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Exploring teachers' experiences in using formative assessment strategies in foundation phase (isiNdebele) home language within Kwaggafontein East Circuit

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Declaration:

I, <u>Nompumelelo Emily Mtshweni</u> declare that this dissertation is my own work. All relevant sources were referenced accordingly. The study has not been accepted for any degree at any university, and is not being currently considered for degree purposes at any other university.
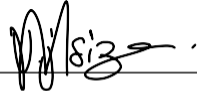
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Acknowledgement

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my parents Jane and July. Thank you for never giving up on me. To my late great-grandmother, I hope you are proud of me wherever you are. To Phindile, Zanele and Siyabonga, I hope this study will inspire you to work hard as well.

Abstract

The study explored teachers' experiences in assessing (isiNdebele) home language in the foundation phase. Despite the 26 years of democracy, isiNdebele is the least spoken language in South Africa amongst the 11 official languages; with a 2, 1 % speaker population. The main aim of this research study was to understand teachers' experiences in assessing isiNdebele home language using formative assessment strategies in the foundation phase. In this study, IsiNdebele is a language of teaching and learning. The Language in Education Policy (1997) stipulates that every learner must be taught in their home language in order to lay a solid foundation for the acquisition of a second language. Formative assessment is believed to be an effective assessment that is able to yield positive results in learning. However, the South African education system is faced with an inconsistent curriculum and the teachers have to adapt to every change that comes with it. The study further explored how experience gained over the years has influenced the manner in which teachers assess isiNdebele. The study employed a qualitative approach and used a case-study methodological design. Eight participants were selected observed and interviewed to generate data. Semi-structured interviews, reflective journals and semi-structured observations were used to gain in-depth knowledge on how the sampled foundation phase teachers understood formative assessment, and what strategies they used to assess the foundation phase learners. The findings indicated that sampled teachers were still rooted to the old methods of assessing and teaching. They believed more on grading learners than interacting with them. Furthermore, some teachers were not familiar with the new terminologies and were still attached to the old terms. The findings also indicate that teachers' experiences differed as well as their understanding of formative assessment. Based on the findings of the study I recommend that there should be more studies conducted focusing on the teaching, learning and the assessment of IsiNdebele. The department of basic education should prioritise extensive training for assessment.

Keywords: *Experiences*, *formative assessment, home language,*

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List of acronyms

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Standard
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FA	Formative Assessment
FAL	First Additional Language
FP	Foundation Phase
HL	Home Language
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcome Base Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SBA	School Base Assessment

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.0 Introduction

South Africa has experienced a number of curriculum changes aimed at improving the education system while also providing redress for those who were previously marginalised. During colonialism and the apartheid, education was designed to suit the coloniser's languages at the expense of African languages (Mandukwini, 2016). Kanjee and Sayed (2014, p. 442) state that "the implementation of a new curriculum was to address the ideals of the new non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa, and the development of teacher capacity and skills to provide high-quality education to all children for them to become active participants in the new society." Language and assessment were amongst the aspects that the democratic government felt the need to review and change, as a way of shifting from the discriminating policies. In addition to the marginalised languages, the apartheid government designed assessments at the time with the intention of providing an inferior education system to the black population. Summative assessment took priority in the form of tests and examinations to assess the learners (Mathonsi, 1988 & Nzimande 1995). Thus, the main aim of changing the assessment policy was to give all learners equal opportunity and design assessment that does not control but allows learner participation in teaching and learning (Kallaway, 1984). Furthermore, the aim was to encourage learner involvement in learning and assessment that did not judge learners on grades but also on their individual capabilities. Presently, there is a transformed democratic dispensation and the transformed language policy was established to protect all the South African official languages (Tshotsho, 2013).The new language policy brought about changes that foundation phase (FP) learners are also being taught in their home language (HL) and they transition to English as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) from grade 4 until grade 12. The motive behind the policy was to develop learners' cognitive skills in their home language so that that they can be able to switch easily to the second language (Lenyai, 2011). IsiNdebele is among the languages that were given official status and freedom of use in schools. It is now a quarter of a century since apartheid and discriminatory policies ended in South Africa and isiNdebele being used as an official language in schools. After 25 years, isiNdebele is still regarded as an under-developed language. For example, according to Statistics South Africa (2012), isiZulu is the most spoken language in South African with 22,7 %, isiXhosa 16,%, Afrikaans 13,5%, English 9,6%, SePedi 9,1%, Tswana 8%, Sotho 7,8%, Tsonga 4,5%, Swati 2,5%, Vhenda 2,4% and isiNdebele 2,1%.

The statistics show that isiNdebele is the least spoken language of all the official languages in South Africa; therefore, many development strategies are needed in order to uplift isiNdebele. Developing a previously disadvantaged language needs teachers to be knowledgeable about the language and use effective methods (Khan, 2014). Since the study's purpose is to explore teachers' experiences of formative assessment to develop isiNdebele in the FP classrooms within Kwaggafontein East circuit, therefore it is important to regard formative assessment as a form of assessment that seeks to develop learners in various aspects of their academic lives and needs. This introductory chapter starts by explaining the background of the study, focus, purpose, objectives and the research questions. Moreover, the chapter discusses the significance of the study, overview and conclusion.

1.1 Background

Background is information that describes and identifies the history of the research conducted using the literature (Labaree, 2013). The background helps the researcher to understand the research problem and its nature. The South African constitution has granted learners the right to be taught in a language of their choice, especially in the Foundation Phase. According to the South African Constitution (1996) Section 29 (sub-section 21), language is a fundamental right in education and every learner has the right to receive education in any official language of their choice. The Department of Education (2003, p. 9) further adds that "learning to use language effectively enables learners to think and acquire knowledge, to express their identity, feelings and ideas, to interact with others and to manage their world". Language is the most powerful tool used for communication; to express, to think and reason. Brunei (2000) notes that the school is an important sector which determines the use of language and to facilitate its growth. Successful language growth is determined by how well the learner can speak and write it. FP is a phase where learners begin to take formal learning starting from grade R-3. The Department of Education (1997), in its Language in Education Policy, stipulates that learners in this phase should use home language as language of learning and teaching in all learning areas. There are four learning areas in the FP which are; mathematics, isiNdebele, Life Skills and First Additional Language (FAL) (English). All the learning areas are taught in home language which is isiNdebele, except English FAL. As noted earlier, the purpose of introducing a home language in the early years of schooling was to develop the learners' language at the early years of schooling. Learners' early language skills are strongly related to their experiences with language input in home context (Mayo, Scheele, & Leseman, 2010). Language spoken at home has an impact in the cognitive development of the

learners as it serves as a tool of expression and communication. Thus, learners relate everything they are doing to their home language. Ross (2004) defines home language as the first language a learner learns to speak from his/her immediate surroundings, such as the family and community, the learner becomes comfortable and competent in that particular language. According to Senadeera (2010), learners who are taught in their home languages develop self-confidence and self-esteem, when compared to learning in a foreign language where they develop anxiety and cognitive challenges (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005). Assessment measures how far the learner's language has developed, what the learner knows and what other strategies can be used to further develop the learner. Formative and summative assessments are functions of assessment that serve to monitor learners' progress and performance (Black & Wiliam, 1996; Wiliam 2013). Summative assessment is assessment that is conducted at the end of a quarter or year although others use it after each lesson for grading purposes (Brown, 2004). Formative assessment is assessment that takes place during the lesson, particularly aimed at improving teaching and learning through interaction and providing feedback (Lewy, 1990). Both assessments serve the same purpose; which is to develop the learner. The effective use of formative assessment to assess a home language is most marked in the early years of schooling, as it is where learners begin to use their home language formally and/or academically. In an environment of learning and teaching, teachers are the agents of education and they carry out assessments (Rea-Dickins, 2004). Therefore, how they perceive and understand formative assessment is crucial for the individual development of each learner and the development of their own teaching practice. According to Rice (2010), teachers' experience is a key factor in education, which determines the effectiveness of the teacher, their salary, as well as seniority. The amount of teaching experience a teacher has is often considered important in developing learners and conducting effective teaching (OECD, 2005). The most apparent measure of teacher's experience is the number of years in service, but within the number of years, there are other factors such as; the amount of knowledge and pedagogical skills the teacher has about using formative assessment (Rodrigues & McKay, 2010). Knowledge and skills developed over the years enable the teacher to know how to deal with diversity and classroom management for the purposes of teaching and that of assessment. As a Foundation Phase teacher using isiNdebele as a language of learning and teaching, I was motivated to conduct the study. The following scholars; Rice (2010); Kini and Podolsky (2016); Pijares (1992); Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993), have indicated the significance of experience in education (teaching). As a teacher with limited experience in the Foundation Phase, I wanted to explore how experience in assessment is used to enhance language competency in isiNdebele. Being new teacher with 5 years teaching

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experience in the field and with less experience, it made me question whether I was capable enough to teach and assess the Foundation Phase learners.

1.2. Focus, purpose and the rationale of the study

The study focused on FP teachers who had more than five years' teaching experience, teaching isiNdebele as language of learning and teaching within Kwaggafontein East circuit in Mpumalanga in South Africa. KwaNdebele[1] was chosen as the site for the study because it is where the majority of the amaNdebele ethnic group resides. As noted earlier, the study focused mainly on teachers' experience of using formative assessment to assess isiNdebele in FP. The purpose of the study was to explore and understand how teachers were assessing isiNdebele in the Foundation Phase classrooms, the assessment strategies that they used to assess the learners, and the reasons behind selecting certain assessment strategies. Considering the rate at which curriculum and assessment policies change in South Africa, teachers are faced with the challenge of adapting to every policy that is introduced. Every policy that is introduced comes with new content and requirements. Through this study, I further sought to understand how experience informs assessment, especially formative assessment. Scholars such as Guvercin (2011), Alexander (2008) and Heugh (2006) assert that learners who have a firm foundation in their home language are likely to succeed academically and be able to acquire a second language easily, as noted earlier (Lenyai, 2011). Language is the most significant aspect in education, especially for Foundation Phase learners (Khan, 2014). In South Africa, Foundation Phase is a phase where learners are officially taught how to use the language academically as well as for communication. As a first language speaker of isiNdebele, and a Foundation Phase teacher for isiNdebele, it was significant to carry out this research. IsiNdebele is spoken by a smaller population of South Africa, at least according to the Statistics South Africa (2012). There are also very few studies researching the teaching and assessment of isiNdebele in the Foundation Phase.

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[1]**KwaNdebele** refers to a broader area and the name was used during the apartheid system of homelands.

1.3. Objectives

There are three main objectives of the study that I aimed to achieve at the end of the research.

- ❖ To explore teachers' experience of using formative assessment for assessing isiNdebele in foundation phase
- ❖ To understand how teachers select their strategies for isiNdebele as home language to facilitate effective learning.
- ❖ To explore the reason for selecting the assessment strategies in a manner in which they did.

1.4. Research questions

Research questions are questions that are to be answered throughout the study. The following are the research questions that guided the study:

1. What are foundation phase teachers' experiences of using formative assessment for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classrooms?
2. How do foundation phase teachers select different formative assessment strategies for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classrooms?
3. Why do foundation phase teachers select different formative assessment strategies for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classrooms the way they do?

1.5 Overview of the study

1.5.1. Chapter one: Background and Introduction

This chapter presented the introduction and background of the study, the focus, purpose and the rationale of the study. In this chapter, I provided the key objectives and key research questions.

1.5.2 Chapter two: Literature review

This chapter discusses literature review, focusing on both from the local and international scholars. The literature touches on key debates with regards to the phenomenon studied. The literature chapter is divided into the following sections; defining formative assessment, studies on teachers' experiences of using formative assessment, studies on formative assessment in relation to home language, and policies on assessment in post-apartheid, followed by the conclusion

1.5.2 Chapter three: Theoretical and conceptual framework

This is a theory chapter and it discusses the theory that informs the study; which is Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. The study also adopted a conceptual framework drawn from the conceptual framing work of Spider-web. I use the concept of assessment and it is guided by two questions; "why are they assessing?" and "how is their teaching assessed?"

