

**EXPLORING TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF CARING WITHIN TEACHING
IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE AT A SCHOOL OUTSIDE THE GREATER
DURBAN AREA**

By

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DECLARATION

This Masters dissertation is the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of others, it has been acknowledged and referenced in the text.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents Ahmed and Rahima Hassen for their guidance, encouragement, love and support during my formative years.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- CFS - Child friendly schools**
- CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child**
- SCS - Safe and Caring Schools**
- NCS - National Curriculum Statement**

ABSTRACT

This small-scale study explored teachers' conceptions of caring within teaching in the Foundation Phase at a combined school outside the greater Durban area. The school serviced children from the nearby squatter camps and surrounding working class community. In this study, I wanted to know how conceptions of caring were made by Foundation Phase teachers' within the context of their work experiences. Their meaning making and their practice was important to consider. A qualitative approach was suitable for this study. The data for the study was obtained by semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The findings show that Foundation Phase teachers have multiple conceptions of caring within teaching. This is influenced by the context they teach in and the frames of references they use. It was evident that teachers were using frames of reference from child development in vulnerable situations, teaching and learning with lack of strong support (from the home and education department) and the futuristic image of the child in order to shape caring within teaching. Teachers position themselves as caring teachers who do culturally situated practice through forming relationships with the children. As such, they identify characteristics that are supportive and responsive to the needs of young children. Their conceptions in relation to pedagogy are supportive of the idea that they need to connect with their learners and create an inclusive environment. This, however, is challenged by circumstances which limits the type of caring that is made possible. A demanding curriculum and large class numbers are limiting the possibilities for caring acts within teaching in the Foundation Phase.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

“Then said a teacher, "Speak to us of Teaching."

And he said: No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of our knowledge. The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness.”(Gibran, K. 1923)

1.1 A context that demands caring

Our society, including schools, is inundated with violence in all forms: psychological, physical, subtle and blatant (Griggs, 1997). As a result, there is concern about the disturbing increase in the number of adults and children without conscience or the ability to care. Everyday South Africans encounter media reports which show the acute need for care in our society. According to Bhana, Morrell, Epstein & Moletsane, (2006), the spills of systemic backlogs from apartheid, poor socio-economic conditions, poor parenting skills, HIV/AIDs pandemic and the lack of strong moral frameworks have led to schools developing into places that need special care.

Crime and violence in schools threaten the well-being of young people in South Africa. A study on security in Durban schools as well as in other provinces found that schools are places where drugs, thugs, and weapons move as freely through the gates as pupils do (Griggs, 1997). Despite national efforts to restore a culture of learning and teaching, incidents of theft, vandalism, burglary, rape and even murder are reported on school grounds.

Poverty and its attendant ills also make society dysfunctional. The problems created demands that teachers be strong in their roles as caregivers. Muthukrishna (2006, p. xviii), in a comprehensive study on barriers to learning in the context of HIV/AIDS, notes that in the home and family context poverty is “the most pervasive and destructive barrier to learning.” She contends that the circumstances surrounding the latter affects children both emotionally and places constraints on the possibilities for meaningful participation in learning.

The scenarios described above, requires teachers' to go beyond the teaching of the official subjects on the curriculum and to display acts of caring sensitive to the plight of learners.

1.2 A reality check on the lack of caring

In this section, I present some excerpts that support my call for the need for agents like teachers to demonstrate caring within teaching. Whilst they relate to older children, it does send a message on the need for caring interventions in the Foundation Phase of primary schooling as the formative years. The excerpts are from the daily media. I chose them in order to show the urgency for teachers in early schooling to break the cycle non-caring attitudes.

On January 29, 2007 a 12-year old boy had been stabbed in the head with a pair of scissors by a fellow pupil at Isipingo, south of Durban. A police spokesperson, said the victim was stabbed by a female classmate after an argument over stationery (SABC NEWS, 11:45)

On March 14, 2007 SABC NEWS reported that a 15 year old pupil from Sister Joans School in Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal was being treated at the local hospital after being stabbed with a pair of scissors by his classmate after an argument.

In another incident, also reported by SABC NEWS on March 14, 2007, in Port Shepstone, two pupils were taken to hospitals with stab wounds after they were involved in an argument.

Also reported on the same day (March, 14, 2007) by SABC NEWS, angry learners of Kebalepile High School in Mafikeng in the North West set alight a car and brutally assaulted the driver for allegedly terrorising them at school.

On May 04, 2007 SABC NEWS reported that "Young thugs carefully chose a defenseless teacher to kidnap, rob, stab repeatedly and abandon her body at a roadside near Pomeroy, between Greytown and Dundee.

On February 20, 2008 SABC NEWS reported that an early warning system is to be implemented in 240 Gauteng schools to prevent "senseless" violence. This was stated by the National Minister of Education - Angie Motshekga. She stated that there is ongoing bullying in schools and forms of violence that were deeply worrying for her department. She therefore

supported Project *Hlayisika* (to be safe). She indicated that this project would help to maintain safety inside and outside schools.

Another SABC NEWS report on March 14, 2008 announced that the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) released a report on school-based violence which revealed shocking findings about the state of South African schools. The report found that school children are resorting to more aggressive methods to deal with conflict using more knives, weapons and handguns in fights. Games emulating physical and sexual violence are believed to be played on South African school grounds.”

The types of violence evident in the excerpts above are quite telling. The context of violence makes it necessary for us to look deep into how we can create more caring environments to counter anti-social behavior. The work of Noddings (1992) reminds us that to care and be cared for are basic human needs but that not all of us learn to care for ourselves, for near and distant others, animals, plants, human-made objects, or ideas.

Crime and violence "contaminates" the school environment and jeopardises the educational process. There can be serious long-standing physical, emotional and psychological implications for both teachers and pupils including: distress, reduced self-esteem, risk of depression and suicide, reduced school attendance, impaired concentration, fear and a diminished ability to learn (WHO, 1997).

1.3 The international and national frameworks

Both international and national frameworks that inform policy in South Africa are supportive of caring adults who act in the best interest of the child. The rights-based approach uses human rights standards to promote and protect the rights of all people in a country (Mikkelsen, 2005). In 1995 South Africa joined the international community in ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The clause on education of children makes an implicit statement about the need for care work in education. Article 29 states the following:

The education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

In 2008 UNICEF released General Comment No. 7 which relates specifically to children in early childhood. The comment makes it abundantly clear that young children whose lives are embedded in adverse situations suffer special vulnerabilities. They therefore need special care and protection.

On the national front, our Constitution is supportive of this. Section 28 deals with children. Children have the right to care from their family members, parents and services provided by the government. Caring for children to promote their best interest is legally supported.

UNICEF's is mobilising the concept of the global Child-Friendly Schools Framework (CFS) (UNICEF, 2000). This serves as a means of translating the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the South African Constitution and other human rights instruments to improve school management and classroom practice. The Safe and Caring Schools Programme (SCS) has six broad characteristics. The school should be effective, rights based, gender responsive, health seeking and promoting safety, secure environments in a partnership oriented network.

The framework lays emphasis on the learner being at the heart of the learning process, and the school at the centre of the education system. Schools are viewed as investments sites and teachers are the frontline care workers. They play a role in giving children the opportunity to develop in holistic and integrated ways.

1.4 Rationale for the study

I am a Foundation Phase teacher with 27 years of experience. I had the opportunity of exploring many caring acts within teaching. During the apartheid years my duty towards Indian children related to educating them for a racially divided society. I worked through the Christian National Education system. Although heavily criticised this system took the caring of the child as a moral duty of a teacher.

The change to democracy saw schools opening up. This was a difficult time for me. I knew very well how to care for the pedagogic needs of children in an Indian community. I was, however, deeply challenged by multiracial education. The school I taught at was flooded by black African children. I had received little training on how to handle children of diversity. My motherly instinct, however, helped me to care for these children in a way that helped their minds and bodies.

This study is motivated by a growing recognition of the pivotal role that Foundation Phase teachers can play as agents of caring. I have witnessed the struggles young children go through because of learning problems, language barriers, violence, child abuse, poverty and parental neglect. These barriers to learning mean that teachers have to take a stronger caring role. I view my study as necessary to shed light on how teachers make their conceptions of caring within teaching in the Foundation Phase. I do believe that this information can help shape professional development of Foundation Phase teachers.

1.5 Research Question and Aims

In order to gain insight into the conceptions of caring within teaching I asked the following questions:

- 1.5.1 How are conceptions of caring made in relation to young children and pedagogy?
- 1.5.2 What do Foundation Phase teachers perceive to be the qualities of a caring teacher?
- 1.5.3 What are the challenges that face Foundation Phase teachers in the types of caring they can offer?

Given the importance of caring within teaching in the Foundation Phase the aims of this study was to:

- understand the conceptions of caring within teaching in the Foundation Phase
- establish how Foundation Phase teachers make these conceptions in a specific context
- Illicit information on the qualities of a caring teacher
- understand conceptions of caring in relation to pedagogy
- establish the challenges related to conceptions of caring is a specific context.

