

**WHAT INFORMS THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES OF THE
LESOTHO FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION? AN ANALYSIS OF
STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS AT PITSENG PRIMARY SCHOOL**

BY



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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval.



Prof. Relebohile Moletsane

January 2004

Declaration of Originality

I, **Pholoho Justice Morojele**, do hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "What informs the implementation strategies of the Lesotho Free Primary Education? An analysis of stakeholders' perceptions at Pitseng Primary School" is my own work and that all references I have used/quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references. I also declare that I have never submitted it before to any other university.



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my son Kutlo. May he grow to be wise.

ABSTRACT

This is a case study that investigated the Pitseng Primary School stakeholders' understanding of the purpose and objectives of Free Primary Education (FPE), the strategies that they have developed and adopted for the implementation of this programme, the challenges they encountered in their efforts to implement FPE, and how they addressed these challenges. Pitseng Primary School is located in the Leribe district in Lesotho.

The study used the questionnaires which were administered to teachers and the governing body of Pitseng Primary School. Group interviews were conducted with 8 teachers and 3 members of the governing body. Individual interviews were conducted with 10 parents and the researcher used observations to collect and verify the data.

This study was informed by critical, pragmatic and positivistic approaches to policy implementation.

The findings of this study have revealed that the Pitseng Primary School's stakeholders understand the purpose of FPE as a vehicle to make all Basotho children get basic education, provide jobs for the

needy Basotho people, eliminate hunger and malnutrition among the Basotho children, and reduce teenage and juvenile crime.

The study has also found that there are no formally developed and adopted strategies for FPE implementation at Pisteng Primary. The government determines all the strategies, and the actions that various stakeholders take at the school/community level are an *ad hoc* response to the pressing demands of FPE implementation.

Lack of resources, massive enrolment of pupils, lack of co-operation among stakeholders, and HIV/AIDS are some of the challenges that impede the effective implementation of FPE at Pitseng Primary School. The information that the government relayed to parents lacked insight of the practical implications for FPE implementation at Pitseng Primary and this has created a conflict between various stakeholders at the school regarding the implementation of this programme.

To facilitate the school's efforts towards effective implementation of FPE and resource mobilisation, the study recommended that the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School should hold regular meetings wherein they clarify the role and responsibilities that all parties have to play for the implementation of FPE. The government of Lesotho should

give the school autonomy to develop appropriate strategies for the implementation of this programme.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Supervisor's Statement.....	ii
Declaration of Originality.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Abstract.....	vi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
1.2 THE FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY (FPE)	4
1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY.....	5
1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	6
1.5 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	7
1.6 PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY.....	10
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	11
1.8 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY	12
1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	13

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT.....	13
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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	15
2.2 DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPTS.....	16
2.2.1 A POLICY.....	16
2.2.2 IMPLEMENTATION.....	16
2.2.3 STAKEHOLDERS.....	17
2.3 REVIEW OF EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP.....	17
2.3.1 THE PURPOSE, FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES OF FPE.....	18
2.3.2 PLANS AND STRATEGIES FOR FPE IMPLEMENTATION.....	19
2.3.3 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FPE AND HOW THEY WERE ADDRESSED.....	22
2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF THE STUDY.....	26
2.4 CRITICAL THEORY.....	26
2.5 PRAGMATISM	29
2.6 POSIVITISM.....	31
2.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	33

CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	37
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	38
3.2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	38
3.2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	39
3.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE.....	39
3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION.....	40
3.4.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRES.....	40
3.4.2 THE INTERVIEWS.....	42
3.4.3 OBSERVATIONS.....	44
3.5 VALIDITY ANDRELIABILITY.....	45
3.6 LIMITATIONA OF THE STUDY.....	46
3.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	47

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	48
4.2 FINDINGS.....	48
4.2.1 UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF FPE.....	49

a) Teachers' Responses.....	49
b) Governing Body's Responses.....	51
c) Parents' Responses.....	52
4.3.2 THE STRATEGIES THAT WERE DEVELOPED AND ADOPTED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FPE.....	54
a) Teachers' Responses.....	54
b) Responses from the Members of the Governing Body.....	56
c) Parents' Responses.....	57
4.3.3 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND HOW THEY WERE ADDRESSED.....	59
a) Teachers' Responses.....	59
b) Governing Body's Responses.....	62
c) Parents' Responses.....	65
4.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	69

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	73
5.2 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	75
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	79
REFERENCES	82
APPENDIX 1	90
QUESTIONNAIRE.....	90
APPENDIX 2	97
RESEARCH INSTRUMENT ONE.....	97
RESEARCH INSTRUMENT TWO.....	99
RESEARCH INSTRUMENT THREE.....	100
RESEARCH INSTRUMENT FOUR.....	102

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The announcement by the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Lesotho, Mr. P. Mosisili, of the launch of the Free Primary Education (FPE) Programme, in April 1999, marked the dawn of a new era of participative involvement by many stakeholders in the development of a new approach to education provision in Lesotho (Ministry of Education, 2001). The programme was launched in most of the Lesotho primary schools in January 2000. It was begun in grade one and has been rolling upwards every year until all grades will be covered by the year 2006. There are concerns among the Basotho people, especially those in the education sector about the direction this programme is giving education in their country. They claim that the policy is still hugely influenced by colonial ideologies. Seotsanyana, (2002, p.1) states that:

Even the free primary education starting with the first grade introduced in early 2000 is not an innovation by the ruling democratically elected government. Free, but not compulsory, education was first introduced in the late 1920s by the colonial administration.

The realisation that these concerns will not receive an adequate response without a rigorous interrogation of the policy that informs the programme and how it is understood, interpreted, and implemented by the schools, motivated me to conduct this study. Pampallis and Motala, (2001) claim that the most critical stage of policy development is its implementation. Haddad (1995) posits that the most significant amount of planning and *de facto* policy formulation take place during actual implementation. No matter how deeply the various stakeholders affected by the new initiative have been involved in the reviewing and shaping of plans, the concreteness of the first day of a new programme often casts it in a new light:

[The] implementation period is the time when the ravages of inflation cause the teachers' union to demand a pay increase prior to using the new texts; it is the time when parents conclude that the certification offered by the new programme may not guarantee their children the jobs they hoped for; and it is the time when local politicians decide that they should block the initiative since it will be so successful that it will prove that the politicians in the capital are better providers than they [are] (Haddad, 1995, pp.36-37).

The above citation implies that the kinds of perceptions and understandings which various stakeholders have about a policy

influence, to a large extent, the kind of plans and strategies they develop and adopt to implement it. Practical realities on the ground during implementation might also contribute to the development and adoption of certain implementation strategies.

The critical questions are, do stakeholders have a good understanding of the focus and objectives of the FPE policy? How appropriate are the plans and strategies that they have developed and adopted for the implementation of this programme in terms of the practical realities of their school? If they are not, what alternative measures should they take to address these challenges? These are the questions this study seeks to address.

The purpose of this study therefore, is to investigate the understanding of the stakeholders about the purpose, focus and objectives of FPE. Focus is also placed on the kinds of plans and strategies the stakeholders developed and adopted for the implementation of the FPE programme. The challenges encountered in general are investigated.

1.2 THE FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY (FPE)

FPE is a government initiative that aims to ensure the provision of high quality, free, basic education to all Basotho children (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.15). As stated above, the programme was introduced in grade one in January 2000 and will be rolling upwards every year until all seven phases of primary education are covered by 2006.

The objectives of FPE are to:

1. make basic education accessible to all pupils, and relevant to their needs.
2. make education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities.
3. provide basic and necessary resources to enable every Mosotho child to enter and complete the primary cycle of education.
4. ensure that education is affordable to the majority of Basotho.
5. provide and maintain high quality education as a basis for promoting the development of human resources, economic development and societal advancement - thus fulfilling the government of Lesotho broad policy of eradicating poverty and illiteracy.

6. equip every Mosotho with basic skills and knowledge to live a meaningful life and cope with his/ her environment (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The policy requires that parents should send their children to school without paying any school fees (Lehohla, 1999). This provision does not have an age limit – that is, everyone is allowed to go to school regardless of age.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Since starting to teach six years ago, I have noticed that most policy directives brought to schools lack insight into the real conditions of the schools in which they have to be implemented. This places a lot of stress on various stakeholders at the school level. In many cases the policy directives are rigid and prescriptive, and do not allow the people at the school level to change them to suit their conditions. Normally the stakeholders at the school level find themselves bouncing between a wall and a hard rock – that is, they are pressurised by the central department of education to implement policies that are sometimes not appropriate to the schools or issued without articulate and appropriate strategies of implementation. It therefore became obvious to me that

schools should harness capacity to develop and adopt appropriate strategies of policy implementation in their own contexts.

However, the ability of stakeholders at schools to develop and adopt proper plans and strategies is dependent on their understanding of the focus and objectives of the policy in hand. I therefore submit that it is the responsibility of all the stakeholders to familiarise themselves with the policy focus and objectives. Dynamics such as the location and socio-economic context of the school have a bearing on the strategies and challenges of policy implementation. The findings of this research will be useful to stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School in terms of the appropriate strategies for the implementation of FPE

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Personal experience made me aware that parents want their children to go to school since the introduction of the FPE programme. Some parents even force their children who are in upper classes back to the classes where education is free. The high number of children who come to school exceed the number of school facilities such as classrooms and desks, and the teacher-pupil ratio is very high. The high rate of HIV/AIDS in this region retards the full engagement of all the teachers in the schools, not to mention the parents' involvement in

the successful implementation of the policy. It is therefore clear that the location and socio-economic context of Pitseng Primary and the surrounding community impact negatively on the nature and quality of resources necessary for the successful implementation of FPE. It is the extent to which these factors impact on the plans and strategies employed for the successful implementation of FPE that this study seeks to address.