1.5.3.   Chapter four: Research design and methodology

The chapter presents the research approach, and the methodology that was used for the study. In addition, the chapter discusses the research paradigm used by the study, which is interpretivism paradigm, as well as the methods of data generation such as semi-structured observation and semi-structured interviews. Followed by the selection strategy (sampling) method of analysis and conclusion.

1.5.4. Chapter Five: Data presentation, Finding & analysis

After the data is generated and analysed, this chapter presents and discusses the findings. The process of data analysis produced three themes that I discuss in detail in the chapter. Like all the chapters, there is a conclusion to the chapter.

1.5.6 Chapter six Recommendations and limitations

This chapter presents a summary of the findings. It also demonstrates how the findings responded to the key research questions. The chapter further discusses the implication the study has on policy, practice and future research. I also discuss the limitations and conclusion of the project.

1.6. Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the project which will assist the reader in understanding the nature of the study. Chapter two discusses literature review. Chapter three discusses theoretical and conceptual framework. Chapter four discusses research design and methodology. Chapter five discusses findings and data analysis and chapter six discusses recommendations and limitations of the study. The following chapter will discuss the reviewed literatures based on the topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented an overview of the study, the research questions and objectives of the study. This chapter presents the reviews of the existing literature showing how the field of assessment is emerging and the potential contribution made by this study. De Vos (2005, p. 123) defines literature review as a ''thoughtful and informed discussion of relevant literature that builds a logical framework for the research that sets it within the context of the relevant studies.'' Brink (2006) offers another understanding of what literature review is. For Brink, the process of literature review involves findings, readings, understanding and forming conclusions about the published literature, and presenting it in an organized manner. This chapter aimed to present review literature about teachers' experiences in using formative assessment strategies in isiNdebele as a home language. Drawing from the previously mentioned statistics, teachers ought to use methods of teaching and assessment that will not only develop the learners academically, but also develop the language. Since my work is on formative assessment, I define it as assessment that promotes feedback, interaction, and uses learners' results to improve their learning (Chappuis & Chappius, 2008; Hattie, 2009). The focus of the study was on Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in using formative assessment. Experience, according to Dewey (1938), plays a significant role in teaching and learning. According to Huang and Moon (2009), the more years of experience a teacher has, the more effective the teacher should be in teaching and promoting learner achievement. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section defines formative assessment, the second section the use of formative assessment, the third formative assessment on home language, and lastly, the emergence of policies on assessment post-apartheid.

2.1 Defining formative assessment

Assessment is the key element used in learning to assess learning against specified objectives. According to the Department of Basic Education (2002b) assessment is a continuous planned process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about the performance of the learner in terms of outcome. There are various methods that could be used to assess learners. The DBE (ibid) has identified four types of assessment; baseline assessment, which is used to check prior knowledge, formative assessment which provides feedback to support learners, diagnostic assessment used to identify the strength and weakness of learners prior to learning and summative assessment to check the overall of performance of the learners. The study will focus on formative

assessment strategies in isiNdebele as a home language. Multiple studies such (Powell, 2010; Gordon & Rajagopalan, 2016; Hamp-lyons, 2016; Siyanoa-Chanturia & Webb, 2016) indicate that using formative assessment is beneficial as it provides teachers with information that will assist to modify teaching and learning. Formative assessment is a type of assessment that promotes effective learning and teaching. According to Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, and Wiliam (2003), the integration of formative assessment into teaching results in enhanced learner performance and improves the practice in teaching. There are various definitions that explain what formative assessment is. However, they all have the same phenomenon which places feedback at the centre of formative assessment. Black and William (1998, p.7) define formative assessment as "encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their learners, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged." Jones and Moreland (2004) and Ramaprasad (1983) note that the main purpose of formative assessment is to give feedback in a way that will develop the learners' knowledge as well as improve the teachers' pedagogical practice. Thus, formative assessment is not only meant to focus on learning. It also enhances teachers in developing their style of teaching. Furthermore the purpose of formative assessment is providing teachers an opportunity to identify learners' progress, their needs, strengths and weaknesses (Looney, 2007 & Kahl, 2005). Given the variety of formative assessment tasks, Iron (2008, p.7) suggests that "formative assessment is any task that creates feedback (information that helps a learner to learn from formative activities) or feed forward (information which will help a learner amend or enhance activities in the future)."Unlike summative assessment, formative assessment does not emphasize grading; instead the emphasis is on feedback, and collaboration between the teacher and the learner to enhance the learning experience. Often, formative assessment uses observational procedures and diagnostic measures to provide teachers with detailed information about learners' progress (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). However, it remains a challenge to conduct formative assessment, especially using the observational procedures in overcrowded classrooms that the majority of the teachers teach in.

Some scholars such as Wiliam and Thompson (2007) have identified five strategies that comprise formative assessment.

2.1.1 Sharing and clarifying the intention and criteria for success

According to Wiggins and McTighen (2000) it is vital for learners to know and understand the

intended goal as it will allow them and teachers to understand the type of knowledge that is needed and how to apply it. Thus, Teachers should share and clarify the intended goal for a task (ibid). For example, learners must know the purpose of reading a story and what should they look for. The strategy allows the teacher to discuss explicitly the targeted goal or knowledge and share possible ideas for improvement.

2.1.2 Creating effective classroom discussion and activities

Once both the educator and the learner understand the intended goal(s), teachers should design task/activities that will direct learners to the goal(s) and show progression (Wiliam, 2011). Once activities are done, evidence must be collected so the teacher can see if learners understood as well as to monitor progression. Furthermore, evidence enables teachers to be able to design task/activities that are suitable for every learner and conduct classroom discussion with learners about the task (ibid).

2.1.3 Provide feedback that moves learning forward.

With all the evidence collected teachers must provide learners with effective feedback about their progress. Wiliam (2011) assert that feedback is only effective when tells the learner not only what to improve but how to improve as well. Thus, feedback must be meaningful and assist learning as well as encouraging independent learning. Furthermore, feedback must also assist in improving teaching.

2.1.4 Activating learners as owners of their own learning

Learner involvement in learning is likely to yield (Fontana & Fernandes, 1994; Mevarech & Kramarski, 1997). Learner involvement increases their enthusiasm to learn, their self-esteem and their desire to learn. When learners are actively engaged in their learning they are able to understand the purpose of activity and assessment and learning is likely to be effective.

2.1.5 Activating learners as learning resource for one another

Slavin, Hurley and Chamberlain (2003) indicate that activating learners as resources for one another help in improving learning and promotes active engagement as well. Encouraging collaborative learning amongst learners must be paramount, thus teachers must create activities

and assessment that promotes group or peer learning. There are various methods teachers can use to involve learners in their learning, like peer assessment where learners will be evaluating each other's work which will lead to meaningful feedback.

The key strategies are aimed at meeting the learners' needs through using their work and giving them meaningful feedback as well as allowing them to take ownership of their work. Although the scholars presented the above strategies for their own teaching contexts, it was important to further explore the formative assessment strategies used in other African languages.

2.2 The use of formative assessment in the classroom

In the previous section, I presented what scholars define formative assessment as. Therefore, studies reviewed herein are concerned with the use of formative assessment in the classroom; whether it enhances teaching and learning, and whether teachers understand the purpose of formative assessment. In the previous section, literature indicated the use of formative assessment as being meant to benefit both the learners and teachers. There has been a wide definition and conceptualisation of formative assessment. Formative assessment is understood as assessment *for* learning. The main purpose of assessment *for* learning is to provide learners with support that will allow them to become independent and self-regulated learners (Dixon, 2011; Sadler, 2010; Swaffield, 2011). Assessment *for* learning focuses on promoting student learning and self-assessment. Formative assessment serves the same purpose. However, according to Rea- Dicksin and Gardner (2000), there is a small difference between the two approaches assessment for learning and formative assessment. Assessment for learning embraces the importance of supporting the learners during assessment by providing with necessary information to enhance learning (ibid).

While discussing the use of formative assessment, I argue that the role of the teacher during formative assessment is to close the gap between what the learner knows and the main objectives. Basically, what the teacher does is to assist the learner to transition between the known and unknown stages (Heritage, 2007). Feedback is seen as central to formative assessment. For instance, effective feedback from teachers must provide a clear description and information that indicates to learners where they are with their learning and development (Heritage, 2007). The complexities that exist in relation to Foundation Phase teaching and assessment includes the level as well as the approach required to provide formative feedback for the learners. Nicol and MacFarlane (2006) state that formative and effective feedback should allow the teacher to reflect

and select activities that are equivalent to the level of the learners. However, some teachers may have challenges selecting activities for every learner as some schools experience overcrowding.

Teachers' knowledge of formative assessment is important as they need to know how to identify the strengths and the weaknesses of each learner in their classrooms. Considering the uniqueness and diverse nature of learners in classrooms, teachers are expected to play a role in selecting assessment strategies that will enhance learners' development. Naude and Davin (2017) assert that using a variety of assessment methods the teacher creates an environment that is suitable for every learner. Heritage (2007) has identified four core elements that teachers need to know before they can conduct formative assessment. The first element is identifying the gap between the learner's current learning and the desired educational learning (Sadler, 1989). According to Vygotsky (1986) a gap is the distance between what the learners can accomplish during independent problem solving and the level it can be accomplished during collaboration with someone who is an expert (teacher) or the guidance from an adult. Thus, the teachers identify and create a task that will assist in closing down the gap. The second core element is feedback. Feedback is the meaningful response the learner gets from the teacher about his/her performance in learning. During feedback, the teacher must take steps to close the gap between the learner's knowledge and the current learning in order to reach the intended goal (Heritage, 2007). The third element is the learner involvement in learning and assessment. Teachers must create a learning environment where the learners are in charge of their learning and assessment. Naude & Davin (2017) assert that using a learner-centered approach in teaching and learning means that learners are active participants in the knowledge construction process and in the assessment of their own learning. During learner involvement, the teacher collaborates with the learner in developing the shared understanding of current learning and what they need to do to move forward (Sadler, 1989). The fourth core element is learning progression. The teacher must provide learners with their progression and whether they are on the right path to obtaining the intended objective. Heritage (2007. p, 4) states that ''learning progression should clearly articulate the sub-goals that constitute progress towards the ultimate goal.'' The learner progression assists the teachers to know what the learner's progress in learning is (Heritage, 2007).

Feedback is a facet of formative assessment; therefore, teachers must know how to provide feedback and the various types, that seeks to develop each learner (Earl & Kotez, 2006). Learners

vary and so do their needs, the teacher must therefore, be capable of selecting formative assessment that will cater for all learners and their needs. Dixon and Haigh (2009) state that the role of the teacher is to support learners acquire skills that will enhance their learning. During feedback, the teacher must create a learner centered environment that will allow the learner to take initiative in their learning and understand the purpose of assessment. Creating a learner centered teaching and learning means that learners are active participants in knowledge construction; they understand the purpose of assessment, as well as the objectives (Naude & Davin, 2017). Formative assessment emphasizes that teachers must engage with learners to develop their knowledge; for instance, through feedback as indicated earlier. According to Collins (2001), feedback is an important component in improving teaching and learning in Foundation Phase it allows the teacher to create an environment that promotes interaction. According to Earl and Katz (2006), teachers must create assessment that will develop learners' thinking skills and steer them towards the intended objectives. In Foundation Phase, this means designing various assessments that are able to cater for every learner's individual needs. An example is creating a rubric that is versatile. Bell and Cowie (1999) identify two types of formative assessments that can be used in the classroom; planned and interactive formative assessments. Planned formative assessment is planned before the lesson takes place and the objectives are spelt out clearly (Bell & Cowie, 1999). This type of formative assessment is used by the teachers to diagnose the learners' prior and general knowledge so that teaching and assessment can be aligned. During interactive formative assessment, the teacher is responsive to challenges that arise during the interaction with learners (Bell & Cowie, 1999). In addition, during interactive formative assessment, the teacher interacts with a learner to get insight into what they know (ibid).