1.6 Paradigm and theory

In this study I drew on the interpretive paradigm. This paradigm focuses on the individual and seeks to understand their interpretations of the world around them (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

Human beings cannot be studied using models developed for the physical sciences because humans are qualitatively different from natural events. The interpretative paradigm supports the belief that

reality is constructed by subjective perception and predictions cannot be made. Researchers who agree with this paradigm are interested in the social construction of meaning.

It is believed that people have free will, purposes, goals, and intentions. They should therefore be studied as active agents (Littlejohn, 2000). When this is the case then the following basic premises apply:

- people make decisions and act in accordance with their subjective understandings of the situations in which they find themselves
- social life consists of interaction processes rather than structures and is therefore constantly changing
- people understand their experience through the meanings found in the symbols of their primary groups, and language is an essential part of social life
- the world is made up of social objects that are named and have socially determined meanings
- people's actions are based on their interpretations, in which the relevant objects and actions in the situation are taken into account and defined
- one's self is a significant object and like all the social objects is defined through social interaction with others (Littlejohn, 2000).

In this study I drew on the theoretical ideas of symbolic interactionism which is located in the interpretive paradigm. I found the ideas suitable as they focused on meaning, interaction and social construction of reality rather than a natural construction. I provide a full discussion on this in Chapter Two. The work of Noddings (1984) is located in symbolic interactionism. Her focus on the importance of relationships, behaviour, receptiveness and the forming of connections builds on the idea that care is part of the consciousness that is subjective, active and meaning bestowing. I draw on her work to understand conceptions of caring within teaching (see Chapter Two for more details).

1.7 Research approach and methodology

Qualitative research has the theoretical assumptions of the interpretive paradigm, which is based on the notion that social reality is created and sustained through the subjective experience of people involved in communication (Neuman, 2000). Qualitative researchers are concerned with attempting to accurately describe, decode, and interpret the meanings of phenomena occurring in their normal

social contexts (Fryer, 1991). The researchers operating within the framework of the interpretive paradigm are focused on investigating the complexity, authenticity, contextualization, shared subjectivity of the researcher and the researched, and minimization of illusion (Fryer, 1991).

Since I was dealing with conceptions of caring within teaching as a subjective experience and as situated in a context I found the qualitative approach most suitable. My study took place in combined school outside Durban with three Foundation Phase teachers. I used semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. For my initial understanding of care within teaching I also did some lesson observations.

The semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were audio taped then transcribed. I did a line by line analysis to identify issues and identify patterns in the data. This was followed by grouping the subsets into themes. Once the data was transcribed, I took it to the teachers to ensure that their views were accurately presented. I did this to ensure validity of my findings.

Consent for this study was obtained from the Department of Education, the principal of the school and teachers participating in the study.

1.8 Outline of the chapters

In Chapter Two I present the theory and the literature review. I look at the concept of care from multiple perspectives. I begin by showing the commonsense conceptions of care. This is followed by care as a relation. I then deepen understanding on the gendered idea of care as women's work. A discussion on the ethics of care is included. I then relate care to a loving education. I also look at care as a culturally situated practice. Finally I explore the dynamics of caring within the teaching context.

Chapter Three provides information on my research design and methodology. I begin by discussing the paradigm from which this study was undertaken. This is followed by an explanation of the qualitative approach. I describe the research context and the participants. The data collection methods are described and the ethical actions are explained. I detail how the data was analysed. I end by looking at the problems I experienced in this study.

In Chapter Four I present my findings and discussion on the conceptions of caring within teaching as made by Foundation Phase teachers. The conceptions of caring within teaching is presented as a phenomena that has many faces in relation to context, young children's needs, qualities of a caring teacher, care in relation to pedagogy and finally the challenges and assistance needed.

In the final chapter I present a summary of each chapter. I then list the implications of my study and finally present the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The conceptions of care within teaching and the care acts are defined by the frames of reference or cultural models of care which teachers use to inform their thinking and doing. I begin by discussing the theory that was relevant for my study. In the review I look at the concept of care from a variety of perspectives. I begin by showing the commonsense conceptions of care. This is followed by care as a relation. I then deepen understanding on the gendered idea of care as women's work. A discussion on the ethics of care is included. I then relate care to a loving education. Since care does not have one meaning I look at care as a culturally situated practice. Finally, I explore the dynamics of caring within the teaching context. In my review I try to show how the ideas are important for my study.

2.2 Theoretical lens in this study

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

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

For this study I found the use of symbolic interactionism useful. I was dealing with teachers' conceptions of caring. This means that they had subjective interpretations about caring. In other words

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

2.3 The concept of care

The main objective of this study was to explore conceptions of caring within teaching in the Foundation Phase. In order to establish this it is necessary to examine how the concept of care has been approached in literature. As I reviewed literature it was evident that the concept of care is seen as an integral part of teaching, but that it is understood in many different ways. The discussion that follows gives clarity on the above.

2.3.1. The commonsense notions of care

In trying to understand care we frequently come across the common sense definition of care and caring which is based on people's personal experiences. Rogers (1994) notes that this type of caring relates to the action of giving hugs and showing gentle smiles. When we accept such a definition we run the risk of thinking of caring as only related to the affective domain. Jaggar (1989) and Freedman (1990) are critical of this simplistic notion of caring. They argue that caring is not separate from the intellect. Rather than thinking of caring as just a feeling the authors insist on a deliberate intellectual and moral stance. In this study I am aware of the limitations of a common sense interpretation of caring within teaching. I believe that Foundation Phase teachers would have to do more than this to fulfill their role as caregivers in the context of challenges facing the teaching and learning environments.

2.3.2 Care as a relation

Nel Noddings (1984, 1986, 1992, 2005), draws attention to the fact that care is not an innate part of personality. She presents care as a relation. The act of caring, she argues, is not something a person is but rather something that a person engages in. Interactions between and among people will provide encounters to display caring and uncaring behaviours. Noddings went into great detail to provide understanding on the different components of care and the contexts of caring.

The care relationship has the components of a carer, a cared-for and a specific context where the care relationship is enacted. Noddings (1984, p.67) elaborates on the relationship as follows:

The attitude that is perceived by the cared-for as caring is generated by efforts of the one-caring at inclusion and confirmation. It is an attitude that both accepts and confirms. It does not 'accept' and shrug off. It accepts, embraces, and leads upward. It questions, it responds, it sympathises, it challenges, it delights...I have claimed that the cared-for "grows" and "glows" under the perceived attitude of the one-caring.

For this study the ideas proposed by Noddings was relevant for understanding caring within the teacher-learner relationship. The formation of a caring relation requires two parties, the carer (or one caring) and the cared-for (person receiving care). The focus is on the part played by participants during interaction. This view makes it clear that to care is not something that a person is but rather something that one would do in an interaction that will create a favorable set up to establish a caring relation. The one-caring (or carer) is attentive towards the cared-for.

This attention is called "engrossment" in caring (Noddings, 1984, p.2). It is receptive in the sense that it receives what the cared-for is feeling and trying to express. It opens the carer to be motivated to do things. When one cares, ones motive energy begins to flow towards the needs and wants of the cared-for. Sometimes the displacement is resisted because the carer may be tired, stressed, annoyed or busy, then the caring relation is at risk. This does not mean that a person will always approve of what the other wants, nor does it mean that a person will never try to lead the other to a better set of values, but a person must take into account the feelings and desires that are actually there and respond as positively as their values and capacities allow. The cared-for also contributes to the relation by responding to the carer's efforts in some way to signal that the caring has been received and this completes the relation.

The above can be placed within the context of teaching where there is a caring relation or encounter. The learner as the cared-for recognises the caring and responds in a comfortable manner. A learner may show that he/she is aware of the care offered by the teacher. There maybe verbal responses or maybe motivated to work harder to complete a task if there is evidence of care. The receptive teacher can see that her caring has been received by monitoring her students' responses. Noddings (1984, p.2) contends that without an affirmative response from the cared-for, we cannot call an encounter or relation caring.

Noddings (2005, p. xv) also makes a distinction between 'caring-for' and 'caring-about'. Caring-for is the direct face-to-face attempts to respond to the needs of someone being cared for and is fundamentally relational. 'Caring-about' is characterised by some distance in the relationship and relates to the public realm.

The work of Noddings has been criticised especially from the notion of women as carers and the ethics of care they offer. Davion (1993), states that the one-caring relationship model proposed by Noddings is not suitable for adult relationships. Adult relationships should be based on reciprocity, not one-way caring (Davion, 1993). This idea of one-caring entraps a woman into the role of permanent caretaker, with her ethics based on her ability to care.

Care ethics also reinforces the idea of traditional roles of women as the homemakers, the caretakers, and the self righteous (Keller, 2007). In an ethic of care, a woman is expected to be the one-caring in all situations, thus forcing her to remain in the position of sole caregiver. By reinforcing these gender roles, the woman is caught in the role of a subservient person, caring for others but not for herself. It also reinforces an obligation to care while forgetting one's own needs.

Critics also argue that Noddings work on the ethic of care could be greatly enhanced by the addition of other virtues such as justice or room for autonomous growth (Hassan, 2008). This expansion would help boost her ethic of care to be an influential philosophy for feminism as well as well-rounded ethical guide or all persons. However, the problem with her one-caring model is that she neglects other aspects of morality.