1.5 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Pitseng Primary School is located in the rural foothills of the Machache mountain range in the Leribe district in Lesotho. This school is located in a very poor and deprived community. About 80% of the parents have no working. They earn a living by means of farming and gathering wild vegetation. Some mothers depend on the low salaries from their husbands who work in the mines of the Republic of South Africa. Retrenchment of Basotho men who work in the mines has been rife over the last ten years. This fact has exacerbated the severity of the living conditions in the area. HIV/AIDS is rife and many children have been orphaned. There are no health services and people have to travel some twenty kilometres to the nearest Mahobong clinic, which is

mainly accessed by public transport. There is no electricity and the schools use candles on days when the weather is overcast.

In 1999, a year before the FPE policy was implemented, there were about one thousand learners with twenty-one teachers in the school. Then, the teacher-pupil ratio was 1: 48 and the school was prominent in producing very good results. Since the year 2000 the school enrolment has ranged between 1500 and 1600 learners with 21 teachers. This means that the teacher-pupil ratio increased to 1: 76. There are thus legitimate concerns among the stakeholders that the school's results have declined since the introduction of FPE. I chose to study this particular school in order to establish the extent to which this decline is due to inappropriate strategies employed in the implementation of FPE.

In July 2003 when I visited the school for data collection the following conditions prevailed at the school:

First, the FPE programme was offered up to standard four. Second, among the twenty-one teachers at the school, I found that the principal of the school Mr. Lebesele Khoaeane had passed away in May 2003. Third, there were four female teachers who were critically ill, three of whom were on sick leave. The other one was coming to school

after a period of six months on sick leave, but was still very ill. Fourth, the three teachers who teach the four FPE grades had been on a one-week FPE workshop at the regional district office (Hlotse, Leribe). Fifth, in all there were fourteen teachers present at the school that week. Sixth, there was a feeding programme in the school for FPE children which was mainly run by the parents. Lastly, the feeding programme for the FPE children was different from the one for children who were still being paid for by their parents (from standard five to standard seven). The FPE children ate their meals which were prepared outside the school premises at 10.00am and parents, not teachers, were involved in this programme. Children who were not involved in the FPE programme ate their meals at 01.00pm. These meals were prepared in the school by cooks who were employed by the school.

The above is just a brief description of the school during the five days of data collection. A more detailed account will be dealt with in chapter four.

I therefore anticipated that the conditions in the school would make the implementation of FPE difficult. However, I still believe that

appropriate strategies can be adopted to implement FPE in the school, which is why this study was undertaken.

1.6 PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to critically analyse the strategies for the implementation of the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy in the context of Pitseng Primary School in the Leribe district in Lesotho. It can be assumed that the perceptions and understanding people have about a subject inform the plans and strategies they employ to deal with the subject. Therefore, the study aims at examining the major stakeholders' (including teachers and parents) perceptions of the factors that have informed the implementation of FPE. Since the Lesotho education system is a joint venture between the government, the church and the community, the study assumed that other stakeholders rather than those who are at school level should have had an influence on the strategies employed for the implementation of this policy. The aim was to examine the stakeholders' perceptions of the nature and effectiveness of their actions and responses for the successful implementation of FPE policy at the school. In this respect, the study aimed to address the following questions:

1. How do the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School understand the purpose, focus and objectives of FPE?
2. What plans and strategies have these stakeholders developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE?
3. To what extent have these plans and strategies been effective or ineffective in the implementation of FPE in the school?
4. What challenges has the school encountered in its effort to implement FPE and how have these challenges been addressed?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Against the above background, it is evident that an investigation into the strategies Pitseng Primary School stakeholders have developed and adopted should be undertaken. The findings of this study would make these stakeholders aware of the areas of weakness on the strategies they develop and adopt for the implementation of the FPE policy, and the ways in which these weaknesses could be improved or avoided. The study would also provide alternative adaptive mechanisms of handling the challenges that the school encountered in its efforts to implement FPE. It is hoped that the findings from the

respondents would provide valuable insight that would help address the questions that this study seeks to address.

1.8 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to the following areas: It investigates the understanding of the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School into the purpose, focus and objectives of FPE; strategies and plans they developed and adopted; the extent to which these have been effective in the implementation of FPE; and the kind of challenges they encounter in their efforts to implement this policy, as well as how they address these challenges. It is not the intention of this study to get into the modalities of the cognitive processing and acquisition of information, and the philosophical underpinnings behind the plans and strategies employed (Ornstein and Behar-Horenstein, 1999). It is worth noting that this study does not seek to investigate the taxonomy of the educational policy implementation, nor does it attempt to find out the appropriateness of the actual changes that the FPE policy makes in the Pitseng community. In essence, this study seeks to investigate the appropriateness of the strategies chosen by the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School to implement FPE. By appropriate here I mean the extent to which these strategies are in

line with the practical demands of the Pitseng Primary School and its community for the successful implementation of FPE.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As much as I wanted to cover a representative sample of all the schools in Lesotho which are in the process of implementing this programme, I was limited by finances, time, and most of all, the scope of this study. I chose Pitseng Primary School because of the background knowledge I had about its problems in the implementation of FPE and because of its accessibility to me as a next-door neighbour at the high school where I teach (Khethisa High school).

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

This paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study. It covers the areas of study, rationale for the study, statement of the problem, context of the study, purpose and focus of the study, significance of the study, the scope of the study, the limitations of the study and the organisation of the project.

Chapter two deals with the theoretical framework of the study. Relevant literature on various models, styles and approaches to policy implementation will be reviewed. This chapter also presents a conceptual framework within which data collected in this study is interpreted.

Chapter three focuses on the research design and methodology used to collect data. This study takes the form of a case study, using interviews, questionnaires, and observations for the collection of data.

Chapter four deals with data analysis. The data is presented, descriptively analysed and the findings are discussed.

Chapter five concludes by drawing on the findings to ascertain whether they answer the research questions, how they relate to the literature reviewed and present a succinct plan of action to develop proper strategies of policy implementation in the school.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the understanding of the Pitseng Primary School's stakeholders about the purpose and objectives of the FPE policy. The study also sought to find out the strategies that these stakeholders developed and adopted to implement the FPE policy, the challenges they encountered and how these challenges were addressed.

The previous chapter introduced the background and objectives of FPE and the rationale for the study. The chapter also presented the statement of the problem, the context in which this study was undertaken, the purpose and significance of the study. The scope and the limitation of this study were also discussed. The chapter concluded by presenting a succinct outline of the organization of this study.

This chapter seeks to provide a review of the existing scholarship (Mouton, 2001) on the plans and strategies of the FPE policy implementation. It will also present the theoretical frameworks that

have informed the study. It begins by offering definitions of the key concepts around which the study was framed.

2.2 DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPTS

2.2.1 A POLICY

A policy is any formally adopted organisation's operational statements of value, 'statements of prescriptive intent' (Ball, 1990, p. 3). In this study policy is taken to mean a prescriptive statement of intent that has a bearing on what should or should not happen in schools.

2.2.2 IMPLEMENTATION

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (1990) defines implementation as a process of putting a change or a program of reform into effect. In this study, implementation refers to a process of devising succinct plans and strategies that were followed to translate the values embedded in the policy statements into concrete and practical reality (Jansen and Sayed, 2001).

2.2.3 STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders are the different members of the society who have an interest in what is taking place at the school. This study has confined stakeholders to mean the parents, the teachers, and the governing body.

2.3 REVIEW OF EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP

This section seeks to review the existing literature on the strategies employed in the implementation of FPE policies. This review focuses on the purpose and objectives of FPE, the plans and strategies developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE, the effectiveness of these strategies and the challenges encountered for the implementation of the FPE as well as the measures taken to address these challenges. Both local and international literature has been interchangeably interwoven in this review.

Efforts in finding scholarly literature that outlines succinct plans and strategies for policy implementation at a school level, not to mention one that specifically outlines the plans and strategies for the implementation of FPE in primary schools in Lesotho have not been

successful. However, the literature discussed below has been deemed useful in this study.

2.3.1 THE PURPOSE, FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES OF FPE

The fundamental underpinning of the FPE program in Lesotho is the desire to ensure that every Mosotho has access to basic education (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 11). This desire takes expression in the FPE policy objectives, which are to ensure that all Basotho have equal opportunity to basic education. This aspiration is premised on the fact that some Basotho children were denied opportunity to basic education because their parents could not afford the school fees. Through increased stakeholders' participation, the government of Lesotho had a desire to forge appropriate linkages for a well-coordinated primary education system. The purpose of FPE is also to ensure that primary school learners are provided with life skills that are relevant and useful within the context of Lesotho (Ministry of Education, 2000). Poverty eradication and creation of jobs for the Basotho people was yet another objective for the implementation of FPE. To this end, the feeding scheme was intended to alleviate malnutrition and poverty related diseases in young children (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 1)

The purpose, focus and objectives of the Lesotho FPE policy seem to follow international trends. This is due to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which were ratified by almost all nations in the world (Mosisili, 1999). The convention posits that children have a right to basic education and that it is the responsibility of every country to ensure that children have access to basic education. The ratification of this convention therefore, meant that the countries which participated undertook to provide FPE in their primary schools. The Jomtein World Conference on Education for All, held in March 1990 also reiterated the need for countries to implement FPE. Therefore, countries like Kenya and Malawi also implemented FPE in their primary schools (UNESCO, 2002) and their main purpose and objectives are more or less the same as the ones for Lesotho FPE.