2.2.1 Teachers' experience with using formative assessment to promote effective learning.

According to Dewey (1938), experience and education cannot be separated from each other. Thus, all genuine education is a result of experience, which plays a vital role in developing knowledge. In addition, Rice (2000) states that experience gained over time enhance knowledge, skills and positivity. Teachers who have been in the teaching field for many years are believed to have accumulated more knowledge that will enhance learning (Schmidt, 2010). According to Harris and Brown (2009), assessment practice has the capacity to enhance or hinder teaching and learning. Thus, teachers must have adequate knowledge of assessment and be well equipped with strategies that will develop the learner. The reviewed studies highlight experience as an important component in promoting effective learning and assessment. The literature suggests that teachers have

challenges interpreting and using information they get as feedback (Limbrick, Buchanan, Goodwin & Schwarcz, 2010; Hattie & Jaeger, 1998; Knight, 2003). According to Vingsle (2014), interpreting formative assessment data is not an easy task for teachers. This is also the case for experienced teachers. From the reviewed studies, experienced teachers encounter challenges in shifting away from their old practices (Nyambe, 2015). According to Nyambe (2015) and Hilya (2007), a curriculum shift that propels teachers to move away from a teacher centered to a learner centered approach is a challenge to them to implement. South Africa has had numerous curriculum changes and assessment policy reforms, and studies such as Bantwini (2010), have also shown that curriculum reform has caused many challenges and confusion to teachers. As a result, teachers are faced with considerable demands to implement the transformational assessment for learning approach that supports the new curriculum (Gross & Lombard, 2003). Perumanathan (2014) states that many teachers in western countries were taught and trained in an era where assessment was teacher-centered, and more products oriented than process oriented. In a study conducted by Sethusha (2012), it was found that due to the lack of knowledge, teachers interpret and implement assessment according to their classroom experiences as compared to the policy guidelines. Although assessment appears to be rigid, in education this is to be expected because even the curriculum theorists argue that the planned curriculum is different from the enacted. Furthermore, Kanjee and Croft (2012); Pryor and Lubisi (2002); Department of Education (2000); Department of Basic Education (2009); Vandeyar and Killen (2007) observe that some teachers have limited knowledge and expertise to either use or carry out formative assessment. In addition, there is inadequate support for such teachers. This notion is also expressed by Kanjee and Mthembu (2015, p. 143) who say that "the effective use of assessment is to identify and address specific learner needs, especially during the Foundation Phase of schooling as children begin to further their development and enhance their cognitive and affective capacities for learning new knowledge and skills. Teachers' limited knowledge of formative assessment, as argued by Iipinge and Kosanda (2013), results in low confidence when carrying out teaching and learning. This, therefore, contributes to the challenges of implementing formative assessment.

In 2011, the South African Department of Education introduced Annual National Assessment (ANA) as an assessment tool to measure learners' home language development. The purpose of ANA was to monitor learners' performance in Literacy and Numeracy each year, with the aiming of improving learner performance in line with commitments made by the government (DBE,,

2011). ANA uses learners' results to determine school performance. However, according to Naude and Davin (2017), ANA have put teachers under pressure as they have to teach to assess something. Chisholm and Wilderman (2013) call this, teaching for the test. This is done to meet the annual achievement goals.

Teachers were teaching for the test and there was an obsession with scores as performance as opposed to teaching for rich understanding. Naude and Davin (2017, p. 157) argue further that "assessment should not focus on improving scores but increasing learners' competencies in class for living and coping in the real world." In 2016, ANA was challenged by teachers as they felt it was used against its objective. Teachers felt it was used as a punitive tool and it increased their workload. Moreover, the scores did not contribute to the learners' year marks (PSA, 2016). Although teachers should use their time effectively, the "teaching for the test" perception is an assessment that does not contribute to learners' knowledge growth and therefore it becomes a fruitless exercise.

As mentioned earlier, teachers experienced multiple inconsistent curriculums and assessment reforms. That has made it challenging to adjust and master every curriculum introduced to them. The multiple curriculum changes are problematic. For instance, teachers have suffered challenges relating to understanding the curriculum, assessment, policies, and the linguistically diverse learners (Vandeyar, 2008; Vandeyar, 2006; Jansen, 1999; Potenza, Monyoko, 1999). The curriculum inconsistencies have resulted in teachers being resistant to change. This suggests that teachers need support in skills development related to conducting assessment as well as using and interpreting assessment data in a manner that informs teaching and learning (Kanjee & Moloi, 2014). A study by Mark and Lee (2014) found that teachers' competencies and practices in formative assessment were inconsistent, irregular and constrained by various contextual challenges. The contextual challenges included, amongst other things, overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and in some cases, teachers' lack of expertise. Torrance (1995) argues that if change in assessment is implemented with little knowledge or no experience, teachers will interpret formative assessment from a testing perspective, rather than formative assessment perspective. Furthermore, research conducted by Pedder, James and MacBeath (2005) shows that teachers who do not understand formative assessment often struggle in making sense of their role and their responsibilities during activities relating to formative assessment. Lee (2008) further adds that teachers with limited knowledge about formative assessment cannot differentiate between

feedback that is formative and one that is summative. In a survey that was conducted on teacher's understanding of formative assessment, Hargreaves (2005) revealed that teachers understand assessment as either measurement or co- inquiry. Measurement is a process of measuring learners' performance based on their results (e.g. exam, quiz) and co-inquiry is when a teacher constructs knowledge through getting assistance from colleagues and clarifying ideas about teaching and learning (Dewey, 1938). The Department of Education has introduced policies like General Education and Training Assessment guideline for Foundation Phase, which provides details on how to teach and assess, yet teachers are still struggling to put theory into practice (Naude & Davis, 2017). As indicated earlier, feedback is the main component in formative assessment. It provides the teacher with critical and clear information to scaffold learning (King, 2016). The diversity of learners in a classroom calls for creative as well as rigorous approaches to assessment. Vandeyar & Killen (2007) argue that, in South Africa, the challenge in assessment of teachers is to find an approach that is suitable and fair to all the learners and which provides reliable feedback.

2.3 Formative assessment on home language

The previous section presented literature on the use of formative assessment and teachers' experiences of using this type of assessment. This section discusses studies that were previously conducted on formative assessment and home language, how the home language is assessed formatively. Heugh (2006) and Department of Education (2002) define home language as a language that is learned by a learner, which is the parent's language, native language, and the one that the learner is immersed in. Home language emerges and develops from the language the learner is exposed to when she/he starts talking. UNESCO (2003) defines home language as the language an individual uses for the first time in life, and which is used for daily activities. On the other side, Ross (2004) states that home language is not only limited to language that is spoken at home, but in other contexts, it is also the language of the community. More often than not, home language is influenced by learners' surrounding, such as the community. Although there are learners' who may be exposed to more than one language, home language is a language of expression, in which a learner is able to find his/her true identity, and where his/her sense of belonging manifest. In the context of South Africa, home language is learnt and emphasized in the first four years of the child, that is; Grade R to 3. During this phase, the language of learning and teaching in the Foundation Phase is actually the home language. Often, this language is decided upon by the School governing body, through the guidelines of the South African Schools act no 84 of 1996 (Khan, 2014). Orekan (2011) states that home language is the language one thinks

dreams and counts in. The language the child learns when they start to utter their first word is often considered as their home language as it is the language they understand and communicate with.

Language and education are intertwined entities, and no education related practice and activities can take place without language (Daby, 2015). Education depends on language as the success of education is determined by the development and use of language. According to Daby (2015), language is a considerable variable on which the effectiveness of the education system is validated and academic success measured. The foundation phase and early childhood education are very essential in learning therefore; effective assessment practices are essential in ensuring that learners complete the phase with sufficient knowledge. Sathiaseelan (2013) argues that learners think and dream in their home language so training in home language is the first human culture and the first essential of schooling. As mentioned earlier, in South Africa, learners are taught in their home language from grade R until grade 3. Learning in home language is necessary to develop the level of literacy and verbal proficiency at a FP level; in particular, a language that they are familiar with (Baker 2006, Benson 2005 & Cummins 2000). Beka's (2000) study reports that, when learning takes place in a learner's home language, it boosts their self-confidence, psychological stamina and communication. The curriculum policy in South Africa, CAPS, also affirms the importance of home language. The Department of Education (2012) notes that learning through a home language enables the learner to acquire language skills that are required for academic skills across the curriculum. It enables the learner to express and justify their views confidently and as independent analytical thinkers.

Language plays a significant role in education. For knowledge to be developed, learners' language proficiency must be well developed. According to Cummins (2000), language proficiency involves more than the ability to communicate in everyday conversational contexts, but is specifically related to the use of language for academic purposes. Language is the most complex yet prominent feature in education. South Africa has eleven official languages which the Department of Education has recognised. The languages are endorsed by government to be taught in all the levels/grades. According to the Language Education Policy of (1997), the Foundation Phase learners are to be instructed in their home language until in grade four where they switch to English as medium of instruction (Mashiya, 2011). The use of home language as medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase suggests that assessment will be carried out in their home language, which is a language they understand better. In another study, Mashiya (2014) indicated that language plays a critical role in assessment as one formulates meaning through it and provides relevant

response. Through the home language, the learners are expected to display their understanding of the content, apply new skills, display creativity in their work, and more often, interact with the teacher to develop proficiency (Mashiya, 2014). While teachers conduct assessment in a home language, in subjects like isiNdebele there should be more communication between the learners and teachers as the learners are exposed to the language for the first time. DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara and Cao (2013) argue that the early years of schooling are a sensitive period in the development of a lifelong learning and the acquisition of skills, knowledge, behaviours, values and attitudes that support learning in the later years. Therefore, home language at this stage plays a significant role academically as well as for communication

The main aim of using home language in South African schools is to "maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s)" (Language in Education Policy, 1997, p. 1.). This is important in particular at a time when there is a growing call in higher education to decolonize and African the curriculum. As indicated earlier, the South African School act no 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1996) stipulates that the school governing body has to decide on the language of teaching and learning of the school, and formulate the language policy. Some of the decisions taken are exclusionary in ways that a learner whose home language is not the chosen medium of instruction is unable to participate effectively in the day to day activities in the classroom. Teachers often encounter a language barrier when conducting formative assessment or interacting with a learner whose home language is not the medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase classroom. In a study conducted by Howie (2002), teachers who were native English or Afrikaans speakers could not speak any African language and therefore could not communicate and clarify concepts in the pupils' home language. Carless (2002) asserts that it is difficult to implement home language in South Africa, especially in diverse areas which consist of multiple ethnic groups. Vandeyar and Killen (2007,p. 101) further adds that ''one of the challenges affecting the implementation of assessment in South Africa was the unwillingness of teachers to accommodate linguistically and culturally diverse learners.'' The effective use of formative assessment plays a vital role in the development of the home language at the Foundation Phase. Sekati (2016) indates that effective communication leads to more learning opportunities in the classroom when the language used is familiar to both the teacher and the learner. Foundation Phase learners are still eager to learn, so teachers must be well equipped or have the ability to interact with learners and provide feedback to improve their language competence (Naude & Davin, 2017).