Although Noddings ideas are criticised they are relevant to this study. They do give the idea that care is something that is made in relationships. These relationships differ depending on the context.

2.3.3 Care as women's work

Teaching is one of the most highly feminised professions across the globe. In South Africa, Porteus (2004) in her analysis of the state of play in early childhood in the first decade of democracy notes that 99% in the field are women. The notion of care in teacher's work is highly gendered and has been traditionally and historically considered as "women's work".

Benhabib (1989) uses a feminist perspective to argue that the dominant idea of care work related to women comes from socio-biological theories. She notes that in these theories human caring is automatically linked to mothering and therefore essentialises caring as a female characteristic. It is believed that women are naturally inclined to play the caring role. Benhabib (1989) have been critical of such responses. She argues that the essentialising of care as women's work gives power to male attributes and makes emotionality and softness weak qualities.

Gilligan (1995) provides clarity on feminine ways of caring. She distinguishes between a feminine and a feminist ethic of care. Care as a feminine ethic is characterised by special obligations and interpersonal relationships. For Gilligan (1995, p.22) the feminist ethic of care begins with the notion of *connection* theorised as primary and seen as fundamental in life. She further notes that an ethic of care rests on the premise of non-violence – that no one should be hurt.

In researching conceptions of caring within teaching in the Foundation Phase this study will privilege female participants. I have chosen to go this route because little is known about how female teachers in the Foundation Phase conceptualise care in the line of performing a professional duty.

2.3.4 Care as an ethic

The concept of an ethic of care can be understood in two ways, namely as, a moral perspective (which has been found to be more often held by women) or an ethic of care understood as responsibility for and relatedness to their pupils (which has emerged amongst men as well as women) (Vogt, 2002).

According to Drudy, Martin, Woods, O'Flynn (2005), research in Ireland has demonstrated that there is an emphasis on care and on 'making a difference' among entrants to the profession as well as among established teachers. In a study conducted of more than 1,000 school students and over 450 primary student teachers their orientations towards careers and work were explored. It was found that both male and female student teachers were more strongly oriented to caring or altruistic values than second-level students. This was marked in the case of the female student teachers. This stronger orientation towards caring or altruistic values among the student teachers confirmed the linkages between caring and primary teaching. The data in this study also suggested that males studying to be primary teachers were most markedly different from other males in relation to their attitudes to caring/altruistic values. These females were much less oriented to factors like pay and prestige, and much more oriented to caring towards others than were males in general (Drudy et al, 2005, p.6).

The research identified discourses of femininity and domesticity in teaching. There was also evidence that an ethic of care is part of a more generalised discourse of care in teaching which is shared by both men and women (Mills and Satterwait, 2000; Barber, 2002; Vogt, 2002; Drudy et al., 2005). It is therefore important to emphasise that an ethic of care is by no means a value that is, or should be confined to women. For historical and cultural reasons women have more frequently espoused this value and have been more involved with care work. Thus, an ethic of care is a value which women have very particularly contributed to teaching, and to the world. Therefore an ethic of care should be an integral element of quality in teaching and in teacher education. Research in England has suggested that there is a need for the emotional and caring work that teachers invest in their daily role to be incorporated into definitions of good teaching throughout the standards-agenda mechanisms, including assessments and inspections (Hebson, Earnshaw and Marchington, 2007).

In South Africa, the work of Bhana et al. (2006) is helpful in understanding care in a vulnerable context. The authors argue that the context of HIV/AIDs in secondary schools in Durban make it necessary for teachers to engage in care work. The conditions of the school determine the nature and the extent of care work that teachers engage in. The authors found that whilst the well resourced schools could afford counseling services the poor schools relied on the goodwill of teachers to care and support learners.

It could be said that the above relates to Noddings (1984) that caring is at the root of ethical decision-making. In other words the teachers had to take a stance on what was the right thing to do. Nodding (1984) argues that ethics is about particular relationships between two parties, the “one-caring” and the “cared-for”. She goes on to explain that caring is not simply a matter of being concerned about people with whom one has no concrete connection, for example one cannot care about the children in Somalia as much as one cares for ones own children. Therefore, real care requires actual encounters with specific individuals like teachers with young children.

The work of Gilligan (1982) sheds more light on the gender polarisation related to care and ethics. She drew attention to the ethic of care as female and the ethic of justice as male. She went on to argue that we should be looking more at moral orientation than the care and justice divide in gendered terms. By focusing on how a person becomes involved in a situation it is possible to look at an ethical orientation beyond gender (Dobert, 1995 as cited in Vogt, 2002).

2.3.5 Care as loving education

In her study, Goldstein (1998) explored teaching with love and the implications for education. She argues that each educational decision, from placement of desks to selection of academic content, is made with love for children as the guiding principle. This love-based early childhood curriculum gives a new twist to the teacher’s responsibility to act *in loco parentis* (Goldstein, 1998, p.24). Griffin (1997), states that teaching in early schooling is seen as broadening the role of a mother. Teachers in early schooling are seen as replicating the mother-child relationship. Nel Noddings (1992, p. 154) states that “the primary aim of every teacher must be to promote the growth of students as competent, caring, loving and lovable people”.

Given the focus on expertise, professionalism and authority, an ethic of care is perceived as a non issue for teaching. Goldstein (1998) argues that majority of teachers “care” in a virtue sense. She notes that they profess to care and work hard at their teaching. There is also a recognition that there are many who do not adopt the relational sense of caring. They “care” in the sense that they conscientiously pursue certain goals for their learners, and they often work hard at coercing learners to achieve those goals. These teachers must be credited with caring in the virtue sense of the word. However, these same teachers may be unable to establish relations of care and trust. Within the notion

to get on with the academic work a full ethic of care becomes difficult and could be perceived as time consuming and slowing down curriculum delivery.

The work of Goldstein (1998), combines care and femininity to explain how teachers create care in loving educational environments. Goldstein explains that “sometimes a teacher experiences intimacy (“close, connected, and bonded feelings ...intimacy embodies trust, the sharing of meaningful experiences, a degree of mutuality and reciprocity among participants, and a depth of feeling regardless of the number of people participating in the relationship”). Sometimes a teacher experiences this type of intimacy with a single learner on a one-on-one basis – but it can also be experienced by a teacher with a whole class (Goldstein, 1998). Goldstein (1998, p.20) notes the following about a loving education:

...teaching with love, and passion could be defined as a teacher’s compelling desire to teach, to work with children, and to facilitate interactions between children and content.

Feminists are also responsible for the development of models premised on loving education. Jane Roland Martin (1992. p.27) describes a “schoolhome” as an institution that both educates and gives care to children. She advocates the notion of “a school as a moral equivalent of home”(1992, p.27) suggesting that this type of education is becoming increasingly important as the real lives of American students move further and further from the traditional nuclear family. In Martin’s schoolhome, children are taught and nurtured at the same time, making connections with each other, with academic content, and with the community at large.

In South Africa the notion of the schoolhome as a loving space has been explored by UNICEF in the context of poverty and HIV/AIDs. It is argued that the latter is making the school into a haven of safety for some children. Teachers therefore have to take on the responsibility of not only delivering the curriculum but playing the role of a social worker. Muthukrishna (2006) in her examination of the barriers to education also argues the need for teachers to play an important role in enacting care giving.

For this study the notion of care as loving education is important. The South African context provides young children with many dilemmas. Caring within teaching which is made up of a loving relationship is important to consider.

2.3.6 Care as culturally situated practice

In South Africa we live in a pluralistic society. People come from different cultural backgrounds. These backgrounds provide them with multiple ways to understand caring and enact care behaviours. It is the work of Tronto (1993) which draws attention to caring as a culturally situated practice. The author argues for an understanding of care that shows intersections among the different social categories of gender, race and class. She draws attention to the fact that there is no one definition of care. Whilst she notes that care is something that human will do, the social practice and the political context will dictate the form that caring will take. From a culturally situated perspective, Tronto (1993, p.103) notes the following about care:

A species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible.

The definition above gives the idea that human beings have a natural instinct to care. The enactments of care will never be neutral. She notes that caregiving has a political side that can have negative effects such as the notion of caring as women's work discussed earlier on. In this instance care can be related to unequal power relations between men and women. When care is examined from the perspective above then it becomes possible not only to think of it as a neutral relationship but as tied up to personal, cultural, and institutional relations.

The work of Thompson (1998) is valuable in understanding the limitation of care literature from universal perspectives. She notes that the dominant western image of caring for a child is based on the mother-child dyad. This is typical of western parenting where children are isolated from the real life activities in the world. She points out, that African American women have not had the luxury of such parenting based on meeting individual needs in a sheltered place. For African American women the home was not a site of protection as was the case for white, middle class women. On the contrary,

caring in the black family has had to be an integral part of society. Children had to live in the world to learn how to counter a system of racism.

In the barrier to education research project, Muthukrishna (2006) notes how the family is made up of multiple structures. The dominant structure was the grandmother-led family. The relationship of caring between an adult and the child was complicated by poverty and illness. Older children cared for young children. Children in the South African context take on the roles of caregivers. This is outside the norm of white middle class parenting. The context shapes the enactments of care.