2.3.2 PLANS AND STRATEGIES FOR FPE IMPLEMENTATION

Since the Lesotho education system is a joint venture among the government, the church and the community (Mateka, 1994), most of the strategies that were developed and adopted were hugely influence by the state. This was largely because the state was responsible for the funding of the schools including the payment of teachers. Available

literature did not suggest any implementation of plans and strategies at an individual school level. However, this does not nullify the vital contribution and involvement of the stakeholders at school level. This section focuses on the plans and strategies developed and adopted for the kind of physical facilities necessary for the implementation of FPE: the instructional materials; the concern for pupils' welfare; the kind of professional services carried out; and the mobilization of support services (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Haddad (1995) asserts that there should be physical facilities provided for any policy implementation to thrive. To achieve this, the stakeholders in the Lesotho education system planned to establish new community schools, which would facilitate the implementation of FPE. The intention was to establish 120 new community schools in villages where children would have easy access to them. In the already established schools the intention was to build additional classrooms, erect tents for temporary shelter, and provide furniture (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.13).

Mechanisms were devised for the provision of instructional materials. It was clear that teachers would need additional stationary. Stakeholders also planned to provide teaching and learning materials;

a supply of books and; to put in place special facilities for adult learners (Ministry of Education, 2000 and Paneng, 1999). Provision was made for pupils' welfare. A feeding scheme for the pupils was established because this scheme was also meant to fulfil some of the primary objectives of the policy, namely to alleviate malnutrition and the diseases associated with it. Parents, whom the government paid, ran the feeding scheme. Clear criteria for selecting the parents were made (Ministry of Education, 2000) to ensure that all parents had equal opportunity to be selected. Those who wanted to take part submitted tickets with their names on them and then the tickets were chosen at random. This role lasted for six months, after which the same process was repeated for different parents. This project addressed the need to provide jobs for parents. Strategies were also put in place to provide sporting facilities and equipment for the pupils (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The professional services that would need to be rallied for the implementation of FPE were also considered. The government of Lesotho undertook to provide 460 new teacher grants and a total of 180 principals were trained during 2000. Para-professional teachers were recruited and the in-service program for teachers was intensified (ibid.).

However, Craig (1994) posits that educational policy implementation is always a politically motivated innovation. Therefore, its success depends on the extent to which it is based upon the aspirations and expectations of the majority of the population. The stakeholders in the Lesotho primary schools developed and adopted ways in which they could provide support services for the implementation of FPE. This was done by way of community mobilisation activities, such as teachers and governing body workshops; parents meetings and public gatherings (lipitso) wherein parents were encouraged to send their children to school (Lehohla, 1999).

2.3.3 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FPE AND HOW THEY WERE ADDRESSED.

There were various challenges facing the implementation of FPE. The challenges discussed in this section are related to the strategies for FPE policy implementation discussed earlier.

First, there has been a huge influx of learners in the schools since the implementation of FPE in Lesotho. For example, the enrolment in Lesotho primary schools grew by 80% between the years 2000 and 2002 (Ministry of Education, 2002). According to the honourable

Minister of Education (2002) some children who enrolled at schools were as young as 4 years and the oldest was 52. In a similar situation, according to the Ministry of Education, in Malawi, children had to learn under trees because there were more children attending primary schools and not enough classrooms to house them. Children were denied the chance to learn under normal conditions due to scarce resources such as desks, books, teaching materials etcetera. Children were also exposed to hardships due to lack of classrooms. (e.g. they were exposed to cold, rain, and wind since most of them were learning outside) (Ministry of Education Malawi, 2001). This increase of children in schools also caused them to live in an environment that had very poor sanitation; most of the toilets and water taps had been vandalised and in some cases were altogether absent.

In Kenya the teacher-pupil ratio increased drastically after the introduction of FPE. The government made provision that there had to be a teacher for every 60 children, but in most cases three teachers shared 200 students in one class and divided the subjects between them. This did not help the concentration of the children or that of the teacher. There is no way a teacher can pay attention to 200 pupils (Salmon, 2003).

Second, according to a study conducted by UNESCO (2002) in Kenya, teachers, parents and pupils misunderstood the word "free". They had an attitude that since education was free teachers only taught when they wanted. Similarly children only went to school when they wanted to and even when they went to school some of them just disappeared whenever they liked. This made it difficult for teachers to finish the syllabus, made the schools difficult to manage and thus compromised the quality of education in primary schools. There was also an attitude of "since government said education was free it should do everything for us". Parents sent their children to school without proper uniforms and sometimes with dirty clothes. This added to the challenge of dealing with children who just left the school as they pleased. Without uniforms, teachers could not identify these children when they met them in the streets during school hours and they were unable to take disciplinary action against them.

Third, the World Conference on Education for All, held in Dakar in April 2000, found that performance in primary education fell below desired levels in countries where FPE was implemented. Factors such as large enrolments, lack of educational materials and teachers not being appropriately trained to handle the demands of FPE contributed to this decline. Poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic were regarded as serious

deterrents to effective implementation of FPE. Thousands of teachers and educational personnel have died or been destabilised by HIV/AIDS. Children have been orphaned and thus have had to take on the responsibility to care for their families instead of going to school (UNESCO, 2001)

Fourth, teacher commitment is at the heart of any strategy for the FPE policy implementation. Though it is critical that their commitment, competence and creativity continue to be central to the success of the FPE policy implementation, it is also critical that they receive support from other stakeholders. Most curricula are centrally controlled and tend to deprive stakeholders of the flexibility to adopt strategies for the FPE policy implementation in their own unique contexts (UNESCO, 2001).

From this literature, it is evident that not much has been written on the manner in which stakeholders' understanding of the purpose, focus and objectives of the FPE policy influence the plans and strategies they develop and adopt for the FPE policy implementation. But the challenges that are raised in the literature need to be examined within the context of Pitseng Primary School.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF THE STUDY

This study is informed by three theories on the approaches to policy implementation. The theories are critical theory, pragmatism and positivism. These are the ideological underpinnings behind any steps taken for policy implementation (Schubert, 1986) and were used to collect and analyse data to show the theoretical orientations of the plans and strategies developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE in Lesotho. While working within these three theoretical frameworks, this research also explored the validity of the theories in developing country contexts, and identified the ones which are most appropriate for the implementation of FPE at Pitseng Primary School.

2.4 CRITICAL THEORY

A critical approach is premised on the idea that policy-implementers bring with them to the policy-implementation settings not only an array of theories about the most appropriate plans and strategies for policy implementation, but also a desire to change and improve them (Frame, 2003, p. 8). My study sought to ascertain if the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School did not only bring with them some theories

about how FPE had to be implemented, but also how they wanted those strategies to be changed and improved.

The theorists of this approach argue that policy-implementation should be about identifying and unmasking those human beliefs and practices that limit freedom, justice and democracy of stakeholders' participation in policy implementation (Scott, 2000, p.54). They assume that the goals of an educational policy are ambiguous and contested (Bush, 2003). Therefore, discussions about which strategies to develop and adopt for policy implementation involves a complex process of bargaining and negotiation. Scott (2000, p. 54) asserts that during bargaining and negotiation, members of groups or individuals use certain power devices to ensure that they achieve their interests. This implies that there are conflicting realities in any policy implementation site. In the first place, we have the reality of the dominant groups, who want to adopt policy implementation steps and strategies which promote their values and interest at the expense of the values and interests of the dominated groups.

My study has used this theory to see how various stakeholders took advantage of the FPE policy implementation to unmask some of the beliefs of the other stakeholders and practices which limit the freedom

and democratic participation of all the stakeholders in the implementation of FPE. Data in this study were analysed in a way that displayed how various stakeholders used power devices to achieve their interests at the expense of the other stakeholders when bargaining and negotiating on the implementation strategies of FPE.

The proponents of this approach do not only seek to expose that which is oppressive and dominating (Schubert, 1986, p. 183), they also set criteria under which agreement that is not based on custom, faith and coercion can be reached. My study used this theory to establish how the dominated stakeholders engaged the dominating stakeholders to validate what the dominating stakeholders called the most appropriate plans and strategies; and the criteria under which agreement on the plans and strategies developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE was based.

The model that identifies with this theory for policy implementation is multifaceted. It focuses on the type of communication between various constituent parties of the policy implementation process; it attempts to expose the ways in which powerful people can manipulate the process itself; and tries to find the unanticipated consequences of the decisions made by various stakeholders which might lack sight of the realities of

the school and the community in which the policy is to be implemented (Scott, 2000, p. 22). The model assumes that teachers, parents and managers engage in political activity in pursuit of their own interests (Bush, 2003). It adopts the view that conflict is an endemic feature of educational institutions during policy implementation. My study used this model to establish the ways in which powerful stakeholders manipulated the process of the FPE policy implementation to pursue their own interests. Again, data in this study were analysed to display how the teachers, parents and managers engaged in political activity in pursuit of their own interests in FPE implementation.