Meirim, Jordaan, Kallenbach, and Rijhuma (2010) assert that in order to develop language proficiency, teachers must facilitate that through teaching and assessment strategies. The study focused on the use of formative assessment in isiNdebele home language. IsiNdebele is one of the official languages that are predominantly used in Mpumalanga and in some schools in Limpopo as the medium of instruction. Despite the fact that African languages were given recognition, isiNdebele language speakers are relatively low. Mashiyane (2002, p.2) states that ''isiNdebele language has suffered a profound neglect, thus it is still at its crawling stage.'' Mashiyane (2002) further adds that the reason isiNdebele is underdeveloped is due to absence of written records. The lack of resources to develop isiNdebele has resulted in a setback regarding developing isiNdebele literacy, and the language getting the recognition like others. IsiNdebele is still a developing language compared to other languages such as isiZulu, Xhosa, English etc. There is limited literature that researches about isiNdebele, therefore schools are an excellent platform to develop the language, and thus it is important to think about how isiNdebele as a language is assessed in schools. According to Mamabolo (2005), the teaching of (isiNdebele) home language in the Foundation Phase will, not only enhance learner's cognitive and academic development, but also contribute to the rapid development of the language in the country. Through feedback and constant interaction between a learner and the teacher, learners will be able to develop their language proficiency. A teacher will know which words or sounds (phonics) to use based on each learner's capability.

The early stages of learning require teaching methods as well as assessment methods that will develop the learner's language. According to Fagan (2003), research emphasizes the need for learners to have a firm base in their home language before they can be introduced to an additional language. Learners' ability to learn a second language or additional language lies in how well developed their first language is. Naude and Davin (2017, p. 164) state that ''home language needs to be developed to the level of cognitive academic language proficiency for scaffolding of additional language learning.'' Thus, learners will not have difficulties transitioning to second language if their home language was well developed in the Foundation Phase (Beka, 2016; Kwamwangamalu, 2008). Home language should be a key focus in the Foundation Phase because all subjects are learnt through it. The purpose of formative assessment in a home language is to bring about a change in learners' language learning by supporting and promoting their language (Afitska, 2014). Formative assessment plays a significant role in teaching and learning, and Dunn and Mulvenon (2009) states that formative assessment facilitates improvement in instructional

practices, identifies 'gaps' in the curriculum, and contributes to increased learner performance, teacher and learner interaction, and scaffolding process to enhance their language. In addition, Kanjee and Mthembu (2015, p. 144) state that "teachers must acquire the requisite understanding and knowledge to use assessment evidence and be able to account for the context within which learning takes place to effectively address the learning needs of children." According to Sakati (2016), assessment should focus more on learners'abilitytodemonstratemasterofknowledgeandlanguageproficiency. Assessment in the Foundation Phase cannot focus on a single aspect as learners have diverse needs. Various assessment methods should be used to accommodate their needs (Naude & Davin, 2017).

2.4 The emergence of policies on assessment since post-apartheid

This section focuses on the policies that emerged in post-apartheid South Africa. I provide a historical account of assessment policies in South Africa post 1994. The shift from apartheid system to democracy resulted in a change in the education system. According to Muller (2004), assessment during the apartheid era was solely non-norm referenced and largely summative. Muller adds that apartheid education had divided the curricular. The apartheid government used education to segregate people according to race, culture and ethnicity. Given the unequal apartheid education, the new democratic government had to change the education policies from racial and class biased and to an inclusive policy framework. Turning to the assessment of education, which is the focus of this study, Kanjee (2014) states that there was a transformation process to introduce effective policies of assessment. The policies during apartheid were imbalanced, thus, new policies had to be developed with the aim of addressing the imbalance created by apartheid regime as well as addressing the twin imperative of equity and quality education (Sekati, 2016; Kanjee & Sayeed, 2013). Two transformation initiatives were then introduced, namely; National Qualification Framework (NQF) and Outcome Based Education (OBE). According to the DoE (1995, p. 1), ''the purpose of NQF was to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements, facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education and training career paths, enhance the quality of education and training, and accelerate the redress of unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.'' The NQF was introduced with the aim of addressing the inequalities the apartheid government created. The first assessment policy that was introduced aimed at shifting from traditional assessment methods towards learner centered ones. According to the Department of Education (1998, p.4), ''the shift was introduced from a system

that was dominated by public examinations, which are 'high stakes' and whose main function has always been to rank, grade, select and certificate learners.'' The introduction of the new system was to inform and improve the curriculum and assessment practices of educators, the leadership, governance and organization of learning sites (D oE,1998).The schooling sector was then divided into two ;General Education Training grade R – 9) and Further Education Training (grade 10-12). The NQF and OBE had similar objectives; both were focusing on what the learner is expected to achieve at the end of the lesson.

2.4.1 The shift to Outcome Based Education

Outcome Based Education (OBE) is also one of the policies that were developed to shift away from the oppressive policies. One of the significant reasons from shifting away from the old education was to move away from content–based education to outcome-based education (Sebate, 2011). Sieborger and Macintosch (2004, p.33) define outcome-based education as "an approach to teaching, training and learning which stresses the need to be clear about what learners are expected to achieve." For Spady (1994), OBE means focusing and organising activity in an education system around what is essential for all learners. The main focus of outcome based education was the learners' competences at the end of the learning process. According to Vandeyar and Killen (2003), OBE needed teachers to take on approaches of how to teach, plan and assess. The introduction of OBE meant that the teacher needs to be in charge of everything that takes place in the classroom. Assessment in outcome-based education is defined as a ''continuous planned process of gathering information about the performance of the learners against the assessment standards of the learning outcomes'' (Department of Education 2002, p. 125). Outcome-based education focused on the learner's improvement and the development of competencies. According to Vandeyar and Killen (2007), outcome-based education emphasized learner achievement of specific outcomes, and learners' progress was measured against the outcomes. According to Spady (1994), there are four basic principles which underpinned OBE and the management of assessment. The first principle stated that when designing or preparing for teaching and learning, the plan must be in line with the outcomes. This principle stipulated that teachers and learners must have a clear picture and understanding of the desired principle. Sebate (2011, p, 35) state that "this principle requires all assessment tasks must be clear and explicitly linked to the well-defined outcomes and assessment standards.'' The second principle, according to Netshikhophani (2012), was the clarity of the focus of what was expected to be achieved at the end of teaching and learning. The teacher must be clear on what they expect the learner to achieve at the end of the lesson based on the chosen learning

outcome. Erasmus (2010) asserts that OBE starts with an intended outcome, which is used as a way to direct and channel the learning programme. The third it is whereby the teacher has to assist the learners reach their full potential (Netshikhophani, 2013). Teachers are expected to assist the learner in every possible way so that they can achieve the intended goal in developing their home language like reading ability or phonics. The last principle stated that, if learners are further assisted, they can demonstrate their full potential in terms of their knowledge, value, skills and attitudes. This principle acknowledges that all learners can succeed if they are given adequate opportunity and time (Sebate, 2011). Therefore, learners who do not achieve highly must be provided with more opportunities to develop their knowledge (e.g. extra classes) (ibid). This allows the teacher to interact with learners to develop them. According to Kudla (1994), outcome based education can be viewed as a process that focuses on learning and the ability to demonstrate it. Although OBE was set to shift away from the oppressive education policy, it also had complications that resulted in the policy being changed. Outcome-based education was then reviewed due to complicated terminologies that teachers did not understand. In addition, teachers were not adequately trained for the implementation of the Foundation Phase (Chisholm, Volmik, Ndlhovu, Potenza, Mahomed, Muller, Lubisi, Vinjevold, Ngozi, Malan, & Mphahlele, 2000). Davis (2003) asserts that the weakness of OBE was that learners were overloaded with work which inhabited learning by discovery. Another complication that resulted from OBE was that teachers were not provided with guidelines on how to follow the basic principles of the assessment (Jansen& Taylor, 2003).

2.4.2 The shift to National curriculum statement

In 2002, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), a later stage a revised curriculum was introduced as it aimed at addressing the gaps that were realized on the former policy. The revised policy was called Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) . The aim of the NCS was to develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of the democratic South Africa (Ramokgopa, 2013). Mosuwe and Vinjevold (2008) add that NCS sought to create a lifelong learner who was confident and independent, literate and numerate, multi-skilled, and compassionate with respect to the environment, and with the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen. National Curriculum Statement was also premised on the goals of the previous curriculum which were to redress the past.

The NCS introduced continuous assessment (CASS) as a method that uses learners' assessment

results such as test or class-activity to improve teaching and learning. The DoE (2007, p.2) defines Continues Assessment as "an on-going process that measures a learner's achievement during the course of a grade or level, providing information that is used to support a learner's development and enable improvements to be made in the learning and teaching process." The Department of Education (2007, p.5) stipulates ''that CASS must be used to support the learners' development and to feedback into teaching and learning and should not be interpreted merely as the accumulation of a series of traditional test results.'' The assessment policy introduced two types of assessments under CASS; formal and informal assessment. Kanjee and Sayed (2013, p. 449) define formal assessment as ''assessments that provide teachers with a systematic way of evaluating how well learners are progressing in a grade and how assessment results should be recorded.'' Formal assessment provides feedback to the learners, through interaction or written feedback (e.g. examination, class test, projects). Informal assessment is ongoing assessment that takes place on a daily basis verbally, where there is immediate interaction with a learner, with no planned rubric or assessment plan like observation, informal discussion, learner-teacher dialogue (Kanjee & Sayed, 2015). Maboya (2017) states that the challenge with NCS, is that the teacher was overloaded, carried administrative burden, was unclear on how to teach and how to assess. Just as OBE, it contained terminologies that teachers did not understand, and the challenges were not sufficiently addressed during the review. du Plessis and Marrias (2015) state that the National Curriculum Statement was confusing as it had terminologies that teachers did not understand. Serrao (2008) and Kgosana (2006) further add that the poor training of teachers on how to implement the new curriculum and most importantly to assess the curriculum were amongst the challenges that hampered the implementation of NCS Teachers were overloaded with paperwork, and there was need to lessen the administrative load (Department of Education,2009).

2.4.3 The shift to Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement

The Department of Education appointed a panel to review the curriculum, which resulted in the NCS curriculum being changed and Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) introduced as the new curriculum. CAPS is a modification of what to teach and how to teach (du Plessis & Marrias, 2015). The main reason for introducing CAPS curriculum was to give teachers a clear guidance on how to teach and conduct assessment. CAPS is a comprehensive and concise policy document that provides details regarding what teachers need to teach and assess in each grade and in each subject (DoE, 2011). Themane and Mamabolo (2011, p, 8) state that ''CAPS seeks to provide a coherent, systematic content and knowledge to satisfy the specific aims of the

curriculum.'' In addition, curriculum policy and guideline documents seek to address concerns of transition between grades, phases and assessment ibid). The shift from NCS to CAPS effected changes in the curriculum and assessment. The Department of Education (2011) points out the changes that took place with learning outcomes and assessment standards being removed and replaced by topics and skills, all the grades use the 7 point scale. However, CAPS must not be seen as a new policy but a refined package of NCS (Moodley, 2013). The CAPS policy focuses on the content that must be taught per term and the required number and type of assessment tasks each term for each subject (Moodley, 2013). CAPS give a clear indication on what is expected from the learners and areas to be assessed on. School-Based Assessment (SBA) is a compulsory component of the promotion marks (Sethusha, 2012). The new policy emphasizes the use of school based assessment strategies. This study is pertinent because it seeks to understand teachers' experiences of formative assessment in the Foundation Phase in line with Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement. According to Sebate (2011), CAPS emphasizes two implications for education; the first is the role assessment plays in teaching and learning, and the second is the importance of aligning teaching, learning and assessment with one another. CAPS' aim is to outline the significance of assessment and integrate it to teaching and learning. The curriculum aims at lessening the administrative load from teachers by giving them clear guideline (Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2016).