Collins (1991) sheds further light on relationships African American mothers develop with their daughters. The author notes that these are filled with tensions of how caring is imagined and enacted. These do not necessarily fit the hegemonic model of what caring is supposed to feel and look like. The discussion that Collins offers of both the experiences of African American women in general, and of African American mothers, offers important insights into how race, gender, and caring intersect. She suggests there is a convergence between

Afrocentric and feminist values in the ethic of caring” and the “components of the ethic of care – the values placed on individual expressiveness, the appropriateness of emotions, and the capacity for empathy which pervade African American culture (Collins, 1991, p.216).

She further argues that Afrocentric and feminist values have not been recognised as compatible with an ethic of care, they are harmonious.

Angela Valenzuela (1999) also draws attention to looking at culture as a lens to look at care. Studying both youths born in Mexico and in the United States, she asked: What is the source of the disparity between high-achieving immigrant youths and low-achieving US-born students? From her research in an urban high school in Texas, she concluded that teachers and students had different cultural models of caring about school. Teachers, who were for the most part white, interpreted some of their students’ attitudes as “not caring” and attributed lack of school success to students’ dispositions towards school. In contrast, students operated from the cultural model that teachers ought to care about them, as a pre-requisite and foundation to their caring about school. Thus, Valenzuela (1999,

p.94) argues “*what looks to teachers and administrators like opposition and lack of caring, feels to students like powerlessness and alienation*”. In this case, teachers and students having different cultural models related to the connection between care and schooling led to conflict.

This study values the notion of care as culturally situated practice. The teachers in this study all come from different backgrounds and draw on particular frames of reference to conceptualise care. There is no universal definition of care which teachers are merely implementing. I contend that what they view as care is shaped by their cultural, professional and institutional context.

2.3.7 The dynamics of caring

The above is necessary to explore given that this study does not assume a fixed nature of caring. The dynamic of caring refers to the psychological state and beliefs of a teacher that result in caring relationships between teachers and students (Bondi, 2007). In the literature that was reviewed about caring, three salient points emerged. These are discussed below.

Firstly, a sense of positive regard for others on the part of the caregiver which suggests an individual acting out of an ethic of care is concerned with the value, worth, and well-being of others. Noddings (1995) asserts that when we care, we want to do our very best for the objects of our care. She further explains that experiencing positive regard for another is the ability to step out of one's own personal frame of reference into another's frame of reference and to be able to consider the other's point of view and his or her objective needs.

A second component of the dynamic of caring is a consistent personal belief about the responsibility to nurture caring and in caring for one another. By assuming another's frame of reference, leads one to take responsibility for the individual and to sense show a sense of obligation to the relationship. Gilligan, (1982) stresses that caring includes assuming responsibility for another, by acting responsively to nurture, or lessen another's needs. Gilligan also mentions the dynamic of the interaction as individuals motivated to act responsibly toward another maintain their own needs for connections and relationships.

Mayeroff (1971) considers a caring relationship to be one in which the caregiver is devoted, consistent and persistent over time. Mayeroff termed this dimension of caring as knowing. He believes that to act responsibly, the caregiver must know the powers, limitations, and needs of the other, and how to respond in order to assist in growth and development. In order to meet the others needs, the caregiver must know his own powers and limitations.

Ezzo and Ezzo (1993) discuss the responsibility of the caring person as having another-oriented sensitivity that is not at the expense of the self, but a fulfillment of individual desires for gratification which comes from knowing another's needs have been met. Noddings (1992) proposes the caregiver must be devoted and constantly willing to give attention if needed, but that the caring acts need not be constant. The caregiver must know the cared-for well enough to be able to identify needs and provide the caring acts when necessary.

The last component of the dynamic of caring is the dual and reciprocal nature of caring. Many who have explored the constructs of caring insist that caring is not a unidirectional relationship. Terms such as interdependence and connectivity, reciprocity, mutuality, and ethic of relation have been used by researchers to describe the interactive nature of caring relations. Gilligan (1982, p. 149).) writes that when interdependence exists between people, they are motivated to act responsively toward self and others and thus to sustain connectivity... and an ethic of care.

Chaskin and Rauner (1995) discuss the reciprocal nature of caring in teacher-student relationships and the concern for mutuality and connection. They contend the most important influences in the social development of children are nurturance, empathy, and opportunities for mastery of tasks. Children deprived of such opportunities in the family, may have a greater need to connect with a teacher, making teacher-student relationships all the more important. Chaskin and Rauner (1995) believe that through attempts at caring, responsive teachers recognise, understand, and respect their students and trust is established. This results in creating and building caring interpersonal relationships in the classroom.

Caring is widely believed to be a central facet of teaching. Kohl (1984) asserted that a teacher is obliged to care about every student. Rogers and Webb (1991) insisted that good teachers care and it is

reasonable to assume that good teaching is inextricably linked to specific acts of caring. However, caring, like all other skills, attitudes and dispositions which are required to teach well, is not always as easy as it may look to novices. Researchers, during their field experiences, have found preservice teachers struggling with issues related to caring teaching. Both Weinstein (1998) and McLaughlin (1991) documented preservice teachers wrestling with the tension between caring and control. Bullough et al. (1992) discussed the challenges faced as preservice teachers confront the mismatch between their view of teaching of as similar to motherly nurturing and the realities of teaching in their field-placement classrooms.

Deford (1996) suspects that, as a result of increased violence and crime, poverty, child abuse, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, and high dropout rates, many families depend on schools to act as an extension of our social support system, including emotional support and guidance for their children. The philosophical roots of care theory can be found in several places. Nel Noddings drew heavily on the relational philosophy of Martin Bruber when she first wrote about caring.

Gilligan, (1982) challenged the form of cognitive developmentalism laid out by Lawrence Kohlberg. In contrast to Kohlberg's emphasis on moral reasoning culminating in a commitment to universal justice, Gilligan's version of care theory described an alternative path of moral development based on the moral agent's increasing capacity to respond with care to the needs of others. In looking at care I was found Gilligan's (1982) discussions valuable on two fronts. The angle of justice is important to consider. Another helpful idea relates to care as the morality of responsiveness. This says that there is an element of connectedness to others around us.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter I have shown that the concept of care can be understood in many ways. I explored the different perspectives of care because people have many meanings which they relate to as care. Since I wanted to be sensitive to the Foundation Phase teachers' conceptions of caring within teaching, I reviewed the concept of care which shows multiple meanings. In my discussion I have also related it to the teaching context where caring has particular dynamics. In the next chapter I discuss the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe my research design and methodology. I begin by discussing the paradigm from which this study was undertaken. This is followed by an explanation of the qualitative approach. I describe the research context and the participants. The data collection methods are described and the ethical actions are explained. I detail how the data was analysed. I end by looking at the problems I experienced in this study.

3.2 The paradigms and links to the research approach

In this study I drew on the interpretive paradigm as a lens to answer my research questions. In Chapter One I outlined the interpretive paradigm as being one where the individual seeks to understand their interpretations of the world around them (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). In Chapter Two I discussed the value of symbolic interactionism for my research.

In my study I focused on Foundation Phase teachers and I investigated their conceptions of caring within teaching. I wanted to know how these conceptions were made. In other words I wanted information on the sources of knowledge and actions related to caring within teaching. The interpretive paradigm supports the belief that reality is constructed by subjective perception and that predictions cannot be made (Maree, 2007). I therefore had to ask teachers about their meanings around caring. To do this I had to recruit participants who had expertise and had to show caring as an integral part of their profession. My research approach was therefore a qualitative one.

3.3 The Qualitative Approach

My study was exploratory in nature within an interpretive paradigm. Neuman (2000, p. 71) notes the following as important with regard to the latter:

the systemic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds.

For my study I had to respect the fact that knowledge is derived from everyday concepts and meanings within a specific context. I had to capture participants' frames of references in their context and situated practices in order to understand how conceptions of caring were made by teachers in the Foundation Phase. At the beginning of my study it seemed most likely that I would use observation.

Qualitative research in general is more likely to take place in a natural setting (Denzin, 1971; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). This means that topics for study focus on everyday activity as "defined, enacted, smoothed, and made problematic by persons going about their normal routines" (Van Maanen, 1983, p.255). In my study the school was the natural setting and I focused on the meaning making around caring within teaching in the Foundation Phase.

The qualitative research approach allowed me to be sensitive to the subjective views of Foundation Phase teachers. It is accepted that qualitative research is less likely to have a priori classification on the collection of data. It is less driven by very specific hypotheses and categorical frameworks and more concerned with emergent themes and related descriptions (Cassell and Symon, 1994).

In qualitative research, human behavior is described and understood from the perspectives of the social actors rather than explained (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Neuman (2000) states that an interpretivist researcher seeks to provide detailed descriptions of social settings, interactions and phenomena thus enabling the reader to step into another's social reality. By researching teachers in their natural settings I was able to enter their everyday world in order to grasp the socially constructed meanings and understand their interactions and actions in the way that they chose to represent it.