2.5 PRAGMATISM

Scott (2000), Frame (2003), Bak (1990), and Schubert (1986), agree in principle that policy implementation involves agreement among human agents about what constitutes the most appropriate strategies and plans. This paradigm posits that various stakeholders in an educational organisation have authority of expertise that contrasts with the positional authority associated with bureaucratic models (Bush, 2003, P. 52). This means that during FPE implementation all stakeholders should be given autonomy and their creative contribution should be equally valued. Schubert (1986) purports that teachers,

parents and the school governing body collaborate to ensure a coherent approach to policy implementation. This model assumes that different stakeholders within an educational institution have a common set of values and thus refer to jointly held beliefs when devising plans and strategies of policy implementation. It follows therefore that decisions should be arrived at by consensus rather than conflict. My study sought to ascertain if the various stakeholders were referring to jointly held beliefs when devising and implementing the strategies for FPE. It also attempts to identify the manner in which the stakeholders were given autonomy and collaborated during FPE implementation.

According to Scott (2000, p. 54) the model of policy implementation that identifies with this theory is called the "pluralist model". In this case, policy implementation involves a large number of people operating at different levels of the education system and thus has a democratic legitimacy as it involves a variety of interested parties. This theory assisted me to investigate how the implementation of FPE involved various stakeholders operating at different levels of the education system and how this enhanced the democratic legitimacy of the plans and strategies developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE.

2.6 POSIVITISM

Positivism does not admit to value or ideological orientation, yet values are implied by the positivist assumptions that it represents (Schubert, 1986, p. 181). This means that policy implementation strategies are informed by certain predictable patterns, which are not dependent upon the context in which policy is implemented, but are applicable in all situations. Owens (1998, pp. 29-31) asserts that a positivistic approach to policy implementation is epitomised by the image of the eighteenth century army of Frederick the Great with its characteristically mechanical regimentation. According to Fay this theory posits that strategies taken to implement policy estrange and alienate stakeholders from themselves – from their true nature and their ideal form of existence (1887, cited in Deacon, 1990, p. 1). My study used this theory to establish the extent to which the plans and strategies developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE were not based on value and ideological orientation and if so, how this estranged and alienated the stakeholders.

Steps and strategies for policy implementation are seen as an ordered set of systems that operate according to discernible patterns or laws, which are universal; thus a claim to know how and why particular

steps and strategies for policy implementation work, is a claim to universal truth about how and why these strategies work in all cases. The knowledge of what, how and why certain strategies work, therefore enables one to predict, control and manipulate the process of policy implementation (Frame, 2003, p.3). The most appropriate policy implementation strategies can be discovered by empirical observations, which are neutral and a-theoretical, and there can be a univocal language to explain such discoveries (Scott, 2000, pp. 50-51). My study sought to establish how the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School used universal laws about how policies are implemented to determine the plans and strategies adopted for the implementation of FPE. Effort was made to ensure if the strategies adopted at this were discovered through empirical observations, which were claimed to be applicable in all cases.

According to Scott (2000, p. 21), a policy implementation model that identifies with this theory is a "centrally controlled" model. In this case, policy-makers who reside in the offices develop universal policy implementation plans and strategies. The job of the policy implementers at the school site is just to follow the guidelines and directives for policy implementation. I used this model to investigate how the implementation strategies adopted at Pitseng Primary were

the brainchild of the Pitseng Primary School stakeholders or were imposed on them by the officials who reside in offices.

The above theories were used to analyse data in this study. The study also sought to identify the most appropriate theory/theories for the successful implementation of FPE at Pitseng Primary School. Data were sorted and interpreted according to the main attributes/principles of the various theories. This helped establish the extent to which the plans and strategies developed and adopted by the Pitseng Primary School stakeholders bore the characteristics of particular theory/theories. Further analysis was made to find out the extent to which these strategies were effective in the implementation of FPE in this school. The results of these and the reasons behind them helped me to suggest the theories that are most appropriate for the implementation of FPE at Pitseng Primary School.

2.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The literature reviewed indicated that the main purpose and objectives of FPE was to make basic education accessible to all the children, to fight malnutrition and create jobs for the parents. The review also indicated that the strategies that were developed and adopted for the

implementation of FPE were the building of additional classrooms and other physical facilities, provision of feeding scheme wherein parents played a major role, and community mobilisation activities such as holding workshops for teachers and parent meetings.

The literature also suggests that there was a huge influx of children to the primary schools due to the implementation of FPE. In various countries, lack of appropriately trained teachers, lack of enough classrooms, and lack of educational material were some of the challenges facing the implementation of FPE. HIV/AIDS was the main deterrent to the successful implementation of the FPE programme in many developing countries. The literature revealed that the quality of primary education failed in many countries where FPE was implemented. The literature asserts that the problems facing the implementation of FPE can only be overcome through the enhancement of teachers' commitment, competence and creativity. However, teachers alone cannot solve the challenges encountered in the implementation of FPE, hence the need for the involvement and support of other stakeholders.

The literature does not link the stakeholders' understanding of the purpose and objectives of FPE to the strategies they developed and

adopted for its implementation. In most cases the literature is full of statements of intent about what should be considered for the implementation of FPE. It does not show the strategies that were developed and adopted by the stakeholders at the school level in the realm of FPE implementation, nor does it relate these to any specific context. As such, the literature fails to ascertain the effectiveness of these strategies because they are not confined within a particular milieu. The challenges raised for the implementation of FPE might thus not be applicable to Pitseng Primary School.

To fill this gap, my study provides a detailed case study of this selected primary school with the focus on investigating the stakeholders' understanding of the purpose and objectives of FPE, the strategies these stakeholders developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE, the effectiveness of these strategies and the challenges the stakeholders encountered as well the measures they took to address these challenges. The name of the school under investigation is Pitseng Primary School, which is located in the rural eastern foothills of the Leribe district in Lesotho. My study also covered the strategies that were addressed in the literature review and put them within the current context of Pitseng Primary School. The study concludes with a succinct plan of action about the plans and strategies

that are appropriate for the implementation of FPE at Pitseng Primary School.

The next chapter describes the research design, methodology and data collection methods used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the understanding of the Pitseng Primary School's stakeholders of the purpose and objectives of the FPE policy. The study also sought to find out the strategies that these stakeholders developed and adopted to implement the FPE policy, the challenges they encountered and how these challenges were addressed. This chapter outlines the research design, methodology, as well as the methods used for the data collection in this study.

In May 2003, I wrote a letter to the principal of Pitseng Primary School, asking for permission to undertake my study in his school. In the letter, I indicated which stakeholders I would like to involve, and the purpose of my study. In the beginning of June 2003, when I went to Lesotho for an answer to my letter, I was told that the principal had just died. The deputy principal, who was then the acting principal, asked me to give her a few days to check in the late principal's files for my letter. Once she got the letter she gave me a positive response and from then I worked closely with her to arrange and ask for permission from the other stakeholders to participate in my study. I received

positive response and a willingness to participate in all cases, except for a few cases when parents were not available during the data collection period.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilised a case study research design (Bell, 1999). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), a case study is a technique the researcher uses to observe the characteristics of an individual unit, for example a school, community or a class. A case study has enabled me to be more focused and probe deeper into the understanding of the Pitseng Primary School's stakeholders about their understanding of the purpose and objectives of FPE, the plans and strategies they developed and adopted to implement the programme, and whether or not these strategies promoted teaching and learning in the school, as well as the challenges encountered and the efforts taken to address them. In this type of study, the findings also describe the current situation and individual practices and opinions.

3.2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach of this study was mainly qualitative. Merriam and Simpson (1995) assert that qualitative methods provide rich and holistic descriptions which reveal the dynamic complexities of the social settings of the investigated phenomena. This is important in this study because the understanding, strategies, reasons for strategies and their success were being investigated. These variables can be interpreted in a number of ways and their interpretation differs from one context to another. However, quantitative methods were applied where necessary.

3.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

Sample refers to the selected group of people or elements selected from the larger population to participate in the research study. The unit of analysis in this case study was a school. Pitseng Primary School's governing body, teachers and parents involved in the implementation of FPE were the primary respondents. There were five members of the governing body including the principal. The acting principal, the chairman of the governing body and the representative of teachers in the school governing body were interviewed. The study

assumed that the principal and the chairman of the governing body were the driving forces behind the implementation of the FPE programme at this school. Their experiences were deemed valuable to provide information to answer the research questions. Out of the twenty-one teachers of the school, seven were originally chosen for interviews. One teacher per grade level (grades 1-7) was invited to participate on a voluntary basis. Ten parents were also selected based on availability and willingness to participate. This approach was used for interviews only. In addition, questionnaires were distributed to all five members of the governing body, and all twenty-one teachers at the school. However, only fifteen were returned from the teachers. From the five members of the governing body, only three were able to return filled-in questionnaires, the other two were blank.

3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Considering factors of time, expense, and administration, I regarded a questionnaire as one of the most suitable methods of data collection. Questionnaires were mainly used to collect data related to the nature and quality of human and physical resources available in the school and their usefulness for the implementation of FPE. The social and

economic context of the school and the surrounding community were also elicited from the questionnaires
(See APPENDIX 1).

Questionnaires are used when a researcher needs to quickly get lots of information from people in a non-threatening way (Gay and Abrasion, 1996). The participants in the study could complete questionnaires anonymously and thus feel free to give information they would be shy to reveal in a face-to-face contact situation. These consisted of closed dichotomous questions, wherein respondents were expected to give a yes or no answer without being allowed to make remarks (Wellington, 2000). These were followed by open-ended questions which allowed the respondents to expatiate the stand they took on the close-ended questions (Mouton, 2001), thus expressing their views more freely. Since this study is mainly qualitative, 80% of the questions were open-ended giving room for respondents to reason out and air their personal opinions. As stated above, the questionnaires were administered to all twenty-one teachers and five members of the governing body at the school, including the principal. Out of the twenty-one teachers, only fifteen questionnaires were completed, while only three of the five members of the governing body returned completed questionnaires.