Above are the themes from the literature in relation to the phenomenon under study. The study sought to explore the Foundation Phase teachers' experience with formative assessment. I was particularly interested in isiNdebele home language in the Foundation Phase, isiNdebele remains under studied. The study sought to contribute to the body of knowledge in the following ways; first by broadening an understanding of assessment from Foundation Phase teachers' experiences, and second, by understanding how isiNdebele home language is assessed in the Foundation Phase.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, literature highlighted the significance of formative assessment and how effective it is in teaching and learning as well as how experience enhances learning. The literature further demonstrated how teachers still encounter challenges of implementation and providing feedback; and their need for support in broadening their knowledge. As indicated in the review, studies have been conducted in various languages and contexts. This study sought to understand the phenomenon within isiNdebele and amaNdebele language speaking communities, and what can be learnt about

formative assessment strategies from minority languages. In the next chapter, I present the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

3.0 Introduction

The study is informed by one theoretical framework; experiential learning by David Kolb (year) and a conceptual framework drawn from Jan Van der Akker's (year) curriculum spider web. Kolbs' theory of experiential learning (1984) elaborates the significance of experience in learning, teaching and acquisition of new knowledge. This theory focuses on the importance of experience as well as how experience is used to acquire and develop knowledge. The experiential learning theory was informed by the work of Dewey, Lewin and Piaget. Kolb focuses solely on experience and how knowledge is formed through experience without cognitive or behavioral emphasis. Thus, Kolb (1984) developed four learning cycles which outline how experience is used to develop knowledge namely; concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experiment.

The study also used two concepts from Van der Akker (2003) spider web. These concepts assisted me to underpin my study within them as conceptual frameworks. The first concept used was the rational. Van der Akker (2003) was concerned about knowing why teachers assess learners (why are they (teachers) assessing. The second concept is the assessment. In this concept, Van der Akker (2003) wanted to understand how their teaching is assessed. In context, these concepts in my study relate to why do FP teachers assess their learners in classrooms and the second one relates to how these FP teachers assess their teaching. The following section elaborates further on experiential learning theory as well as the four experiential learning cycles followed by the two conceptual frameworks.

3.1 Elaboration on Experiential learning theory

Kolb (1984) in his experiential learning theory indicates that through learning, one has to recall their past experience in order to develop new knowledge. Kolb (1984, p. 41) defines experiential learning theory as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". Kolb's main purpose was to show the central purpose of how knowledge is developed through experience and provide a clear mechanism of teaching and learning through experience. According to Stirling (2013), Kolb uses the term "experiential learning" as a way of emphasising the significance of experience in learning. Kolb (1999) further indicates that experiential learning theory is a holistic theory used to determine and understand the individual learning process and

development. Therefore, critical reflection on previous experience is significant for learning and for avoiding past mistakes (Boreham, 1987). The link between knowledge and experience is that knowledge is transformed through using past, present and the experiences of others. For Kolb, experience is not static, it changes overtime. While this takes place, knowledge is modified and reformed (Passarelli & Kolb, 2011). For example, Stirling (2013) states that learning is a continuous process that stems on experience, it is also the process of experience that is best seen more useful than the product (Kolb and Kolb, 2005). Knowledge is constructed through what an individual has been exposed to from the previous experience, which collaborates with the present experience to develop new knowledge. Furthermore, Kolb (1984) asserts that knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience known as dialectically related modes. Grasping experience (concrete experience and abstract experience) it is the process of taking the information, teacher would take in the knowledge think about it, analyze it and plan ways to utilize it. Transformation experience (reflective observation and active experimentation) is how an individual interpret and act on information, the teacher would watch others how develop they knowledge and reflect on their previous and experiment the new developed knowledge. These two modes elaborate on how different experiences enhance the development of knowledge. Within Kolb's theory, there are four models, namely; a) concrete experience, b) abstract conceptualizing, c) reflective experience, and d) active experimentation. The construction of knowledge involves going through the four models. The four models will elaborate how foundation phase teachers' knowledge is developed through the models. According to Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton and Renn (2010), the ability for an individual to integrate all the four learning modes indicates effective learning and personal growth. There is no designated starting point for the cycle. However, it is important that an individual goes through all the stages in order to have effective learning (Petkus, 2000). The diagram below shows Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle

Figure 1: Kolb Learning Cycle
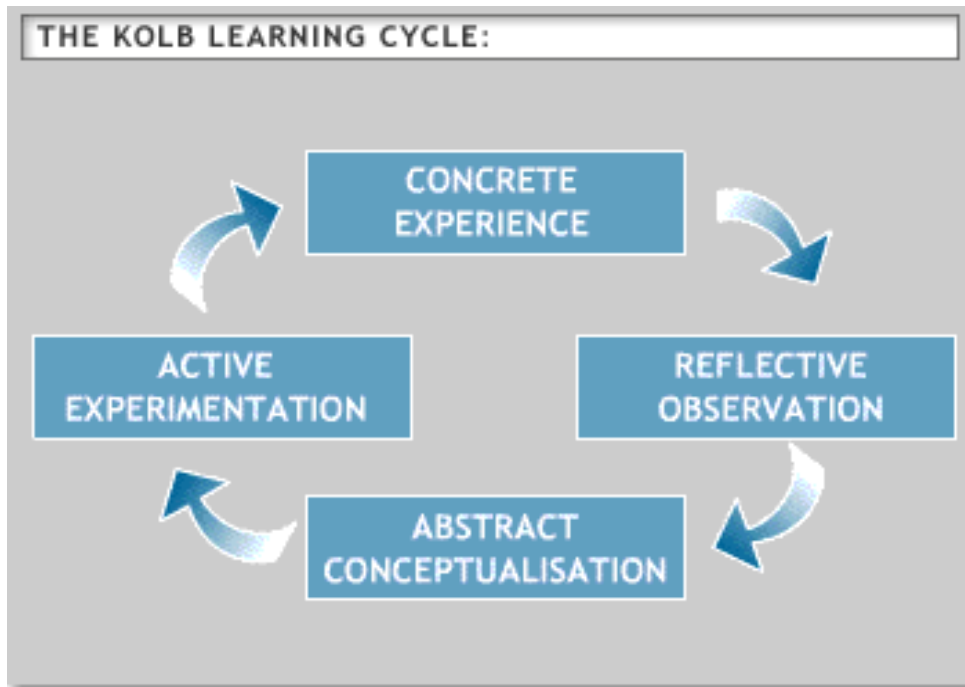
I chose to use Kolb's experiential learning theory in the study because it elaborates how an individual grasps and transforms an experience to form new knowledge. Furthermore, it indicates the significance of experience in the process of acquiring new knowledge. Thus, the experiential learning theory assisted me in understanding how teachers used their experience to assess learners and how they understood formative assessment. The theory focused on how learners' uses of experience developed their learning. However, I modified the theory to accommodate this phenomenon and further theorize it. The models solely focus on how learning, in conjunction with experience, takes place. I also modified the models because my study focused on teachers' experience in using formative assessment. The following section explains the four models of the experiential learning cycle, in particular, how the teachers used the existing experience to develop their knowledge about formative assessment.

3.1.1 Experiential learning cycle

It is a stage where an individual has direct interaction with the phenomenon that is being studied. This phase is guided by our senses (Robert, 2006). In addition, the context in which one is located plays a significant role towards understating the phenomenon studied. The teacher at this stage observes the surrounding, that is; the strategies used to teach, and the gestures learners show

towards feedback given. Furthermore, they observe others on how they use formative assessment. Concrete experience involves intuition as well as feelings, and at this stage, one is guided by senses to understand the phenomenon. According to Kohonen (2012), concrete experience involves learning by intuition, with emphasis on personal experiences, belonging and feelings. Through the use of intuition, teachers involve their personal experience and other peoples' experiences of formative assessment. The next stage of the cycle is reflective observation.

According to Robert (2006), reflective observation is a stage where an individual reflects on what they have experienced before in relation to the formative assessment, in this case, isiNdebele home language in the Foundation Phase. At this stage, the information is gathered through observing others and personal experiences. An individual reflects on the experiences from different points of view, makes connections across experience with an intention to find meaning that will enhance their knowledge of formative assessment (Svinick& Dixon, 1987; Petkus, 2000). Teachers reflect back on their previous experiences, on how they used formative assessment to improve learners' language proficiency. They also reflect on whether the feedback was effective. In addition, at this stage, the focus is on understanding the ideas and situations by observing the surrounding (Kohonen, 2012).

The third stage is abstract conceptualisation. Robert (2006) explains this conceptualisation as a stage where one grasps the information through comprehension by forming rules, generalizations or hypotheses about the phenomenon being studied. With the information teachers gathered from observation and reflection, they then use logic and theories to understand their own formative assessment practice. According to Petkus (2000), integrating theories and concepts into the overall learning process is perceived as in-depth thinking stage of the cycle. Teachers integrate their collected information from reflection and observation with theories as well as with policies, to have a better understanding of formative assessment. This stage involves rigorous thinking, using a systematic approach to structure and frame their assessment practice (Kohonen, 2012). In the next paragraph, I discuss another concept, which is active experimentation.

Basically, active experimentation is a stage where an individual is testing or putting into practice, the rules, generalizations, or hypotheses formed in the previous stage (Robert, 2006). Herein, teachers put the findings or the generalizations they found during abstract conceptualisation into practice, and test whether they are effective or not. With different information gathered through Kolb's experiential learning theory, the teacher is able to determine the effective method of

conducting formative assessment in isiNdebele home language in the Foundation Phase. According to Kohonen (2012), the stage emphasises the practical applications in real life contexts (such as the classroom context). This stage particularly through the experience acquired, allows the teacher to configure and re-configure their formative assessment practice.

3.2 Limitations

According to Bibian (2014) experience alone is sufficient for learning to occur. Experience is the fundamental aspect in learning and developing knowledge according to this theory, however the theory is not helpful to inexperienced individuals (Forrest, 2004). The theory emphasizes the importance of experience. However, it does not take into consideration individuals who have less or no experience. In this context, the theory does not consider teachers who are still new to the teaching field. Another limitation of the theory is within one stage of the learning cycle which is reflective observation. Reflective observation states that one can learn from others' experience.

However, the theory does not emphasize the use or significance of interaction or feedback. According to Bibian (2014), learning through others' experience is short-lived.

3.3 Conceptual framework

While the study was informed by Kolb's (1984) theory, which assisted me in understanding how teachers conceptualize, reflect and develop their own knowledge in relation to formative assessment, I also adopted two concepts relating to assessment from Van de Akker (2003) spider web. The spider web has ten concepts however for the study only two we used, namely the rationale (why are teachers assessing) and assessment (how is their teaching assessed). The following section will elaborate further on the chosen concept.