In relation to data collection, the qualitative methods include non-structured procedures from observation to interview, self reports or written narratives. The focus is within the situation or within the individual; the gathering of information is open-ended in nature. In relation to data analysis, an analysis is qualitative whenever there is not a numeric translation of data beyond the translation to

absolute or percentage frequencies. The usual focus is on the meaning of the information collected either by way of a content analysis or by more descriptive means (Ericson & Simon, 1984). The qualitative analysis is characterised by coding information into categories or levels and looking for similarities and differences among data. A quantitative analysis can follow.

In summary I found the qualitative approach to research valuable for my study. It allowed me to gain understanding of my research questions from participants themselves in their everyday context. This is more trustworthy than ticking pre-established conceptualisations of care as promoted by survey methods.

3.4 The context of my study

This study was conducted at a combined school situated in an urban area just outside Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. The school caters for children from grades R–12 and had about 650 learners at the time of the study. The medium of instruction is English. A considerable number of children are IsiZulu speaking. The teachers are English speaking except for the isiZulu language teacher. The school has some resources and caters for learners from multicultural backgrounds within a working class/poor community. Learners from three neighboring informal settlements were also catered for. Hence, the school had a mixture of children from both working class and poor environments.

I chose to conduct the research at my school as I have been a Foundation Phase teacher at the school for the past 18 years. I also live in the community. This made it convenient for me. I also understand the dynamics of the school and the community. Thus my sample was one of convenience. It was also purposive. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) in purposive sampling, researchers personally pick the cases to be included in the sample so that they build up a sample that is relevant to particular needs. I had to make specific choices about which people to include in my sample. For my study I targeted the Foundation Phase teachers at my school for the specific purpose of finding out their conceptions of caring. I know that they do not represent the wider population of teachers. I do not wish to generalize the results beyond the group sampled. I knew that I would save time and money as I would not have to travel to another school to conduct my research and collect data. Furthermore, study leave is problematic given the lack of Foundation Phase teachers. Another reason

for choosing to conduct the research at my school was the familiarity with the teachers and learners. I knew that I would be comfortable with the participants in my study.

The Foundation Phase department consisted of 100 learners. There was only one unit of each grade. Thus, excluding me, all the other Foundation Phase teachers were part of my sample - Grade R, Grade 1, and Grade 3. From the three teachers who participated in the study, two were qualified in the Foundation Phase and the other one was an English teacher in the Senior Primary Phase.

3.5 Teachers in the study

Participant 1: (S.B)

The Grade R teacher had 27 years of experience. She had taught at many schools and started teaching at this school from the beginning of the second term. The previous teacher applied for a vacancy at a school nearer to her home and she was successful. When she left, a vacancy was created and the new Grade R teacher filled the post, which she occupied at the beginning of the second term in 2009.

Participant 2: (R.K)

The Grade One teacher has been teaching at the school for the past four years as an school governing body employee. She graduated with a degree specialising in Foundation Phase education and was absorbed into a permanent post at the school.

Participant 3: (N.N)

The Grade Three teacher was a qualified English teacher, who has a history of broken service. Since she resided in the same area as the school, she applied for a post at the school which resulted from the Deputy Principal being on sick leave. When the Deputy Principal returned to the school at the beginning of the year (2009), the teacher became redundant. She then accepted a post in Grade Three.

3.6 Ethics and data collection methods

Data in this study was produced through initial lesson observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews. Before I began the data production process, I obtained permission from the

various authorities concerned. Firstly I had to obtain ethical clearance for my study from the university. The documentation for this process required that I explain the nature and aims of the study, assure confidentiality and voluntary participation. I also detailed the data collection methods. I submitted a letter informing the Department of Education of my study. Once I began my study I ensured ethical behavior by asking permission of my principal and the teachers in the study during the different data collection processes.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is one of the most frequently used qualitative methods. According to del Barrio (1999) being by nature an open individual interview qualitative research could be quite creative and include different types of materials which describes a social situation e.g. drawings, dolls, video, cartoons. Maree, (2007), notes that there is an effort to minimize the hierarchical situation in order to help the subject feel comfortable with the interviewer. An interview script is used, consisting of a set of questions as a starting point to guide the interaction. Nevertheless, as the aim is to capture as much as possible about the subject's thinking on a particular topic or a practical task, the interviewer follows the process of posing new questions after the first answers are given by the subject. Consequently, at the end every interview can be different from each other.

Hockey, Robinson and Meah (2003), note that semi-structured interviewing is more flexible than standardised methods such as the structured interview or survey. Although the interviewer in this technique will have some established general topics for investigation, this method allows for the exploration of emergent themes and ideas rather than relying only on concepts and questions defined in advance of the interview. The interviewer would usually use a standardized interview schedule with set questions which will be asked of all respondents. The questions tend to be asked in a similar order and format to make a form of comparison between answers possible. However, there is also scope for pursuing and probing for novel, relevant information, through additional questions often noted as prompts on the schedule. The interviewer frequently has to formulate impromptu questions in order to follow up leads that emerge during the interview. Usually the interviewer's role is engaged and encouraging but not personally involved. The interviewer facilitates the interviewees to talk about their views and experiences in depth but with limited reciprocal engagement or disclosure.

In my study I used semi-structured interviews to probe teachers' conceptions of caring in order to answer my critical questions. I interviewed each teacher separately and taped the conversations. I had a set of questions which I used flexibly during the interview. These questions related to caring in relation to young children, qualities of caring, pedagogic slants of caring and challenges. I used prompts to gain a deeper understanding of some responses. Two semi-structured interviews were held with each participant so that I could probe deeper into the questions that were answered vaguely.

3.6.2 Observations

It is widely accepted that observation is key to field work and that it has great possibilities to bring information that cannot be obtained in other ways. Observation is when there is a systematic process of recording behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). One of the ways in which observation can be conducted is by the researcher being a complete observer and as such he/she enters the setting and remains physically detached from the activities and social interactions (Maree, 2007). When doing observations it is obvious that one cannot commit everything one sees to memory. Field notes have to be written. The researcher has to make detailed and descriptive records of the research experience, including observations, dialogue and physical descriptions of the setting (Maree, 2007).

At the beginning of my study I wanted to get a feel for care within teaching. I therefore did observations. I did attempt to follow an ethical process to structure my observations. I made prior arrangements with the educators concerned so that they were prepared for my visit. I explained the nature of my visit to the teacher and asked permission. I used a lesson observation schedule and photographs were taken to understand caring within teaching. After the observation I thanked both the teacher and learners for affording me the opportunity of observing their lessons. As a token of my appreciation I gave each learner a lollipop. I soon realised that teachers don't like being watched. They felt that in my role as an observer I will find something to criticise. This is understandable if we consider that being watched conjures up images of Foundation Phase inspectors, clipboards, checklists and fear of being judged unfairly. In this study I used the observation data only for my preliminary understandings.

3.6.3 Focus group interviews

Lewis (2000, p. 2) notes that group interviewing is those "...limited to those situations where the assembled group is small enough to permit genuine discussion among all its members." Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggest that interviewing more than one person at a time sometimes proves very useful. Some young people need company to talk, and some topics are better discussed by a small group of people who know each other.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.365) state that the term "focus group" applies to a situation in which the interviewer asks group members very specific questions about a topic after considerable research has already been completed. Kreuger (1988, p.18) defines a focus group as a "carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment".

The focus group interview is helpful in exploring a variety of areas. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990, p.15) have summarized the more common uses of focus group to include:

- obtaining general background information about a topic of interest;
- generating research hypotheses that can be submitted to further research and testing;
- using more quantitative approaches;
- stimulating new ideas and creative concepts;
- diagnosing the potential for problems with a new programs, service or product;
- generating impressions of products, programs, services, institutions, or other objects;
- learning how respondents talk about the phenomenon of interest which they may facilitate
- quantitative research tools;
- interpreting previously obtained qualitative results.

Qualitative research concentrates on words and observations to express reality and attempts to describe people in natural situations. The key element here is the involvement of people where their disclosures are encouraged in a nurturing environment. It taps into human tendencies where attitudes and perceptions are developed through interaction with other people. During a group discussion, individuals may shift due to the influence of other comments. Alternately, opinions may be held with

certainty. Kreuger (1988, p.26) suggests that the purpose is to obtain information of a qualitative nature from a predetermined and limited number of people".

In my study the focus group interview helped in bringing together all teachers that taught in a common phase. They had all undergone the semi-structured interview and therefore had a warm up to the type of questions I asked. Two focus group interviews were held with the participants. This helped me to probe their ideas and gain further insight. They were also encouraged to ask their own questions or volunteer information not related to the questions I asked.

3.7 Data Analysis Process

Tape recorders are invaluable for semi-structured and focus group discussions, however, they are prone to pick up background noises. Kreuger (1988) notes that the microphones and recorder should be set up prior to the interview and should be visible to participants. The researcher must encourage participants to speak one at a time to avoid garbling the tape. However, Howe and Lewis (1993) suggest that in focus group interviews members of the group will need to identify themselves before they speak. For my focus group interview I used a Dictaphone which serves the same purpose as a tape recorder.

I considered note taking as a helpful process in data analysis. The capturing of exact phrases and statements is important for a descriptive text. However, I did not make any notes due to the intrusive nature of the activity. I considered the Dictaphone to be adequate.