3.4.2 THE INTERVIEWS

Interviews were also used for data collection in this study. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) purport that the ultimate goal of the researcher is to understand the meaning people make about their experiences and that interviews provide necessary room for this purpose. When conducting an interview, the researcher has face-to-face contact with the interviewees. This enables the researcher to read other speech dynamics such as eye contact, tone of voice and body gestures the interviewees make, which enrich the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the data collected. The interview instruments consisted of five sections (see Appendix 2). The questions in the first section were geared towards establishing the kind of understanding the stakeholders had about the purpose and objectives of FPE. The second section required the interviewees to outline the plans and strategies they developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE. In the third section, the interview questionnaire probed various reasons why certain strategies were developed and adopted. The fourth section asked the interviewees to explain the extent to which teaching and learning improved in the school as a result of the implementation of FPE. The fifth section examined the challenges

encountered by the school in its efforts to implement FPE. A tape recorder was used and the tapes were then transcribed for analysis.

Originally, I had intended to conduct the interviews with seven teachers on a one-to-one basis. When I got to the school, since there were few teachers, I was allowed to conduct the interviews after school hours. After interviewing two teachers I realised that the interview schedule was taking a long time and that the other teachers were becoming impatient. I also realised that the situation was very tense with one teacher. The teachers were feeling like they were being tested and were shy to speak openly. So I decided to change the interview schedule so that teachers could be interviewed in pairs. This made the interview sessions run a little faster and teachers were more relaxed and interactive in pairs. I had to adjust the number of teachers to be interviewed from seven to eight so that I could have three more turns of teachers in pairs.

I interviewed three members of the governing body. They were the chairman of the governing body, the representative of teachers in the school governing body, and the acting principal. The other members were not available. One of them, I was told, went to look for his stolen cattle in the Machache mountain ranges and the other was reported to

have gone to see her sick daughter in the Mapoteng hospital in Teyateyaneng district. I was able to conduct the interviews with the entire ten parents as planned. In all cases, the interviews were tape-recorded and I took some notes as a back-up where possible.

3.4.3 OBSERVATIONS

During the five-day visitation to the school, I observed day-to-day activities of the school in a bid to identify the challenges and successes of the school as it tries to implement FPE. In particular, I observed the classroom activities, school assembly and feeding programme (see Appendix 2 for details).

Observations are useful because they portray the impact of the actual actions that the stakeholders took (Lofland, cited in Patton, 1996). Gay and Abrasion (1996) claim that though observations might be complex to categorise, they provide accurate information about how a programme actually operates, particularly about the process.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

I have taken certain measures to ensure that the aspects of validity and reliability are covered in this study. 'Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument actually measures what it is intended to measure' (Purohit, 2001, p.37). Jansen and Vithal (1997) posit that validity is an attempt to 'check out' whether the meaning and interpretation of an event is sound or whether a particular measure is an accurate reflection of what one has intended to find out. To ensure validity in this study, I used triangulation of data. Cohen *et al.* (2000) refer to triangulation of data as a process in which two or more data collection methods are used to observe the same event in the study. The reason for this is to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected (Cohen and Manion, 1984).

Vithal and Jansen (1997) define reliability as the degree to which a tool is consistent to measure what it is supposed to measure. To ensure reliability in my study I used the same questions directed at parents for all the parents I interviewed. This approach was also taken with other respondents.

With the same intention of making the study valid and reliable (Neumann, 1997), I piloted the questionnaires. Cohen *et al.* (2000) purports that the questionnaires need to be piloted and refined so that the final version contains as full a range of possible responses as possible. In addition, Mouton (2001) contends that most errors, such as misunderstanding of the questions by respondents, occur because of the ambiguity of the questions.

The pre-testing of the questions was undertaken in another school ten days before the date for their distribution. The group on which this was done bore similar characteristics to those of the sample (Neumann, 1997) but this group was not part of the sample. This exercise and the comments from my supervisor assisted me in refining my questionnaires.

3.6 LIMITATIONA OF THE STUDY

As stated earlier, the design of this research is a case study. The case study only focuses on one school in Lesotho, using a small sample. As such the findings of the study cannot be generalised as representative of all the Lesotho primary schools which are implementing FPE. As

much as I wanted to cover a representative sample of all the schools in Lesotho, as already stated I was limited by finances, time, and most of all, the scope of this study. However, experiences gleaned from this school can provide valuable lessons about the implementation of FPE in other similar settings.

3.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has focused on the methodology and specific methods of data collection in response to the research questions about the understanding of the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School with regard to the purpose, focus and objectives of FPE, the strategies they developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE, the challenges they encountered, and how they addressed them.

The sample and the method of inquiry that this study has adopted have been presented and justified. Among other things, the chapter discussed the measures I took to ask for permission to conduct this study from Pitseng Primary School authorities, and how validity and reliability in this study were ensured.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to analyse and interpret data collected to investigate Pitseng Primary School stakeholders' understanding of the purpose and objectives of FPE, the plans and strategies they developed and adopted for its implementation, the challenges they encountered in their effort to implement FPE and how they addressed them. The study utilises a case study research design, using interviews, questionnaires and observations as methods of collecting data.

4.2 FINDINGS

The findings and the discussion of the results are presented according to the specific questions of the research (Mouton, 2001). The research questions were:

- a) How do the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School understand the purpose, focus and objectives of FPE?
- b) What plans and strategies have these stakeholders developed and adopted for the implementation of FPE?

- c) What challenges have the school encountered in its effort to implement FPE and have these challenges been addressed?

Responses have been categorised according to various stakeholders, and integrated with literature on theories that might have underpinned the strategies employed by these stakeholders in the implementation of FPE. Presentations of the responses from various stakeholders on each research question are followed by a brief summary/discussion.

4.2.1 UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF FPE

In relation to the stakeholders' understanding of the purpose and objectives of FPE, the following responses emerged:

a) Teachers' Responses

Pitseng Primary School teachers understand the purpose and objectives of FPE as the government's bid to ensure that education reaches all Basotho children in the country.

I think the purpose of FPE is to ensure that education becomes accessible to all children because when I look carefully I am aware that many children could not come to school. However,

because of FPE, almost every child has come to school, even those one could not imagine they could attend school (Response to teacher questionnaire).

The teachers assert that most children could not access education because of lack of financial resources and the purpose of FPE was to solve this problem.

Some teachers see FPE as a government strategy to increase their workload.

No *ntate*, I do not understand why the government did not consider in advance all the demands of FPE. Because I do not think they are stupid enough not to have realised that if they say every child must come to school without paying, they needed to ensure that there were enough teachers to teach them (Teacher Interview, July 2003)

These responses indicate that Pitseng Primary School teachers understood the importance of the implementation of FPE. However, failure by the government to provide the school with adequate resources to implement the programme made teachers see the implementation of this programme in a negative light.

b) Governing Body's Responses

The Pitseng Primary School's governing body understands FPE as the country's move to ensure that every Mosotho child gets basic education. To illustrate, the acting principal declared:

When the government realised, in fact it was not the government but this is the idea of SADAC countries of which Lesotho is one. The idea of FPE was meant to help the needy parents to send their children to school and to provide them with jobs as they participate in the feeding scheme. The money they get is R4000.00 per month and they are encouraged to keep and accumulate so they could make bigger projects wherein more other Basotho people could be employed (Interview, July 2003).

According to them, the feeding scheme was also meant to eliminate hunger and malnutrition among the children. To illustrate, the chairman of the governing body concluded:

Because of poverty our children are dying of hunger. The government encourages and pays the parents who volunteer to cook for the FPE children. I see this as a tool to fight hunger and diseases (Interview, July 2003: Translated from Sesotho).

The school's governing body members also saw FPE as a move to reduce the loitering of youth in the streets which leads to juvenile crime and teenage pregnancy. For example, the teachers' representative argued that juvenile crime and teenage pregnancy were rife in the Pitseng community and attributed it to the high numbers of youth who loitered in the streets. To exemplify, she affirmed:

With the implementation of FPE most youth are attending school, where measures are taken to ensure order and discipline. We no longer witness cases of rape and forced teenage marriages in our community (Interview, July 2003).

c) Parents' Responses

Parents at Pitseng Primary understand that the purpose and objectives of FPE are to ensure that all the children in Lesotho are given the opportunity to learn to read and write. They posit that FPE seeks to provide the Basotho children with knowledge that will assist them to meet the challenges of their society and to assist the needy parents who cannot afford to send their children to school. For example, according to one:

I am not able to read and write. Consequently, I cannot provide for my family because all the jobs need someone who is literate.

FPE will help our children to be literate and thus find some jobs to support their families (Parents Interview, July 2003: Translated from Sesotho).

Some parents see FPE as a mechanism that responded to the fact that most Basotho men have been retrenched from South African mines and consequently most parents have no money to pay for school fees.

Since our husbands were retrenched from the South African mines, many children were not able to go to school. The implementation of FPE makes all children to go to school, even those whose parents are not working (Parents Interview, July 2003: Translated from Sesotho).

The above responses reveal that the majority of the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School understand the purpose of FPE in four ways. They understand FPE as a tool to:

- ensure that all the Pitseng community children have access to basic education,
- create jobs for the needy Pitseng community people,
- eliminate hunger and malnutrition among the Pitseng community children and

- prevent the loitering of the youth in the streets and thus combat juvenile crime and teenage pregnancy.