3.3.1 Rationale (Why are teachers assessing?)

Assessment is the most fundamental aspect in learning. It is a tool teachers use to check learners' development as well as to evaluate their own pedagogical practice. Nitko and Brookhart (2011, p.3) define assessment as, "a broad process for obtaining information that is used for making decisions about students, curricular programmes, schools and educational policy." Assessment is used by teachers to enhance learning, to determine learner's level of understanding, as well as to ensure progression. The Department of Education (2007) indicates that assessment is used on a daily basis. It can be formal or informal, and it can be used to develop learners' language

proficiency. The Department of Education (1997) defines assessment as a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners. Furthermore, when the teacher designs an assessment task for learners, they must take into consideration the learner's level of development. According to Gronlund (1998), there are six aspects that a teacher should take into consideration when planning an assessment. These are: i) clarity on all intended learning outcomes, (ii) variety of relevant assessment procedures, (iii) fair procedures for all learners, (iv) specified criteria for judging learners' successful performance, (v) feedback to the learners that emphasizes strengths and weaknesses, and (vi) a comprehensive system of grading and reporting. Learners must be clear on what they are being assessed on, and they must understand the purpose of the assessment. Furthermore, the assessment designed must accommodate learners with different learning abilities. The Department of Education (2008) states that effective teachers stress the importance of establishing the purpose of assessment before they even begin to talk about the content and the methods of assessing. When assessing the learners, the main purpose of assessment is to gather as much information about the learner so that a teacher can be able to determine the gap in which a learner needs assistance. When the teacher has identified the gap each learner has, she is able to channel the instructions directed to the individual learner's need. According to Earl (2006), the purpose of assessment is considered as a mechanism for providing an index of learning. Earl (2006) further adds that this is a pattern where the content is taught, students are assessed to check understanding and the outcomes determines the areas of improvement both in teaching and learning. Earl (2006) states that teachers who are assessing for learning use assessment to identify particular learning needs and draw on the information to ensure that pupils get on track in their learning. The assessment process happens throughout the learning and teaching process. In the process of assessing learners, teachers, not only collect the information or disseminate the content, but also engage with the learners in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses the learners have. Quality feedback is what determines effective learning because learners' scores do not give enough evidence of learners needs. They only point out that the learner has failed or did not meet the required score to pass (William, 2013). Therefore, it is important that when teachers design assessment, it must yield results that will give feedback and evidence that will develop both the teacher and the learner. For instance, feedback provided in the Foundation Phase isiNdebele home language should develop the teachers and the learners. Carles (2002) points out that providing feedback in multiple stages of learning helps re-orientate learners' efforts in appropriate ways. Furthermore, teachers use assessment to check whether the objectives were met during the lesson.

The Assessment Reform Group (2003) has identified three purposes of assessment, namely; assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning. Earl (2006) states that assessment for learning is designed to give teachers information that will allow them to modify the teaching and learning activities in order to differentiate and understand how individual learners' approach their learning. Assessment for learning gives teachers enough evidence about the learner so that the next activity can be designed according to the learner's level of understanding. Furthermore, it helps the teacher to gain an insight into each learner's capability and incapability. Earl (2003) states that assessment for learning helps teachers provide feedback to scaffold the next steps. Assessment as learning is a subset of assessment for learning. According to Earl (2006), assessment as learning emphasises using assessment as a process of developing and supporting meta cognition in students. During assessment as learning, a learner is not only viewed as a contributor to assessment, but also a critical connector between assessment and learning (Earl, 2003). Learners use their critical thinking to make sense of what was taught the feedback and integrate them with prior knowledge to formulate new knowledge. According to Schraw (1998), the main purpose of assessment as learning is to help learners take responsibility for their own learning and monitor future direction of learning. Thus, assessment as learning gives learners an opportunity to learn at their own pace, assess their work and understand what they are learning. Unlike assessment for learning and assessment as learning, assessment of learning's main purpose is the final result. In a nutshell, assessment of learning is referred to as summative assessment. Earl (2006) states that assessment as learning is summative in nature and is used to confirm what learners know and can do, to demonstrate whether they have achieved the curriculum outcomes, and occasionally, to show how they are placed in relation to others. Teachers use assessment of learning to collect evidence about the learner so that conclusions can be drawn about the learner's future. Therefore, project, exams and tests are used as an evidence for learners' performance. Earl (2006) stipulates that assessment of learning becomes public and results in a statement about how well students are learning. Furthermore, teachers have the responsibility of reporting learners' learning accurately and fairly, based on evidence obtained from a variety of contexts and applications.

3.3.2 How is their teaching assessed?

Assessment is a fundamental aspect of learning. It serves as a tool to measure and evaluate

knowledge that the learner has. Furthermore, assessment must not only be aimed at enhancing learning but also at improving teaching. Stiggins (1994), Valencia (1990), and Wiggins (1989) say classroom assessment is most effective and useful for a teacher (as well as for learners) when it accurately matches the instructional content that has been taught. As discussed earlier, there are two methods commonly used to assess learners, namely; summative assessment and formative assessment. Both formative and summative assessments are used to enhance learning in different ways. Earl (2006) defines summative assessment as information collected about the learner that provides evidence for decisions about learners' placements and life choices. Summative assessment is often used when the teacher wants to make a decision about the learner's progress to the next grade or level, as well as to measure what the learner has learnt already. Adam (1990) defines formative assessment as constant provision of feedback to improve both teaching and the learning experiences. Formative assessment is linked to feedback. Teachers collaborate with learners with the aim of closing the gap between the known and the unknown. Formative assessment is used on a daily basis. Teachers (must) give feedback to every lesson conducted in order to direct learners to the main objective. Bell and Cowie (2001) indicate that it is through learner–teacher interactions during learning that activities are able to generate opportunities for deepening learners' understanding. During formative assessment, through the dialogue between a teacher and a learner, the teacher is able to use the feedback from the learner to assess the effectiveness of their teaching. According to McMillan (2001) and Stiggins (2001), effective assessment can assist teachers determine relevant interventions, allow teachers to evaluate their teaching approaches, and provide information to learners on what they need to do to improve learning.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the theoretical and conceptual framing of the study. Kolb's theory assisted in understanding how experience informs teachers' conceptualisation of formative assessment. It also assisted in understanding how experience is acquired, configured and re-configured to form an effective assessment practice. Two concepts from the spider web assist in understanding teacher's reasons for carrying out formative assessment and their interpretation of how their teaching is assessed. The theoretical and conceptual lenses framed this study. The next chapter presents research design and methodologies that we employed by the study

Chapter 4: Research design and Methodology

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical framework and conceptual framework that underpin the study. This chapter describes and discusses the research steps and research methodology employed in the study. Research methodologies are guided by the type of research questions the study addresses. Furthermore, methodologies dictate how to conduct the research, which methods to use to collect the data, and how to analyse the data. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state, research methodologies are determined by the subject being investigated as well as research questions. The study is divided into sub-sections which give in-depth discussion of research approach, paradigm, location of the study, methods of data generation, sampling, and data analysis. The chapter further presents the ethical issues, limitations of the study as well as the conclusion.

4.1 Qualitative approach

The study sought to understand how teachers used their experience of formative assessment in isiNdebele home language to assess learners. The study was situated within qualitative research. Cresswell (1994) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding, based on distinct methodological tradition of enquiry that explores social or human problems. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that qualitative research studies things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of the phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to them. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, and how they make sense out of it. For instance, Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape (2013) argue that the aim of qualitative research is to provide in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of the research participants. It allows the researcher to understand why and how the phenomenon happens in a particular way. For Joubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima and Haider (2011), qualitative research is used to help one to understand how people feel and reason, their interpretations or meanings they attach to their feelings. In the context of this study, using qualitative approach enabled the researcher to understand how teachers used their experience of formative assessment in Foundation Phase to enhance language competence. Qualitative research draws its interest from how people use their experience to make meaning and understand their world(Merriam2009).Qualitative research allows the researcher to discover participants' inner experience, how their surroundings influence them (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Qualitative research as an approach enhanced the study by giving the researcher a clear understanding of the impact that experience has on understanding and use of formative assessment in isiNdebele as language

of learning and teaching. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth data on how formative assessment enhances isiNdebele in the Foundation Phase.

There are shortcomings associated with qualitative research. Hancock, Ocklford and Windridge (2007) assert that qualitative research has historically focused on small samples which cannot be generalized for a bigger population. Another limitation of qualitative research is subjectivity (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Later in the chapter, I unpack how I strengthened the trustworthiness of the entire research project.

4.2 Paradigm

According to Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher and Perez-Prado (2003), a paradigm is a worldwide view, a basic belief or assumptions that guides the research inquiry. Thus, the nature of the study is oriented around a paradigm chosen. Willis, Jost and Nilakanti (2007) see a paradigm as a comprehensive belief system, worldview or framework that guides the research and practice in a field. Paradigm represents how an individual views and understands the world because we view and interpret the world in a different way. Cohen, Manion and Marrison (2011) add that it is important for the researcher to present their worldview. The manner in which the researcher views their social world determines how they will conduct the study. The study used an interpretive paradigm which focuses particularly on how an individual makes sense of a situation or phenomenon, according to Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), interpretive research assumes that people create their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. Interpretive research aims at understanding how people interpret, create, give meaning, define and rationalise their world (Babbie & Mouton, 2008). Interpretive research focuses on understanding phenomenon by exploring the participant's world. Through exploring and understanding the participant's world, the researcher is able to understand the phenomenon from different angles (Riyami, 2015).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), a paradigm is how the researcher's worldview influences the epistemology, ontology and methodology of the research. In an interpretive paradigm, Hudson and Ozanne (1988) believe that there are relative and multiple realities and one cannot accumulate knowledge based on generalization. Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and what is there to know about the world (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013). Ontology believes in being subjective. What an individual knows is influenced by their social world, thus, there are

multiple truths to a phenomenon (Riyami, 2015). Neuman (2011) states that reality is socially constructed and it seeks to understand the social world from the experience and the subjective meaning that people attach to it. The manner in which individual constructs knowledge is determined by their social world, hence; there is no single truth. The aim of the study was not to generalise the findings but to understand teachers' experiences in using formative assessment in isiNdebele (home language). Cresswell (2007) indicates that the aim of interpretive paradigm is not to generalize but to gain an understanding of the phenomenon.

On epistemological perspectives, knowledge is explored on how one constructs and understands knowledge. Ulrich (2001) defines epistemology as the philosophical discipline concerned with the nature, origin and validation of knowledge. The aim of epistemology is to understand how we know what we know and how our social world influences what we know. For Crotty (1998), knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed in and out of interaction between humans and their world, then developed and transmitted in a social context. Thus, knowledge is individually constructed, meaning there is no false knowledge. Ritchie and Cresswell (2007) add that the aim of interpretive paradigm is to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context and not to generalize. Bryman (2008) assert that according to the epistemological perspective, interpretivists believe that knowledge is gained through the strategy that respects the differences between people and the object of natural science. In this study, the aim was to establish F P teachers' experiences of assessing isiNdebele as a home language using formative assessment strategies. Ritchieet.al. (2013) say knowledge is produced by exploring and understanding the social world of people being studied and focusing on its meaning and interpretation. Thus, the knowledge explored can only be accepted if it is what the researcher is aiming to explore and understand.

4.3 Location of the study

The study was located in Mpumalanga in a small village called Kwaggafontein, which is within the former homeland of KwaNdebele. It was situated in the eastern part of Mpumalanga. Mpumalanga has four districts; Gert Sibande, Ehlanzeni, Bohlabela and Nkangala district. KwaNdebele is located under Nkangala district which is the largest district amongst the four. Under Nkangala district, there are 20 circuits and I focused on one circuit which is Kwaggafontain East circuit. Kwaggafontain East Circuit has 28 schools; 17 primary schools and 11 high schools. KwaNdebele is a diverse village with different tribal and cultural groups. There are Ndebeles,

Zulus, Pedis and other diverse cultural groups. The Ndebele group is the most dominant cultural group in KwaNdebele. Thus, most schools use isiNdebele as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT). Only few schools use sePedi and isiZulu as LoLT. All schools in Kwaggafontain East circuit are government schools. There are only five farm schools in Kwaggafontein East, which, although they are government schools, the chief has a major influence on the schools' decisions. All the participants in this study were from research sites located in KwaNdebele and they taught isiNdebele in their FP classrooms although some were not first language speakers of isiNdebele. KwaNdebele is a semi-urban area with a population of approximately 100 000 (Statistic South Africa, 2011).