Once the information was collected the first step was to transcribe the data. The next step was to analyze the content of the interviews. The aim of this analysis was to look for trends and patterns. Kreuger (1988, p.109) suggests that content analysis begins with a "comparison of the words used in the answer". The researcher must also consider the emphasis or intensity of the respondents' comments. Other considerations relate to the consistency of comments and the specificity of responses in follow up probes. I did take this into consideration.

I read the data line by line. I looked for key words related to answers to my research questions. Those that had similar themes were clustered together. I then found heading and subheading that reflected

my research questions. In creating my findings and discussion chapter I constantly asked how the structure I created answered the main question on Foundation Phase teachers' conceptions of caring within teaching.

3.8 Problems experienced

During the data gathering process the first problem I experienced was that I had to shift my role from being a peer to a researcher. This created new power relations. I had carefully explained the nature of my study and my aims in order to be taken seriously and be respected for my role as a researcher.

Another problem I experienced related to my skill as an interviewer in a semi-structured situation. Being a novice researcher I had to really sharpen my skills at listening without thinking about my next question whilst the interviewee was speaking. Fortunately I was able to work through this after the first interview.

I did as far as possible try to get my participants to relax during my presence. I was, however, aware that I had interviews to complete. They also had a sense of impatience given their busy schedule. I also found the exact replication of questions for consistency in the interview difficult. Then I concentrated on the main concept in each question.

Given that this was a part time study which I resumed after several years, I had to juggle many of my personal and professional commitments to submit my chapters on time. Then there were problems related to getting on track with new developments in research. I battled with expertise in certain sections e.g. data analysis. I was fortunate to spend time with my supervisor and work through a step by step process which helped me to reduce my data to themes and sub-themes eventually.

This study is also a very small scale study. It makes no claims for generalization. I do see this as a problem in some respects. This is especially the case when disseminating the findings. It is possible that people will not take the findings seriously because it is small scale and so specific.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter I detailed my research design and methodology. I argued that since I was working from the interpretative paradigm I needed a research approach that was supportive of people's meaning making. I chose the qualitative research approach which was sensitive to the teachers' subjectivity in the context of teaching experiences. I used multiple data collection methods to be able to make sense of my research questions. Initial observations, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were used. I obtained ethical clearance from the university and the Department of Education. The principal and teachers were asked for permission for the study after full disclosure of the nature and aims of the study. The data was analyzed through identifying themes and sub-themes related to answering the research questions. I also outlined the problems I experienced in this study.

The next chapter presents the findings and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings related to conceptions of caring within teaching in the Foundation Phase. Literature has already confirmed that the acts of caring are important in teaching. For example, Kohl (1984) argued that ‘a teacher has an obligation to care about every student’. Rogers and Webb (1991) were explicit in stating that “good teachers care, and good teaching is inextricably linked to specific acts of caring”. In this chapter I present the conceptions of caring within teaching as a phenomenon that has many faces. I present conceptions of caring made in relation to young children’s needs, qualities of a caring teacher, conceptions of caring in relation to pedagogy and finally the challenges and assistance needed. I draw on the data from semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews.

4.2 Conceptions of caring made in relation to needs of young children

This study revealed that Foundation Phase teachers were drawing heavily on their knowledge of young children’s needs in order to create concepts of caring. This knowledge was informed by the developmental domains as outlined in child development theory. The excerpts below show how teachers used the conception of young children in an early stage of development to shape their role as caregivers.

Learners in the Foundation Phase are dependent on the educator for social, emotional and intellectual needs. (S.B)

I have to provide the learner with support, emotionally, physically and mentally (pedagogically). (R.K)

The above can be understood in terms of the need for interdependency in a relationship in the schooling environment. Care is respected as a relation. Gilligan (1982) writes that when

interdependence exists between people, they are motivated to act responsively toward self and others and thus sustain connectivity. The excerpts below provide examples of conceptions of caring which emerged from the understanding that young children need special support in the emotional domain of development.

I have to ensure that learners are emotionally balanced and ready for lessons. (S.B)

I have to be patient and mindful of the feelings of these learners, if and when they mess themselves in class. (N.N)

By listening to pupils, giving guidance and counseling I care for those who need emotional strength and support. (S.B)

I work hard to encourage, praise and boost a child's ego. I attempt to be positive and gentle at all times. (S.B)

It was evident in the study that Foundation Phase teachers' were drawing their conception of caring from knowledge of physical needs of young children and keeping them safe and healthy. The teachers' functioned in an environment where children became ill often. Caring for the children meant that they had to be constantly on the look out for signs of ill health and disease, create a safe environment and act on behalf of parents/caregivers when necessary. Caring as culturally situated practice in a vulnerable context was necessary. The following responses show this:

I look for signs of poor nutrition, skin problems inability to concentrate, mental or physical disabilities. (S.B)

A first aid kit must be kept in class at all times as cuts and bruises can be quickly treated. (N.N)

I also take learners to the doctor when they are ill and their parents are working and do not have transport to fetch them from school to take them to the doctor. (N.N)

Teachers' conceptions of caring was also shaped by the needs of young children in the context of poverty. Children were coming to school without meals. Some had difficulty gaining school uniforms. According to Noddings (1984), when one cares, one's motive energy begins to flow towards the needs and wants of the cared for. Noddings (1995) also asserts that when we care, we want to do our very best for the objects of our care. She further explains that experiencing positive regard for another is the ability to step out of one's own personal frame of reference into another's frame of reference and to consider the other's objective needs. This is in keeping with Gilligan (1982) ideas. She stresses that caring includes assuming responsibility for another, by acting responsively to nurture, or lessen another's needs. This was evident with the teachers in the study. The following excerpt shows a conception of care where creative energy is directed towards improving circumstances for young children in the context of poverty.

Most of these learners come from informal settlements. They have to be understood and catered for. (N.N)

If some of the learners don't have lunch, they are referred to the lunch club in school which provides lunch for indigent learners on a daily basis. (N.N)

We collect old uniforms and clothing and distributing it to the needy pupils.

We try to get sponsorships for sports such as chips, cakes, fruit and sweets to make their day exciting. (S.B)

There are times when learners cannot afford to pay school fees or excursion fees. I make the effort to assist them by trying to get sponsorships which helps to pay for these expenses. (N.N)

We ensure that pupils who qualify for child welfare grants get this right.. (S.B)

The conception of caring was also made within the framing of moulding young children for the future. The teachers were able to recognise that what they did in terms of caring for young children in the present had repercussions for the future. The following excerpts show this:

Caring by way of their need for information will equip them to fit into society. This will make them confident. (S.B)

I know the learners characters and potential in order to develop them to their maximum potential for the future. (R.K)

I am responsible for learners that are in my care and I need to foster good habits to ensure that the learners grow into responsible citizens. (R.K)

I must be a role model to pupils – one that the pupils could benefit from in all aspects to improve their lives in the future. (S.B)

4.3 Qualities of a caring teacher

The notion of a caring teacher in the early years has a gendered connotation. Vogt (2002) argues that culture of care normally associated with teaching of young children is typically associated with females and characteristics of motherly love, relatedness and nurturance. Young children need this source of support. According to Chaskin and Rauner (1995), when they are deprived of nurturance, empathy and opportunities for mastery of tasks, they may have a greater need to connect with their teachers. In the study the teachers' were able to describe the qualities of a caring teacher as follows:

She is patient, understanding, authoritative yet loving, motivating, motherly, sympathetic and nurturing. (R.K)

Teacher needs to be sympathetic and understanding. Empathy is important. (R.K)

... educator has to show love and warmth to all the learners in her class. (S.B)

Showing pupils that they have someone to turn to when they feel lonely and upset. (S.B)

The teacher needs to be calm, patient and tolerant with all learners. (R.K)

Teachers' in the study also felt that a caring teacher is one that is vigilant of problems that young children experienced.

The teacher needs to be very observant so that she can pick up on behavior changes and behavioral problems. (R.K)

Keeping them safe from strangers ... since rape and physical abuse are on the increase, pupils must be counseled against these constantly. (S.B)

...my class children are very hyper-active and are prone to injuries. I am well equipped for these mishaps as I have ensured that I have proper training by attending a First Aid training course. I am now able to assess and administer first aid to injured children. (N.N)

I try as hard as possible to stay calm and warm. When there are discipline problems, I am firm and authoritative and try to include positive reinforcement. (R.K)

4.4 Conceptions of caring made in relation to pedagogy

According to Moyles, Adams and Musgrove (2002, p.4) pedagogy “connects relatively self contained act of teaching and being an early years educator with the personal, cultural and community values (including care), curriculum structures and external influences. Pedagogy in the early years operates from a shared frame of reference (a mutual learning encounter) between the practitioner and the young child...” Chaskin and Rauner (1995) discuss the reciprocal nature of caring in teacher-student relationships and the concern for mutuality and connection. In the study, the conception of caring in the pedagogical context related to the creation of a conducive environment for connecting with the children. The following excerpt shows this:

My classroom is warm, colorful and appropriately stimulating, ensuring a secure learning environment... the learner is comfortable and can strive towards his/her full potential. (R.K)

Teacher's conceptions of caring were directly related to curriculum content, lesson delivery and children's understanding of concepts. When asked about care in relation to curriculum the following responses were received:

Ensuring that pupils can grasp the lesson being taught, and that learning outcomes are achieved. (S.B)

Giving pupils personal attention and ensuring that they understand the subject matter being taught. (S.B)

Ensuring that the learners understand basic concepts... (R.K)

Learners ... are taught life skills, values and attitudes. (R.K)

The teachers in the study recognised that the children were still at a stage of development where they required concrete resources. They related caring within teaching to supporting young children with the correct stimulus for learning. The following excerpts illustrate this:

The teacher needs to take care in choosing the appropriate learner and teaching material/resources. Choosing the appropriate resources for their stimulation of learning is important. (R.K)

It was evident that teachers' in the study also equated caring to motivating learners to high performance in order to gain rewards. These took the form of motivational stickers and certificates. The excerpts below illustrate this.