4.3.2 THE STRATEGIES THAT WERE DEVELOPED AND ADOPTED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FPE

a) Teachers' Responses

Teachers in the sample claimed that there were no formal strategies developed and adopted within the school for the implementation of FPE. This is in spite of the fact that they have been attending a series of workshops on teaching in the context of FPE (e.g. high teacher pupil ratio, lack of resources, etcetera). According to one teacher:

Since the introduction of FPE in 2000, we have been attending a series of workshops organised by the Ministry of Education
(Response to teacher questionnaire).

Teachers claimed that there were a lot of problems in the school concerning FPE, which they, as the people who run the day-to-day activities of the school, have solutions to. However, they were prevented from acting because of lack of resources. According to them, all formally developed and adopted strategies were ultimately determined by the government, theirs was just to follow suit.

The only formally acclaimed strategy by the school was that of dividing children according to age and teaching them separately. As one teacher explained:

We divide children according to age. This we called 'in-house-streaming' in which children between the ages of six and ten were grouped together, those between the ages of eleven and fifteen together, separate from the ones between sixteen and upwards. This strategy failed because of shortage of teachers to teach these groups (Response to teacher questionnaire).

During data collection at the school, one teacher was teaching a huge group of noisy children because of the shortage of teachers.

The only way to ensure commitment to strategies of policy implementation is to let the teachers who run the day-to-day activities of the school spearhead and own the process of developing such strategies (Scott, 2000). Besides, without enough teachers the implementation of FPE becomes a futile exercise.

b) Responses from the Members of the Governing Body

Members of the school governing body claimed that they attended workshops about the implementation of FPE. The Ministry of Education ran these workshops. According to the acting principal:

The workshops also allowed us to suggest to the government officials the needs of our school to implement FPE (Interview, July 2003).

Members of the school's governing body claimed that in trying to solve the problem of age differences among the children, they decided to have two shifts in the school. One teacher representative explained:

We strategised that younger children (6-14) attend school in the morning hours (08.00am - 01.00pm) and the older ones (15 and upwards) in the afternoons (from 02.00pm - 06.00pm). This strategy failed because there were no teachers who could teach in the afternoons and the present teachers were not prepared to work for an unpaid overtime (Interview, July 2003).

The school's governing body claimed that they requested desks, chairs, chalk, additional buildings and teaching materials from the Ministry of Education. Most of these were provided and the school was

supplied with tents for temporary shelter pending the building of additional classrooms. I observed that there were new desks and chairs, and some additional classrooms had just been completed. The chairman of the governing body added:

We also encouraged and supported teachers to attend the workshops and met with parents to encourage them to send their children, who were mostly shepherds, to school (Interview, July 2003).

This implies that without proper and adequate resources, effective implementation of FPE is not possible.

c) Parents' Responses

In order to make FPE work, parents who were interviewed claimed that they encouraged their children to go to school. One parent explained:

We encourage our children to go to school by making examples of the successful people in our community, saying that our children will be like them if they go to school. Again, we cook food for the FPE children where the government pays us R2.00 per child per day (Interview, July 2003: Translated from Sesotho).

Some parents asserted that they accompanied their children in the mornings to ensure that they got to school. They also gave their children some money for exercise books when they were asked to do so by their teachers. One parent lamented:

Because of poverty and unemployment sometimes we are not able to buy the exercise books and other demands of the school (Interview, July 2003: Translated from Sesotho).

Respondents in this study seemed to agree that most of the plans and strategies they undertook for the implementation of FPE were not initiated by the stakeholders at the school level. For example, the fact that teachers attended workshops and that the school was provided with desks and additional classrooms was not discussed and adopted at school level. They were all determined and provided by the government through the Ministry of Education. School level strategies did not work because of lack of resources. For example, teaching two shifts and dividing learners into two groups according to age did not work because of the shortage of teachers.

4.3.3 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND HOW THEY WERE ADDRESSED

a) Teachers' Responses

Teachers in the study claim that since the implementation of FPE, the school had been facing serious financial problems. One teacher claimed that:

Children do not pay school fees under the FPE policy. Sometimes they become sick and we have to wait for their parents to take them to the hospital. If the parents do not come, we have to contribute some money ourselves for the child to be taken to the hospital, especially in emergency cases (Response to teacher questionnaire).

Teachers also asserted that classrooms were overcrowded. This posed health problems and compromised the quality of education in the school. According to one teacher:

One teacher is teaching 112 children, who are congested in a tent. There is no space to move from one child to another and thus it is difficult to give them enough attention. In summer, some children collapse and faint because of heat and poor

ventilation in the tents. We are happy that the government is providing some additional classrooms (Interview, July 2003).

Another problem faced by the school concerned discipline among the learners. In both the interviews and questionnaires, teachers posited that some children were over age and ungovernable and this posed a major disciplinary problem in the school. They reckoned that this was partly because most of them spent a long time on the rural farms (Motebong), where they learnt to be violent and use vulgar language. Teachers claimed that they tried in vain to institute disciplinary measures against these children.

Observations during data collection indicated that teachers had problems in managing teaching in the classrooms because of the age disparities among the children. The older children were very undisciplined and quarrelsome with teachers. One teacher wrote in the questionnaire:

We normally use analogies to make students understand the lessons. One day I asked the children if their father had ten cows and the thieves come and steal three cows as to how many would be left. One old boy stood up and instead of answering the question he said, 'no madam that cannot happen. Where would I

be when the thieves steal my father's cattle, I can fight until I die'. I tried to explain but the boy could not understand.

A further problem faced by teachers involved insufficient materials. Teachers argued that the learning support materials provided by the government for learners are not sufficient. Ten exercise books randomly selected from grade two indicated that only four of the children were using new exercise books that were bought by their parents after the FPE ones were filled. The other six were rubbing off the work they did earlier from their exercise books so that they could be able to write in class. As I was checking the books, one elderly teacher came to me with rage and said:

You see! Your father Mosisili [Prime Minister] told parents to bring their children to school without paying, yet he only gives them two exercise books and two pencils for the whole year. The exercise books get finished in two months and parents refuse to buy them. Then how am I expected to teach?

From the above responses, it is clear that the major challenges that Pitseng Primary School teachers faced in the implementation of FPE are lack of resources, overcrowding and lack of discipline among the children. This suggests that the school should formulate and embark

on resource mobilisation strategies and rehabilitation of the older children into the school atmosphere, for FPE to be effectively implemented in the school.

b) Governing Body's Responses

When asked about the factors that prevented effective implementation of FPE, members of the Pitseng governing body also alluded to the scarcity of resources in the school as a major challenge they faced in their effort to implement FPE. According to the acting principal:

We have no means of generating money to run the school yet the school has to fund teachers who attend the FPE workshops. As you can see, windows are broken and a lot of dust gets in the classrooms. I will not forget when a car knocked our child. First, the child lay on the ground for sometime while we waited to confirm if he came from our school because the child was not wearing the school uniform. After we identified that it was our child we waited more trying to raise some money through volunteering teachers for the child to be taken to the hospital. The child died on his way to the hospital after a 4-hour delay from when the accident happened (Interview, July 2003).

The chairman of the governing body complained about lack of cooperation among the members of the governing body as well as among the stakeholders of the Pisteng Primary School at large. He argued that in meetings it always looked like as if they worked together as a school governing body, but he has observed that in reality the teachers' representative colludes with other teachers to rebel against the recommendations of the school governing body. For example, the school governing body agreed that teachers should oversee/supervise the feeding of the children. However, no teacher was willing to cooperate in this regard.

Another problem identified by the governing body was absenteeism from school. They professed that some children only come to school for examinations. According to the teachers' representative:

Some children only come to school during lunch time and leave immediately after they have eaten. They continue to do so throughout the year and only come in classes when it is time for writing examinations. This is promoted by the fact that since the implementation of FPE some teachers do not take proper attendance registers and are no longer involved in the feeding of the children (Interview, July 2003).

The acting principal complained that parents send their children to school without bathing them. She said that with the densely populated classrooms, she feared that the few cases of malaria reported in the school could be due to this unhygienic state of the FPE children. She explained:

We hold meetings with parents about these issues. However, parents always rebuke us and blame us for wanting them to pay for their children to come to school, much against their Prime Minister's will, whom they claimed he told parents not to pay a cent for their children to attend school (Interview, July 2003).

The acting principal suggested that HIV/AIDS was rife in the Pitseng community. According to her, many children were orphaned and consequently did not attend school because they had to look after their families. This pandemic disease also affects many teachers in the school. She elaborated:

Out of the twenty-one teachers in my school, four have been away from the school for three months allegedly because of HIV/AIDS related illnesses (Interview, July 2003).

During data collection I observed that one teacher of the four whom the acting principal spoke about was critically ill. I was informed that she had just joined the school that week after three months sick leave.

During a subsequent visit in November 2003, I was informed of the death of two teachers out of the four whom the acting principal referred to in the interviews.

The above responses show that there is a lack of coordinated strategy regarding the implementation of FPE. This means that the governing body should develop a strategy to address challenges that face the school. For example, they could convene meetings for all stakeholders (including the learners) wherein they deliberate on the ways in which the school can best implement FPE.

Again, HIV/AIDS campaigns should be intensified in the Pitseng community. The school should also propose that the government employ and fund substitute teachers to replace the sick ones.

c) Parents' Responses

Parents claim that they have difficulty sending their children to school. During the interviews one parent lamented that her child was twenty-five years old and he has been hired as a shepherd from the age of twelve to bring income in the family. She said her child was over age,

felt ashamed to attend school with young children, and therefore refused to go to school.