4.4 Methodology

A case study was used as a research methodological design. Gillham (2000, p. 1) defines case-study "as an investigation to answer specific questions which seek a rage of different answers from the case setting.'' A case study often answers research questions that the researcher is asking and helps the researcher understand the phenomenon. Yin (1984. p. 23) defines a case study as ''an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context.'' Case study allows the researcher to explore the behavior of the participants and how they make meaning of their social world. According to Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2001), the purpose of a case study is to probe deeply and analyse the phenomenon within a particular context. Case study allows the researcher to discover the unknown about phenomenon through studying and analysing the world of the participants, and through interaction (Yin, 2004). In this study, the researcher interacted with the teachers and observed how they use formative assessment. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) assert that a case study is used to richly describe, explain or assess and evaluate a phenomenon. According to Yin (2003), a case study is aimed at answering the how and why questions. Examples are; how do Foundation Phase teachers select formative assessment strategies in an isiNdebele home language classroom? Why do they select the strategies in ways they do? Cohen et al. (2001) indicate that a case study provides unique examples of real life situations which enable the reader to understand ideas more clearly. There are two types of case studies; a single case study and a multiple case study (Yin. 2003). A multiple case study allows a wider discovery of theoretical evaluation and researcher question (2017). Baxter and Jack (2008) and Stake (1995) highlight that a multiple case study is when the researcher is researching more than one case to gain a better understanding about the phenomenon. A single case study research focuses on one case within a specific context or phenomenon. Gustafsson (2017) adds that a single case study

makes the researcher to have a better understanding of the phenomenon studied. In this study, the case focused on the experience of FP teachers in using formative assessment in isiNdebele as LoLT. The study used single case study. Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013) state the unit of analysis or the case in a study as the level of abstraction at which you look for variability. Unit of analysis in a study is the focus area of the researcher. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 25) define case as ''a phenomenon of some sort of occurring in a bound context''. The unit of analysis gives the researcher clear guidance of what must be analysed in the study, be it a group, individual, process, or organisation. The unit of analysis in this study is the FP teachers' experience of formative assessment in home language (isiNdebele). The case was chosen as home language is a pivotal subject in Foundation Phase. Teachers should use effective teaching and assessment strategies that will develop the learners' language. Assessment is a prominent tool in learning as it uses a method of determining the level of development in learning, therefore I have developed an interest in exploring the way teachers use their formative assessment experience to develop the learner's home language.

4.5 Data generation methods

The purpose of data generation is to generate data that will assist to respond to the research questions (Kabir, 2014), data can either be numeral, textual or descriptive. The nature of the study determines the type of methods to be used to generate data. The three methods of data generation were used in the study; semi-structured observation, semi-structured interviews and reflective journal. Johnson and Christensen (2000) define observation as the unobtrusive watching of people's behavioural pattern in certain situations to obtain information about a phenomenon. Marshall and Rossman (1995) describe observation as a fundamental and critical method in qualitative studies, which is used to discover complex interaction in natural social settings. To understand how a person views or understands a concept, it is vital that the researcher be in the same environment or social world as the participant to get an understanding of how they make meaning through their actions. Observations allow the researcher to understand the participants' behaviour, beliefs, reality and meanings (Alshenqeet, 2014). There are three types of observations, namely; structured, semi-structured and unstructured observations. According to Brown and Lloyd (2001), structured observations use a selective schedule of the items to be observed (Brown & Lloyd, 2001). ''Unstructured observations attempt to record behavior as few preconceived ideas as to what is happening as possible, gradually making sense of what is happening from the experience of being in the setting'' (Brown & Lloyd, 2001, p. 352). Basically, unstructured

observations are unplanned, and the researcher captures what is relevant to the study. When using unstructured observations, the researcher enters the field to observe with no clue of what the outcomes might be or how the participants will respond (Mulhall, 2003). In semi-structured observation, the researcher has a clue on what she/he is aiming at, and still observes new issues if they emerge. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 305) ''semi-structured observations has an agenda of issues but will gather data to illuminate these issues in a far less pre-determined manner.'' Semi- structured observation does not limit the researcher to the key issues that were pre-determined. It allows the researcher to add new key issues that develop during the observation. The study used semi-structured observation to observe how teachers used formative assessment to develop isiNdebele.

Prior to observations, reflective journals were used to record all the incidents that took place and everything that was said during the first visit. This assisted in understanding teachers' perspectives regarding the topic. Wallendorf & Belk (1989) describe flexible journal as a reflexive document kept by the researcher in order to reflect on. Reflexive journal will be used as a book (document) to reflect on all that took place during data generation, during observations or after doing the interviews.

The study aimed at generating audio and textual data exploring Foundation Phase teachers' experiences on formative assessment in isiNdebele home language. Interviews were used as the second method of generating data in the study. Kvale (1996, p. 174) defines interviews as ''conversations whose purpose is to gather the description of the world of the interviewee with respect to the interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomenon.'' An interview allows the researcher to engage in a conversation with participants to generate in-depth data. Interviews allow the researcher to probe and ask follow up questions where clarity is required. Interviews allow the researcher to investigate and prompt things that cannot be observed (Riyami, 2015). Through interviews the researcher is able to ask clarity on was observed. In qualitative research, interviews are used to generate data through interacting with the participant in order to get a deeper understating. There are three types of interviews; structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are interviews that consist of administered questionnaires where the researcher is trained to ask questions in a standardised manner and the response from the participant is fixed. Unstructured interviews, the researcher does not ask follow up questions. They only require the yes or no response to the participants, and the participants are asked the same questions in the same way. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), in an unstructured

interview, the researcher introduces the topic or theme to the participants and responses are flexible and not restricted by the questions. In a Semi- structured interview, the information is obtained through predetermined open-ended questions, while other questions emerge from the dialogue (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006)

Semi-structured interviews allow the participant to express their views about the phenomenon. Maree (2010) argues that semi-structured interviews are one of the vital tools that help the researcher to generate data from participants and allows flexibility in the phenomenon. In unstructured interviews, there are no predetermined questions the interviewer asks. Questions are based on what the interviewees respond. In semi-structured interviews, there are questions that are organised in a predetermined open-ended setting, and other questions emerge during the interview process (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Although semi-structured interviews use written predetermined questions to generate data, when there is new information emerging during the interview, probing is allowed. The study used semi-structured interviews in generating data. The researcher used a pre-determined set of questions and probed instances needing clarity. The interviewer was able to interact with teachers in exploring their experience on formative assessment.

There were shortcomings that emerged from using semi-structured interviews as an instrument. The majority of the participants were intimidated by conducting the interviews in English. I addressed this challenge by requesting that teachers can use a language that they were comfortable with. Most used isiNdebele. Semi-structured interviews and observations were both conducted on the same day for each participant. Observations were conducted in the morning and interviews in the afternoon. Observations were conducted during the isiNdebele lesson which was 30 minutes, one session for each participant. The purpose of observations was to observe how teachers used formative assessment in isiNdebele home language lesson. The semi-structured interviews took place based on the availability of the participant, mostly afterschool.

Table: 1 Interview schedule

Pseudonym	Dates	Time for observations	Time for interviews
1.Lerato	27 July 2018	11:00 am	14:30pm
2.Zipho	30 July 2018	10:45am	14:00pm
3.Nombuso	31 July 2018	10:45am	14:00pm
4. Rose	1 August 2018	10:35am	14:35pm
5. Ntokozo	6 August 2018	10:35am	14:40pm
6.Dineo	13 August 2018	10:50am	14:45pm
7.Fakazile	16 August 2018	10:30am	14:30pm
8. Phumi	17 August 2018	10:35am	14:45pm

4.6 Sampling

Gentle, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbon (2015) define sampling as a selection of specific source of

data from which data will be collected in addressing the research objectives. Sampling helps the researcher in choosing the targeted participants. McMillan (1996) states that the purpose of sampling is to obtain a group of participants who will provide specific information needed. There are two categories of sampling; probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is a method in which the subjects are selected randomly in such a way that the researcher knows the probability of selecting each member of the population (McMillan 1996). Probability sampling selects the participants randomly amongst the population with the aim of getting specific data. Probability sampling includes random sampling, stratified sampling and systematic sampling. Non-probability sampling occurs when the respondent cannot be determined or does not represent the entire population (Ronald & Freaker, 2008). In non- probability sampling, the researcher chooses the sample based on how well they will generate data. Non-probability sample includes convenience sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling and snow ball sampling. In this study a non-probability sampling, purpose sampling, was used. Patton (2002); Rubin and Babbie (2001); Trochim and Donnelly (2008) define purposive sampling as a process of selecting samples that are relevant for the research objectives and which yield rich data. The participants we chosen based on criterions that address the research objectives. The criteria used in the present study to sample the participants that a) they should be Foundation Phase teachers in Kwagga East circuit, b) should have taught for a minimum of 3 years in the Foundation Phase, and c) should be teaching isiNdebele home language. The sample size for the study was 8 teachers. Participants were recruited as follows; once ethical clearance was granted and permission from the Department of Education sought, I approached the 5 schools and 10 participants if they were interested to participate. Participants were given consent forms to sign and only 8 participants from foundation phase agree to participate.

Participants were allocated pseudonyms in order to adhere to the need for anonymity. The following table presents the participants' profile that gives a brief explanation about their background and their teaching experience in relation to teaching isiNdebele as a HL in FP.

Table: 2 Participants' profiles

Participants	Background

Participant 1 (Lerato)	Lerato was born in Pretoria Garankuwa and she is 59 years old. She has been teaching for 37 years, and 21 years teaching in Foundation Phase. She is a second language speaker of isiNdebele. Her home language is seSotho. She was teaching grade 2.
Participant 2 (Zipho)	Zipho was born in the Eastern Cape and she is 57 years. She has been teaching for 28 years in the Foundation Phase, teaching in isiNdebele and currently teaching grade 1. She is a second language speaker of isiNdebele and her home language was isiXhosa.
Participant 3 (Nombuso)	Nombuso was born in Dennilton and she is 54 years old. She started teaching 27 years ago. She has two years' teaching experience in Intermediate Phase, and 25 years teaching experience in the Foundation Phase. She is teaching grade 3. Nombuso is a first language speaker of isiNdebele.
Participant 4 (Rose)	Rose was born in KwaThema in Springs. She is 52 years old. She had 24 years teaching experience in the Foundation Phase and she has been teaching isiNdebele since she started teaching. She is teaching grade 2. Her home language is isiZulu.

Participant 5 (Ntokozo)	Ntokozo was born in KwaZulu-Natal and she is 55 years. She has been teaching since1991 and she has 27 years teaching experience in Foundation Phase. However, she has been teaching isiNdebele in the Foundation Phase for 25. She is currently teaching grade 2 She is a second language speaker of isiNdebele as they speak isiZulu at home
Participant 6 (Dineo)	Dineo was born in Bronkhorspruit and she is 37 years old. She has approximately 7 years' experience teaching Foundation Phase and teaching isiNdebele. She is teaching grade one and is a first language speaker of isiNdebele.
Participant 7 (Fakazile)	Fakazile was born in Bethal. She is 53 years of age. She has 32 years teaching experience and has been teaching Foundation Phase isiNdebele for the past 32 years. She is currently teaching grade 1. Her home language is isiNdebele.
Participant 8 (Phumi).	Phumi was born in Witbank and is 54 years old. She had 26 years teaching experience in the Foundation Phase. She is a first language speaker of isiNdebele. She is teaching grade 1.

4.6 Data analysis

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011), data analysis is the process of bringing about order, structure and meaning to the mass of data collected. Data analysis helps the researcher to organize data and make meaning of what the participants said or wrote during data generation, which will help in answering research questions. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) note that, in qualitative research, data analysis is described as a systematic organisation and synthesis of data, that involves the application of one or more qualitative techniques. In data analysis, the researcher

is able to the discover patterns that emerge from the data, make contrast and comparison between them, and organise and interpret the data generated. Henning, Rensburg and Smit (2004); Mouton (2001) further add that in qualitative research, data analysis involves the breaking down of data into themes and patterns in order to make meaning of it.