The learners in my class strive to perform at their best academically because I reward them with gold stars and other positive motivational stickers and incentives. (N.N)

I hand out specially made certificates for their spelling, mental maths, reading and other achievements. (R.K)

The conception of caring for those that are academically weak also featured as a priority given the context of learning problems and poverty. The teachers in the study recognised that “one size does not fit all.” They therefore had to work on strategies that enabled learners to experience success. The following are some of the strategies a teacher used to care for those learners who were academically weak.

Academically, some learners are unable to cope with subject matter being taught. This is sometimes due to learners not understanding the language of instruction so their peers explain to them.

I spend extra time with these learners on an individual basis – usually after school or sometimes during breaks.

I often organize excursions and educational tours for my learners to enhance their learning.
(N.N)

In order to extend their acts of caring outside the confines of the school some teachers in the study undertook home visits. The following excerpts show this:

Home visits are conducted for pupils with discipline and behavioral problems. (S.B)

I make home visits when there is a problem with regards to learners health, academic matters, behavioral matters or long periods of absence etc. (N.N)

Teachers in the study were also active as a school based support team for inclusive education. This can be understood in the context of poverty, lack of parental involvement and poor academic performance. According to Deford (1996) due to increased violence, crime and poverty many families depend on the schools to act as an extension of our social support system including emotional support

and guidance for their children. The following shows how teachers were extending the notion of care by being active in helping those who experience barriers to learning:

...we refer acute cases to relevant assessment and therapy centres. (S.B)

We call professionals to give talks to pupils on health and social issues. (S.B)

Learners at our school get basic counseling because of unstable family life and poor socio economic backgrounds. (R.K)

4.5 Challenges and assistance needed

One of the key areas that shaped teachers conceptions of caring was the context from which learners came. There was a mismatch between what the home offered and what the school required. The teachers felt that they had to increasingly perform the role of caregivers acting on behalf of the parents. This was causing stress as they had competing demands of curriculum to contend with. Their conceptions of caring within teaching were constantly shaped by a lack of performance by parents in certain key areas. The following were identified as problem areas:

Most of them are treated like babies at home so they expect the same treatment from their teachers. They are highly emotional and have to be handled very carefully. (N.N)

When you constantly remind parents that their child may need extra work to be done at home on a regular basis and they don't respond, ...then when you write a report on the child at the end of the term, the parents come to you and they want to know "why my child did badly". (N.N)

Sometimes pupils come to school feeling emotionally upset due to problems between their parents at home. (S.B)

Informal settlements and lack of water/lights impedes learning. Affluent homes foster learning. (N.N)

Some learners aren't properly toilet trained which requires the teacher's extra care and vigilance. (N.N)

In attempting to mobilise a conception of caring where everyone felt valued the teachers were challenged by language barriers. All the teachers in the study spoke English. This was not the home language of some learners. The teachers meant well and wanted to create an inclusive environment but noted the following:

Some pupils do not communicate freely or they do not communicate at all and some pupils do not understand English. (S.B)

Some of them do not speak and cannot understand the language of instruction. They require individual attention and more of my time. (N.N)

Teachers in the study noted that conceptions of caring within teaching are made within a very demanding education system. This enabled certain types of caring to take place whilst others were more in the background. The implementation of the new curriculum with an overburdening administrative load challenged the type of caring that teachers wanted to offer. For example, they spoke about their passion to help learners achieve their full potential but noted that how this happened was dependent of resources. The teachers also spoke about large classes as being an impediment to the type of caring one can give to learners. They stated that it was inevitable that some children who require more care would be lost in large classes.

When asked about how to accommodate the types of caring acts necessary in the context of poverty and behavioral problems that children experienced the teachers spoke about workshops that would help them increase knowledge on dealing with different categories of young learners. They also felt that a lower teacher-child ratio would create better opportunities for teachers to connect with children and be more responsive to their needs.

4.6 Summary

This study looked at how teachers in the Foundation Phase made their conceptions of caring within teaching. In this chapter the findings show that Foundation Phase teachers have multiple conceptions of caring within teaching. This is influenced by the context they teach in and the frames of references they use. It was evident that teachers were using frames of reference from child development in vulnerable situations, teaching and learning with lack of strong support (from the home and education department) and the futuristic image of the child in order to shape caring within teaching. The teachers position themselves as caring teachers doing culturally situated practice and forming relationships. As such they identify characteristics that are supportive and responsive to the needs of young children. Their conceptions in relation to pedagogy are supportive of the idea that they need to connect with their learners and create an inclusive environment. This, however, is challenged by circumstances which limits the type of caring that is made possible. A demanding curriculum and large class numbers are limiting the possibilities for caring acts within teaching in the Foundation Phase.

In the next chapter I give a summary of all the chapters. Then I discuss the implications of my study and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter. I investigated teachers' conceptions of caring within teaching in the Foundation Phase. In this chapter I present the summary, implications, suggestions for future research and reflections.

5.2 Summary of each chapter

In Chapter One I introduced my study. I presented the context that needed caring acts from people like teachers. I then used excerpts from the popular press to show the realities that demands care work. I looked at international and national frameworks in order to show where care is located in the legal frameworks. In the rationale I explained how my experiences influenced my notions of caring. The rest of the chapter focused on the aims, research questions, paradigms, theory and research design.

In Chapter Two I began with the theory used in this study. Symbolic Interactionism was considered to be suitable for my study as it focused on meaning making and allowed me to look at care as being socially constructed rather than something that is biologically given. In the review of care as a concept I presented many perspectives, namely, the common sense notion, care as relation, care as women's work, care as ethics, care as loving education, care as culturally situated practice. I also provided a discussion on the dynamics of caring.

In Chapter Three I presented my research design and methodology. I saw the qualitative approach to be relevant to my study. The context of my study was a combined school with learners from Grades R to 12. Three teachers from the Foundation Phase participated in the study. I used semi-structured interviews, observations and focus group interviews to get the data for this study. I followed the ethical procedures required. I explained how my data was analysed and the problems I experienced.

In Chapter Four the findings of the study are presented. The findings show that Foundation Phase teachers use many conceptions of caring within teaching. This is influenced by the context in which they work and the frames of reference they have access to. They use frames of reference from child development in vulnerable situations, the context of teaching and learning and the futuristic image of the child in order to shape caring within teaching. Since they positioned themselves in care

perspectives they were able to identify characteristics that were supportive and responsive to the needs of young children. Their conceptions of caring in relation to pedagogy are supportive of the idea they must connect with their learners and create an inclusive environment. This, however, is challenged by circumstances which limits the type of caring that is made possible. Teachers' noted that a demanding curriculum and large class numbers are limiting the possibilities for caring acts within teaching in the Foundation Phase.

5.3 Implications of this study

I believe that one of the main implications of my study is that teachers need to be supported in the care work they do. This means that there has to be short courses and workshops that would help teachers to gain more knowledge about care work and sharpen their skills for practical implementation. These courses must be designed taking into account the vulnerabilities of young children and their parents/caregivers in the South Africa context. This is important if the interventions teachers provide are to be effective.

When teachers engage in caring acts within teaching it is not valued as "real" work. What is privileged is the teaching of Literacy, Numeracy, and Lifeskills as dictated by the National Curriculum Statements (NCS). The care curriculum that teachers develop through sensitivity to the context of learner's lives does not get the attention it deserves. There are no rewards or promotions related to care work of teachers. The Department of Education would be very wise to put in place a recognition system for care work. For example, the national teacher award could have special categories to recognise care work. This maybe difficult to measure but portfolios of evidence can be requested from teachers who apply.

To engage in care work is time consuming and draining for teachers as they do have other priorities. The formation of support groups in areas that have children living in vulnerable circumstances can be looked at. Teachers can get together, share ideas and develop strategies. They can be supported by talks from experts occasionally.

5.4. Limitations and future research

I undertook a very small study with only 3 participants. It does not meet the criteria for generalisations. I do believe, however, that my study does add to the literature on care work for young children at schools. I also worked only with female teachers. Time and money placed constraints on this study.

For future research I would suggest that a larger sample be used to investigate the conceptions of caring within teaching. The study can include male and female teachers from different phases in schooling.