Most parents argued that the biggest challenge they have about FPE is the lack of clarity about the role they are expected to play as far as supporting their children is concerned. One of the parents expressed her feelings about this point:

As parents, we are receiving contradicting messages about the role we should play concerning our children who are attending FPE. Teachers claim that we should buy uniforms and exercises for our children. It is surprising because our Prime Minister [Mr. Mosisili] had spoken in the public gatherings and over the radio that under the policy of FPE we do not have to pay anything and that we can send our children to school with traditional attire (t'sea) and rubber boots (likhohlopo) (Interview, July 2003: Translated from Sesotho).

A few parents who understood that they are expected to buy uniforms and pay for the exercise books etcetera, complained that the parents who did not want to pay anything rebuked them. For example, one parent claimed that she was insulted and intimidated by her neighbours for trying to explain to them the importance of buying the

school uniforms for their children. She went on to say that these parents even went to intimidate teachers and told them not to ask them to pay money when the government made it clear that they should not pay anything for their children to attend school.

Parents claimed that in order for them to be eligible to compete for participation in the feeding scheme, they must have R4000.00 in their bank accounts. This is also written in the FPE feeding scheme policy guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2000). The rationale behind this is to ensure that parents who participate in the feeding scheme have enough money to feed the children before the government makes the first payment, which normally takes up to three months.

Pitseng is a poverty-stricken community. Most of the parents do not even have bank accounts. Therefore, only those few parents who have the bank accounts and R4000.00 in them are eligible to be selected and the money goes to them only (One Parent Interview, July 2003: Translated from Sesotho).

Another parent who supported this idea complained that even when they had organised themselves and borrowed some money, they have to wait three months before they get their first payment. According to her:

This makes it even difficult for us to cope with the demands of the feeding scheme.

Many parents paid homage to one businessman, the owner of the Hi-light supermarket Pitseng, whom they claimed always supplies them with food and the necessities for feeding the children on credit until they get paid.

As poor parents we form groups and raise R4000.00. Mr. Lekena [owner of Hi-light supermarket] supplies us with food on credit, which we pay after three months when the government pays us. With this kind of assistance, many parents who could not afford are now able to take part in the feeding scheme (One Parent Interview, July 2003: Translated from Sesotho).

Lack of role clarity and inability to participate in the feeding scheme are major challenges facing the Pitseng Primary School parents. If FPE is to be implemented effectively, the school should hold parents meetings to clarify the role they are required to play concerning the support of their children who are receiving FPE. The policy that parents should have R4000.00 in their bank accounts to be eligible to compete for the feeding scheme should be revised.

4.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has presented data that revealed the understanding of the Pitseng Primary School stakeholders about the purpose and objectives of FPE, the plans and strategies they have developed and adopted to implement the FPE policy, the challenges they encountered in their effort to implement FPE and the measures they took to address these challenges.

The study has found that the understanding of the Pitseng Primary School's stakeholders (governing body, teachers and parents) about FPE was *lopsided* towards their interests, its implications and impact on their livelihood. For example, without being much in disagreement with the viewpoint of teachers and the governing body, parents understand FPE more as a job creation mechanism for them in response to the retrenchment of many Basotho men from the South African mines, which leave many families with no means of income. Teachers see FPE more as an attempt by the government to increase their workload, while the governing body has a more general understanding embracing the views of other stakeholders as well as understanding the international trends that have influenced the implementation of FPE.

The study also found that the understanding of the stakeholders about the purpose and objectives of FPE informed the strategies they adopted for its implementation. For example, since parents understood FPE as a mechanism for job creation, they all wanted to get involved in the feeding scheme. There is evidence also that most parents are not willing to pay even a cent for their children's education. The understanding that FPE was meant to create jobs – that is to give them some money is to them antithetical to the view of the teachers and the governing body that for children to get quality education and for the school to run, parents have to pay some money.

This implies that there is lack of cooperation among the stakeholders at the Pitseng Primary because of lack of unity of thought about the role that they must play for the effective implementation of FPE.

The view of teachers that FPE was meant to increase their workload has made them lose interest in their work and this constitutes a major disciplinary and administrative problem in the school. For example, children absent themselves from the school without being noticed since teachers are not taking proper class registers.

Challenges faced by the school community in their efforts to implement FPE included the following:

First, lack of role clarity among the stakeholders. As stated above, this is due to the fact that parents have received contradicting messages about the role they have to play concerning their children under FPE. Second, the stakeholders do not have in-depth insight of the *de facto* implications of FPE implementation. To illustrate, the government of Lesotho convinced the parents that they need not to buy uniforms or pay any money for their children to attend school. This was said without ensuring that the school was provided with finances to attend to emergency issues. Third, teachers strategised to divide children according to age without realising that this had implications for the number of teachers required at the school. This strategy has failed because of the shortage of teachers in the school. Fourth, the governing body blindly adopted the implementation of FPE without formulating policies in the school to support the process. For example, they continued the policy of funding teachers who attended workshops irrespective of the fact that the school had no money since most children were not paying school fees.

The study revealed that there were no formally developed and adopted plans and strategies by the stakeholders at Pitseng Primary School for the implementation of FPE. In most cases, they only had to follow what the government wanted to be done in the school. Responses from stakeholders indicate that the reason for this was that the school did not have resources to execute the strategies developed and adopted at school level. All the actions that were taken by various stakeholders at school/community level were an *ad hoc* response to the pressing demands of FPE implementation. As a result, FPE implementation has not been effective in this school.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

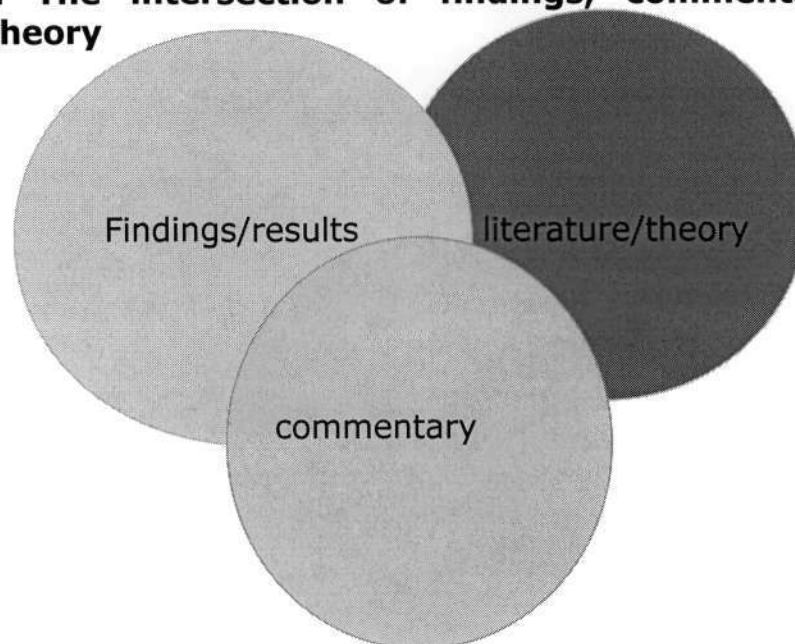
The study in this report was undertaken to investigate the Pitseng Primary School stakeholders' understanding of the purpose and objectives of FPE, the strategies they developed and adopted for FPE implementation, the challenges they encountered in their effort to implement FPE and how they addressed these challenges. Questionnaires, group and individual interviews and observations were used for data collection.

The previous chapter presented findings from the study. The study found that the various stakeholders at Pitseng Primary understood FPE in terms of what they stood to benefit from it, how it affected their working conditions and the impact it had on the educational and socio-economic needs of their community. For example, parents understood FPE as a job creation mechanism, teachers saw it as a strategy to increase their workload while members of the governing body perceived it as a vehicle for ensuring that all Basotho children get basic education, and for alleviating malnutrition and juvenile crime.

The study also found that there were no formally developed strategies at the school level and that the Ministry of Education developed all the strategies that the school adopted for the implementation of FPE. Lack of resources, massive enrolment of pupils and HIV/AIDS were the main challenges that impeded the effective implementation of FPE in the school.

This chapter seeks to analyse and discuss the main findings/results obtained from the study and to relate these to the theories on which this study is built (see figure 5.1) (Holliday, 2001).

Figure 5.1: The intersection of findings, commentary and literature/theory



5.2 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This dissertation was guided by critical theory, pragmatism and positivism (Frame, 2003, Scott, 2000 and Schubert, 1986). First, critical theory posits that stakeholders engage in political activity in pursuit of their interest and that they use power devices during negotiations and bargaining for strategies of policy implementation (Frame, 2003 and Bush, 2003). The results from this study show that the understanding of various stakeholders at Pitseng Primary of the purpose and objectives of FPE was informed by their interests (what they stood to gain from the policy). The strategies each group of stakeholders adopted for FPE implementation were also informed by what they expected or what they understood the policy to have been meant to do for them. For example, since parents understood FPE as a job creation mechanism they all wanted to get involved in the feeding scheme.

The findings of this study also alluded to the conflict that prevailed between various stakeholders while they were pursuing their conflicting interests during FPE implementation, and how each group of stakeholders used power devices to persuade other stakeholders to buy into their interests about FPE implementation. To illustrate, teachers wanted parents to pay for the exercise books and buy the

school uniforms for the children. Many parents refused to do so. Teachers used their power of knowledge about how a school has to be run to persuade parents to buy into their interests. They accused parents of being ignorant and negligent. On the other hand, parents used the speech of the Prime Minister, which supported the idea that they should not pay anything for their children under FPE as a device to justify their refusal to pay for the exercise books and buy school uniforms.

