Scenario

What would you do if you had a child in your class who was not able to sit still for long, who cannot concentrate on tasks for more than two minutes, who is constantly walking around the classroom?

How and where did you learn about diagnosing learning difficulties?

14. What type of record do you keep of your learners' assessments? How do you store your records?
15. How did PGCE programme help you to engage critically with education assessment policies?
16. How well do you think your training has prepared you for being a Foundation Phase teacher?
Please give some examples from your experience of where it has or has not.
17. To what extent did your first degree prepare you for being a FP teacher?
18. In what ways did the core modules prepare you?
19. To what extent did the teaching specialisation modules prepare you?
20. What ways did your teaching practice help you?
21. Are there any other issues about the PGCE and learning to be a FP teacher you would like to mention?

APPENDIX E

From:
Ms Makie Kortjass
School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal

To: Teacher

Dear Educator,

RE: POST-GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION FOUNDATION PHASE

My name is Makie Kortjass, and I am a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am investigating the extent to which the novice teachers who have been trained at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in a one year professional Post-Graduate Certificate in Education programme were prepared to become Foundation Phase teachers.

I hope that this research will help the university to construct a better curriculum and learning experience for Foundation Phase students. I want to explore how teachers experience the teaching and learning in their first years after completing the PGCE FP course. I will conduct individual interviews with teachers.

I would also like to stress that in no way will the research interfere with your teaching at school. The interviews will be conducted after school hours.

Please take note of the following:

1. The individual interviews will last about 45 - 60 minutes each.
2. These will take place at the venue that would be convenient to you. I would like to conduct the interviews at the end of September 2010.
3. All information will be kept confidential.
4. I will not use your name in the research or the name of your school.
5. It is unlikely that you will find the discussions distressing in any manner.
6. I am asking for your permission for you to take part in this study. With this in mind, I ask that you give me permission to participate by signing and returning the attached form to me as soon as possible.
7. You may withdraw from the research without any negative consequence.
8. If at any point you feel you would like to have more information please feel free to contact me on the contact details below. I shall endeavour to provide you with any information you require.

Should you have any queries please contact me at:

Makie Kortjass 0829342621 or Telephone: 033 260 5252

Yours Sincerely

Ms Makie Kortjass