5.5 Reflections

The beginning of this degree started about 7 years ago at the University of Durban Westville where both my husband and I were enrolled as part-time students. At that time I was under the impression that by the end of two years I would graduate with this much anticipated degree. However, due to financial constraints this was not possible. Five years elapsed and I had lost interest in continuing with my studies. My husband, however, continued with his studies and completed his degree. This motivated me to continue when I approached the University, they told me to write a letter to the Senate, explaining and giving reasons why I had taken such a long break from my studies. I sent in my letter and waited for about four months before I was pleasantly surprised with a reply stating that I could continue with my studies

I was then assigned a wonderful supervisor by the name of Dr H.B. Ebrahim, without whom I would not have been able to reach this final point in my studies. Dr Ebrahim was like an angel in disguise as she put me through my paces to produce work of quality. Her constant encouragement and assistance during the past two years, when I felt I could not make it, was truly commendable.

When I look back at the first steps to produce this study it reminds me of a nerve wracking process. The proposal underwent many drafts and resubmissions. The next step was doing the ethical clearance. Filling out the form and then typing out the various consent forms took its toll on my health. At one point I just wanted to quit, but Dr Ebrahim was a pillar of strength.

The lapse of time from my studies had certainly made me very 'rusty' in certain respects. There were many trips to campus to meet with Dr Ebrahim and do electronic searches. I spent many hours reading and updating my knowledge. Even though I was stressed by the whole experience it was a worthwhile exercise. Putting everything together to tell a story was most enriching - thanks to Dr Ebrahim supportive supervision. I also learnt a lot about the conceptions of caring within teaching in the foundation phase as discussed earlier in this chapter.

5.6 Conclusion

I do see my study as an important tool to get teachers talking about their conceptions of caring within teaching. When teachers especially in the formative years do this then we are able to locate what frames of references they are using and how they approach caring within teaching. This information is invaluable in a country trying to better the citizens of the future. The training of teachers for care work in the Foundation Phase is like a key that can unlock many possibilities for young children who grow up in vulnerable circumstances. Support for Foundation Phase teachers care work is critical if we are going to map brighter futures for our little ones.

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APPENDIX A

The Director of Education
Department of Education and Culture Services
23 February 2009

Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SEATIDES COMBINED SCHOOL

I am a Grade 3 foundation phase educator currently teaching at Seatides Combined School. As a part of my professional development, I am presently enrolled for a Masters Degree in Psychology of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I have completed my first year courses and am now required to do a dissertation. My supervisor is Dr H.B. Ebrahim and her contact details appear below.

My research will focus on *Exploring Teachers' Conceptions of Care in the Foundation Phase*. I will be investigating foundation phase teachers' understanding, knowledge and conceptions of care through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, photo images and focus group interviews of the Grade R, 1 and 2 classes. The focus group interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. During the classroom observation, I will be taking down field notes and photographs.

Before conducting my research I would obtain permission of the Grade R, 1 and 2 educators. All information received will be kept strictly confidential and participants will be free to withdraw at any stage of the research. The data will be treated confidentially and will be used for discussion purposes only. Pseudonyms will be used to protect participants' identity. Upon submission of my thesis the data will be stored in the School of Education Studies, Faculty of Education for a period of five years as per university regulation.

I consider this study to be valuable in shaping the way teachers' are trained to deal with caring for learners in the foundation phase.

I hope that you will consider my request favourably and grant me permission to conduct my research at my school.

I look forward to your reply and thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours faithfully

.....
T. RAMDUTT (MRS)

Student number: 8727297

Tel. No: 032 9431530

Fax. : 032 9433626

Email : thahera.r@hotmail.com

SUPERVISOR'S DETAILS:

Dr. H.B. Ebrahim

University of Kwa Zulu Natal

Early Childhood Studies

Edgewood Campus

Tel. No. 031 2603483

Fax : 031 2603423

Email: Ebrahimh1@ukzn.ac.za

I(full names) hereby confirm that I understand the nature of the research project and I consent/do not consent for Mrs T.A. Ramdutt to conduct research at Seatides Combined School.

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORMS FOR TEACHERS

Dear Participant

My name is Thaherabibi Ramdutt and I am presently enrolled for a Masters Degree in Psychology of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I have completed my first year courses and am now required to do a mini dissertation. My supervisor is Dr H.B. Ebrahim. Her contact details appear below.

My research topic is *Exploring Teachers' Conceptions of Care in the Foundation Phase.* In order to establish this I will be examining the understandings and priorities of Foundation Phase teachers, their descriptions of a caring teacher and their interpretations of the caring side of teaching in practice.

I therefore require your generous co-operation and participation in this research. I assure you confidentiality and anonymity in any information that is obtained from you. This means that the school and individuals will not be identified in the report. During my classroom observation I will be observing classroom practice and interactions by taking down field notes, photographs and audio tapes. These will be analysed and transcribed. This data will be disposed of after a reasonable lapse of time from the final report. You will also be required to participate in a semi-structured interview as well as a focus group interview. This means I will be asking you questions in a flexible manner. The questions will relate to understanding learners contextually, your priorities as professionals for young children and care of foundation phase learners. Learners in your class will be informed about the reasons for my visits and they will be made to feel as comfortable as possible.

Your participation is voluntary. You are at liberty to withdraw from this study at any time you desire.

Should you have any queries please contact my supervisor at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Her details are as follows. Dr. H.B. Ebrahim

University of Kwa Zulu Natal
Early Childhood Studies
Edgewood Campus
Tel. No : 031 2603483
Fax : 031 2603423
Email : Ebrahimh1@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your co-operation.

.....
T.A. Ramdutt (student number 8727297)
Tel. No. : 032-9431530
Fax No: 032-9433626

.....
Date

I..... (full names) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project.. I hereby give consent/do not give consent to participate in the research project. .

.....
Signature

.....
Date

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM TO PRINCIPAL

Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOL

My name is Thaherabibi Ramdutt. I am presently enrolled for a Masters Degree in Psychology of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I have completed my first year courses and am now required to do a mini dissertation. My supervisor is Dr H.B. Ebrahim Her contact details appear below.

My research will focus on *Exploring Teachers' Conceptions of Care in the Foundation Phase* In order to establish this I will be investigating the understanding, knowledge and priorities of Foundation Phase teachers, through interviews, classroom observations and focus group interviews.

I therefore require your consent in conducting this research at your school. I assure you confidentiality and anonymity in any information that is obtained from your school. This means that the school and individuals will not be identified in the report. During my classroom observation I will be observing classroom practice and interactions by taking down field notes, audio tapes and photographs. These will be analysed and transcribed. The data will be disposed of after a reasonable lapse of time from the final report. The foundation phase teachers will also be required to participate in a semi-structured interview as well as a focus group interview. This means that I will be asking them questions in a flexible manner. The questions will relate to understanding learners contextually, their priorities as professionals for young children and care of foundation phase learners. Learners in foundation phase classes will be informed about the reasons for my visits and they will be made to feel as comfortable as possible.

I hope that you will consider my request favourably and grant me permission to conduct my research at your school

I look forward to your reply and thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours faithfully

.....
T. RAMDUTT (MRS)
(Student no. 8727297)

Tel. No: 032 9431530
Fax. : 032 9433626
Email : thahera.r@hotmail.com

SUPERVISOR'S DETAILS:
Dr. H.B. Ebrahim
Early Childhood Studies
University of Kwa Zulu Natal
Edgewood Campus
Tel. No. 031 2603483
Fax . 031 2603423
Email : Ebrahimh1@ukzn.ac.za

I..... hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I consent /do not consent for Mrs T.A. Ramdutt to conduct research at my school with the permission of teachers concerned and that the teachers are at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time they desire.

.....
Signature

.....
Date

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR TEACHERS

Theme 1: Understanding children contextually

- 1.1 Describe the socio-economic conditions of your learners.
- 1.2 Comment on family circumstances of learners.
- 1.3 Describe the home conditions of your learners.
- 1.4 Explain the needs of learners in your class/the foundation phase/the school environment.

Theme 2: Priorities as professionals for young children.

- 2.1 What are your teaching qualifications?
- 2.2 Describe the areas of specialisation in your qualification.
- 2.3 Why did you choose to become a foundation phase teacher?
- 2.4 Describe your priorities for teaching foundation phase learners.
- 2.5 Describe the pleasurable moments in your teaching.
- 2.6 What are the challenges in meeting these priorities?

Theme 3: Care for foundation phase learners.

- 3.1 Describe the care needs of the foundation phase learners in your class.
- 3.2 How do you understand the caring side of teaching?
- 3.3 Describe the nature of care work within teaching foundation phase learners.
- 3.4 What does it mean to be a caring teacher?
- 3.5 Comment on the space for care work in the foundation phase curriculum.
- 3.6 What are the challenges in meeting the care needs of foundation phase learners?

APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

1. Examine the photographs and explain the meaning of your actions.

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2. What do you understand by caring acts within teaching?

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3. Describe a caring teacher.

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4. What do you do as a care giver in your teaching?

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5. Describe memorable moments in your role as a care giver in teaching.

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6. Describe worst moments in your role as a care giver in teaching.

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7. How do you deal with learners who have learning problems and those that present with discipline problems?

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8. What changes would you like to see in relation to care within teaching?

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9. How should this happen?

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10. Is there anything you want to tell me about care within teaching?

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