Second, pragmatism purports that policy implementation involves a variety of stakeholders who share a common set of beliefs and that they collaborate to ensure a coherent approach as they refer to jointly held beliefs when devising strategies for policy implementation (Scott, 2000). The results of this study show that the implementation of FPE at Pitseng Primary School involves a variety of stakeholders (e.g teachers, parents and members of the governing body). However, these stakeholders share different values and beliefs about the purpose and implementation of FPE and they do not collaborate to ensure a coherent approach to FPE implementation. For instance, teachers believed that the implementation of FPE reduces their professional responsibilities in the school. Consequently, some of them have stopped filling in class attendance registers. The study also found

that teachers at Pitseng Primary are no longer willing to supervise the feeding of the children since the implementation of FPE. It is, therefore difficult to identify children who absent themselves from school and thus to execute disciplinary measures against them. On the other hand, parents understood that FPE implementation increased their responsibilities in the school and provided job opportunities. As a result, many parents were willing to get involved in the feeding scheme.

Ironically, the study also found that parents at Pitseng Primary School are not willing to buy exercise books and uniforms for their children. This made it difficult for the school to ensure discipline in the school, as children would just leave the school as they pleased and loiter in the streets without being noticed. The quality of education was also compromised as teachers have to teach children who do not have exercise books.

Third, positivism professes that policy implementation strategies are informed by predictable patterns or universal laws, which are not dependent upon the context in which policy is implemented (Schubert, 1986). The findings of this study indicate that the strategies adopted for FPE implementation are determined by government officials who

reside in offices (e.g the Ministry of Education). There are transmitted to the Pitseng Primary School's stakeholders through workshops and public gatherings. This alienates the stakeholders as they lack resources and flexibility to implement FPE in response to the unique demands and challenges of Pitseng Primary School. For example, teachers at the school claim that as the people who are involved in day-to-day activities of the school, they have solutions to some of the problems concerning the implementation of FPE. However, the fact that the government determines all the strategies for FPE implementation in their school places them in a state of powerlessness – a state where they live in a problematic situation that affects them the most, yet they are denied access to resources to exercise their human and professional potential to address the problems.

The findings from the study suggest that FPE policy implementation is a complex process that involves a variety of interested groups. These groups usually have different perceptions about FPE and these perceptions inform the actions they take to implement it. Therefore, without a coordinated strategy the effective implementation of FPE becomes unsuccessful.

This means that stakeholders at Pitseng Primary should hold regular meetings aimed at establishing common interests that they all share about the implementation of FPE in their school. These interests should be taken as the prime purposes for the implementation of FPE in the Pitseng community. Thereafter, they should devise ways in which they can pursue their own varied interests in the implementation of FPE without compromising the core intentions behind FPE.

To facilitate the school's efforts towards effective implementation of FPE and resource mobilisation, the government of Lesotho should give the school autonomy to develop and adopt appropriate strategies for the implementation of FPE. The school should forward plans and strategies as well as a budget for FPE implementation to the Ministry of Education for approval. The Ministry of Education should devise ways of monitoring and overseeing the proper use of resources in the school.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study, therefore, recommends that the stakeholders at Pitseng primary school should, first, hold meetings wherein they clarify and create unity of thought about the purpose and objectives of FPE and

the role/responsibility that various stakeholders take for the successful implementation of FPE.

Second, the meetings should also look into the existing school policies and identify how they are being affected by FPE implementation. For instance, the policy on funding teachers who attend the workshops should be suspended until there are enough financial resources to sustain it.

Third, the school should involve the learners in matters relating to the implementation of FPE. This is topically important given the fact that some FPE learners are adults aging up to 54. This would help the school to know some of the problems that learners are facing in the implementation of FPE so that the implementation strategies of FPE could be improved or modified to accommodate the solution of these problems.

Fourth, the school should engage in fund-raising to provide for an emergency budget and to cater for maintenance and additional expenses. This would enable the school to solve day-to-day running expenses, for example, to replace broken windows, pay transport for sending children to the hospital in cases of emergency.

Fifth, HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and workshops should be held in the Pitseng community to sensitise the community to this pandemic disease so that people can gain knowledge about the reality and

precautionary measures that should be taken to avoid the disease. This would help reduce the rate of infection.

Sixth, the Pitseng Primary School stakeholders should submit a proposal to the government for the employment and funding of substitute teachers to replace the sick teachers. This would enable the school to have enough teachers to teach the children in the absence of those that are on sick leave.

Finally, further research should be undertaken on the impact of the implementation of FPE on the educational and socio-economic needs of the Pitseng community and others. The results of this research might answer the questions on the effectiveness of the strategies employed for the implementation of FPE which my study has not answered.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

To be administered to the governing body and teachers at Pitseng Primary School.

You are invited to participate in answering this questionnaire. I am undertaking for my M.Ed. dissertation at the University of Natal, Durban. The Purpose of this study is to investigate the strategies that your school employed for the implementation of the Free Primary Education Programme. I am seeking your input regarding this matter. Please answer all the questions honestly. Your name will not be attached to this questionnaire so answers cannot be traced back to you. Your information will help me write a report about the implementation of the Free Primary Education.

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age -----
2. Sex -----

3. Qualifications -----

4. Number of years as a teacher -----
5. Number of years at Pitseng Primary School -----
6. Current Post level -----
7. Number of years in the current post level -----
8. Standards taught -----

9. Average class size -----

KNOWLEDGE OF THE FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY

- 10. Are you familiar with Free Primary Education? -----

11. If so, how did you come to know about it? -----

12. What are its main objectives? -----

**THE SCHOOL CAPACITY FOR THE IMPLIMENTATION OF FREE
PRIMARY EDUCATION**

13. In your opinion, does your school have the capacity to implement
Free Primary Education successfully? Yes/No -----

14. If yes, explain why you think it does. -----

15. If no, give reasons. -----

—16. Does your school currently have the necessary resources to implement Free Primary Education? Yes/No -----

17. If yes, explain. -----

18. If no, give reasons. -----

19. What resources are still needed to implement Free Primary Education successfully? -----

20. What factors within your school, would you say facilitate the implementation of Free Primary Education? -----

21. What factors inhibit the successful implementation of Free Primary Education? -----

22. Do members of the staff at your school (teachers and principal) have the necessary training (skills and knowledge) to implement Free Primary Education successfully? Yes/No -----

23. If yes, Explain -----

24. If no, what training is needed and who should offer this? -----

25. What plans (action plans) exist in the school for the implementation of Free Primary Education? -----

26. Who developed the plans? -----

27. In your opinion, are these plans appropriate or effective? Yes/No -

28. If yes, explain how they are effective -----

29. If no, what plans could be put in place at the school to implement

Free Primary education successfully? -----

30. 8. How does the location of Pitseng Primary impact on the nature and quality of resources needed for the implementation of Free Primary Education? -----

31. 9. To what extent do you think the social and economic context of Pitseng Primary School and the surrounding community impact on the nature and quality of resources that are used in the implementation of the Free Primary Education programme? -----

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT TWO

Interview Schedule for Parents (to be asked in Sesotho)

1. What is your understanding of the purpose, focus and objectives of the FPE programme?
2. How did you prepare for the implementation of the FPE Programme? Please commend on the following:
 - a) Encouraging children to go to school?
 - b) Role that you played in the school?
3. In what ways have the steps you took and the role you played assisted in the implementation of the programme?
4. In what ways have they been ineffective?
5. How do you think the steps and the role you played can be modified or improved to enhance the implementation of FPE in your school?
6. What challenges do you encounter in your efforts to assist in the implementation of the FPE programme at Pitseng Primary?
7. How do you address these challenges?
8. What is the most positive thing you can say about the implementation of FPE at your school?

RESEACH INSTRUMENT THREE

Interview Schedule for Teachers

1. Are you familiar with the Free Primary Education programme?
2. If so, how did you come to know about it?
3. What are its main objectives?
4. In your opinion, does your school have the capacity to implement the FPE programme successfully? Explain why you think so?
5. Does your school have the necessary resources to implement the FPE programme? Why you think so?
6. What resources are still needed to implement FPE successfully?
7. What factors in your school would you say facilitate the implementation of FPE?
8. What factors inhibit the successful implementation of this programme?
9. Do members of staff have the necessary training to implement the programme successfully? Explain why you think so?
10. What training do you think is needed and should offer it?
11. What plans exist in the school for the implementation of FPE?
12. Who developed these plans?

13. In your opinion are these plans appropriate or effective? Explain why you think so?
14. Suggest any other plans that you think could enhance the successful implementation of FPE in the School.
15. How does the location of the school impact on the nature and quality of resources needed for the implementation of the Programme?
- 16. To what extent do you think the social and economic context of Pitseng Primary School and the surrounding community impact on the nature and quality of resources that are used in the implementation of the programme?

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT FOUR

Observations

To observe and take field notes of any events or facilities that assist in the implementation of the Free Primary Education programme in the school. For example, observe the Classroom activities, school assembly, teacher-pupil ration, school buildings, desks and chairs, feeding schemes etcetera.

13. In your opinion are these plans appropriate or effective? Explain why you think so?

14. Suggest any other plans that you think could enhance the successful implementation of FPE in the School.

15. How does the location of the school impact on the nature and quality of resources needed for the implementation of the Programme?

16. To what extent do you think the social and economic context of Pitseng Primary School and the surrounding community impact on the nature and quality of resources that are used in the implementation of the programme?

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT FOUR

Observations

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