This study used thematic analysis to analyse data. Alexander (2003) describes thematic analysis as identifying, analysing and reporting themes within the data collected. Thematic analysis helps the researcher to organise data according to themes and give full details of it. Boyatzis (1998) posits that thematic analysis helps illustrate the data in full detail and deals with diverse subjects through interpretation. The themes helped in explaining the phenomenon and answering the research questions. Thematic analysis does not only focus on themes based on the theory, but also allows themes that emerge through data analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 83), ''thematic analysis provides rich, detailed and complex data which will assist the researcher or the reader to get the sense of the predominant and important themes.'' In a study, themes can emerge from theory or through data collection or analysis. Frith and Gleeso (2004); Hayen (1997) regard thematic analysis as flexible as it allows the use of both top-down (deductive) and bottom-up (inductive) methods of analysing data. The study used both inductive and deductive approaches to analyse data. Deductive analysis starts from the theory as themes are drawn from theory and then data is classified based on the themes of the theory. In inductive analysis, themes are drawn from the raw data generated, then the data is generalised and linked to the theory (Patton, 1990). In this study, I used themes that emerged from the theory as well as themes that emerged while generating data or analysing the data. Under thematic analysis, there are two types of approaches; sematic and latent approach. In sematic approach, themes are identified on a surface meaning. The themes only emerge from what the participant said or wrote, whereas in latent approach, the analyst goes beyond sematic content. Data is conceptualized to identify the ideologies and underlying ideas that shape the participant's response (Braun & Clark, 2006). According to Braun and Clark (2006, p. 89), ''analytic process involves a progression from description, where the data have simply been organized to show patterns in thematic content, and summarized, to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications.'' Sematic approach is associated with descriptive and latent approach and is associated with interpretive research.

There are six thematic analysis stages that can be used to analyse data. Below is Braun and Clarke's (2006) diagram which explains the stages.

Figure 2: 6 Stages of thematic analysis
Source: Braun and Clarke (2006)
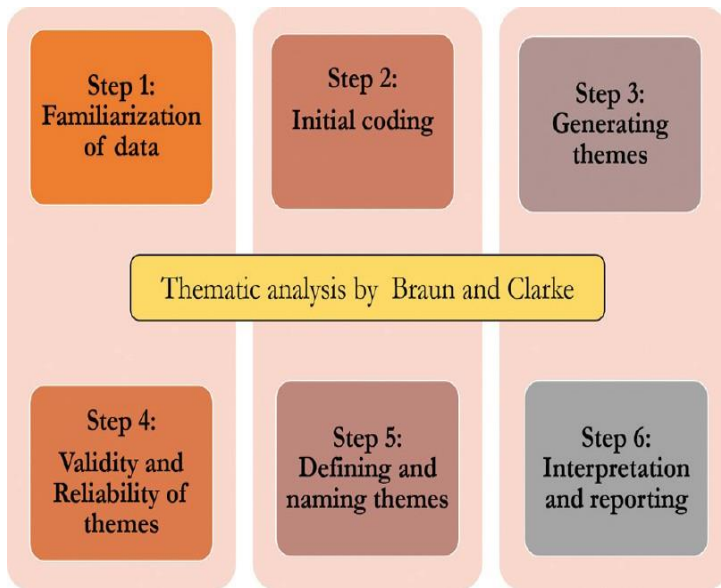
Stage one: Familiarize yourself with data

I engaged with the data by reading it repeatedly with the aim of trying to understand what was written during the observation as well as the intentions behind the results from what was observed. Furthermore, I went through the transcription and listened to the audio to find and create meaning from the participant's response and get the content in-depth.

Stage two: Generating initial codes

While reading and familiarizing myself with the data collected, took down notes trying to find the core element from the data and trying to organize it. Wrote transcription notes while listening to the audio and analyzing the response from the participants. Organized codes into groups and identify familiar codes and their relationship.

Stage Three: Search for themes.

After familiarizing myself with the data and with all the notes (codes) written down and grouped, I analyzed codes individually and organized them according to their meaningful groups. While analyzing the codes, I drew up a mind map which assisted in finding the common code and

relationships and forming sub-themes.

Stage four: Review themes

Sub-themes selected in stage 3 were reviewed by checking whether they were in line with the study, and whether they were coherent. If not, I then went back to the data and created new ones or refined the sub-themes, then selected the relevant themes that were used to analyse data.

Stage five: Defining and naming the themes

Themes were selected then named, then each theme was defined on what it meant and entailed, and their essence to the study, as data was analyzed within each theme selected.

Stage six: Producing the report

After the main themes were selected, data was analyzed within main themes. At this stage, I wrote all the findings from observation and the interviews. I also wrote the theoretical link as well as the arguments, using the selected themes.

4.8 Ethical issues

When conducting research, it is important to consider the safety, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, and protect them. Cresswell (2003) assert that the researcher has to respect the rights, values and the need of the participants during research. When the researcher generates data from the participants, he/she invade the participant's space therefore it is important to protect the participants as well as the information they provide. Johnson and Christensen (2000, p.88) state that ''research ethics are necessary to assist the researcher in conducting ethically sound studies by providing a set of principles that will assist in establishing appropriate goals and resolving conflicting values''.

Before conducting the research, relevant stakeholders were consulted for approval. The research was conducted in Mpumalanga province and a permission request letter was sent to the provincial Department of Education's research office and after a month permission was granted (see appendix A). The DoE's permission letter clearly stipulated that classes would not be disturbed when conducting the research, so interviews were conducted afterschool. After permission was granted by the department, principals of the selected schools were given permission request letters which clearly state the topic and the purpose of the research. Before they could sign, we had discussions

about the project to assure them that there would be no disturbance of classes. Selected participants were given consent forms to sign (see appendix one). As Mark (2011) states informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in the study so that they can decide if they want to participate or not. Discussion about the topic, the purpose of the study and their schedule and how the researcher would be conducted were held before the participant could sign the form (see appendix B). They were further informed that should they wish to withdraw from the research, they could. Every participant in the study freely consented to participate without being unfairly pressurized (Patton & Cochran, 2007). After all the consent letters were received from the Department of Education and principals, they were sent for ethical approval along with interview and observation schedules to the postgraduate research office for ethical approval, and permission was granted (see appendix C)

4.9 Maintenance of Confidentiality

According to Johnson and Christensen (2000), confidentiality means the participants' identity, although known to the researcher, is not revealed to anyone. It is important to protect the identity of the participants during the interviews and observations, and also protect the information they provide in the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants from any harm (Ntokozo, Fakazile, Nombuso, Zipho, Rose, Dineo, Lerato, and Phumi were used when discussing the findings and analysis). The names of the schools in the study were not used. Their information was kept in a safe place and would be destroyed after five years.

4.11 Trustworthiness

Validity and reliability cannot be addressed in a qualitative study. According to Ambert, Adler and Detzner (1995) reliability and validity are not relevant in qualitative study but important in quantitative study. Qualitative research uses trustworthiness to ensure validity and reliability. In this section, I present how my research rigor was strengthened. Lincoln and Guba (1985) see trustworthiness as a strategy of checking reliability. According to Twycross and Shields (2005), trustworthiness refers to the demonstration of integrity and competence in qualitative research by adherence to detail and accuracy to assure authenticity and soundness of the research. Qualitative research has four aspects that are used to ensure trustworthiness, namely; dependability, credibility, conformability and transferability. In this study, I deliberately left out transferability as findings that were generated by the study cannot be transferred or generalised. The following

paragraphs explain further on the other three aspects.

4.11.1 Dependability

According to Merriam (1998, p. 205), dependability refers to ''the extent to which the research findings can be replicated with similar subjects in similar context." Dependability focuses on how consistent the study is with the findings. Gasson (2004) argues that dependability deals with the way in which a study is conducted and should be consistent across time, research and analysis technique. Furthermore, dependability helps lessen bias and errors in the study. According to Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2010); Chilisa and Preece (2005); Krefting, (1991); Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) dependability is accomplished through audit trail, code-recode strategy, stepwise replication, triangulation and peer examination. Audit trial and peer examination will be used to ensure dependability. According to Bowen (2009) and Li (2004), audit trial involves an examination of the inquiry process and product to validate data. Audit trial provides evidence on how the data was generated and analysed. A voice recorder was used to capture enough evidence and ensure accuracy when transcribing and reporting data.

4.11.2 Credibility

According to Flick (2009), credibility refers to the accuracy of the documents. Credibility focuses on how truthful the data is given and whether the researcher was fair. According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004); Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility establishes whether or not the findings represent plausible information drawn from the participant's original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants and their views. In qualitative research, there are multiple strategies that are used to ensure credibility in a study. An example is reflexivity (field journal) (Anney, 2014). In this study, I used triangulation to ensure credibility. Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007, p. 239) state that ''triangulation involves the use of multiple and different methods, investigators, sources and theories to obtain corroborating evidence." The study used eight participants who taught in the Foundation Phase who had more than five years' experience teaching in the Foundation Phase. As mentioned earlier, semi-structured observations and interviews were the data generation methods used for this study. After the interviews and observations, participants were allowed to go through transcriptions' comments and confirm what was written; a process called member checking.

4.11.3 Conformability

According to Voster and Prozesky (2001), conformability is a qualitative oriented criterion for objectivity that indicates the degree to which the findings in a qualitative research are the product of inquiry and not biases of the research. Shenton (2004) further adds that the results of the study must be based on the experience and ideas of the participants. The researcher must be neutral during interviews and observations to avoid being biased. Tobin and Begley (2004. 392) state that ''conformability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretation of the findings are not figment of the inquirer's imagination, but derived from the data''. Bowen (2009); Koch (2006); Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that conformability in qualitative research can also be achieved through audit trail, reflective journal and triangulation. According to Bowen (2009), audit trial offers visible evidence from the process of generating data and the final product, providing the readers with what was found and not found. Thus, audit trail keeps track of what was said and done during the data generation. In this study, I used audit trail and reflective journal as noted earlier to keep track of all the decisions and occurrences during data generation. Wallendorf and Belk (1989) describe flexible journal as a reflexive document kept by the researcher in order to reflect on previous incident. To ensure conformability of the study, interview transcripts were checked several times for accuracy. Reflexive journal was used as a book (document) to reflect on all that took place during observations or after conducting the interviews. Reflexive journal and audio recordings were two ways used to ensure conformability of the study.

4.12 Limitations

According to Rule and John (2011), research does not always go as anticipated. There are limitations that every research encounters. Simon and Goes (2013) note that limitations can sometimes be an impediment for researchers to draw conclusions on their respective projects. This study had limitations that occurred during data generation. There was a limited time for conducting interviews because most of the participants did not reside at Kwaggafontein and they were using public transport. Therefore, time for conducting interviews was limited. I had to focus mostly on written questions more than probing questions. I had to mostly rely on my journal and observations. The study was a small scale project with only four schools, and two participants in each school. Therefore, the study could not be generalized. Another limitation I encountered during the research was that ten participants were approached to participate, but only eight participated, two of the participants withdrew from the research. As a result of the high number of experienced educators leaving the profession through resignations, I encountered challenges in finding

participants who were experienced and a perfect fit for my sampling criteria. I therefore, decided to work with those who had agreed to participate; the eight participants.

4.13. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed different sections that made up the chapter. These included qualitative research, purposive sampling, data analysis, and ethical considerations. There were three methods of data generation (reflective journal, semi-structured observations and semi-structured interviews).The following chapter presents data and the discussion of findings.

Chapter 5: Data presentation, analysis and findings

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an explanation of the methodology, paradigm, approach and methods used to generate data for the study. This chapter presents the findings that emerged from the data that was generated. Upon completing data generation, the data was reduced and presented according to the analysis strategy which I discussed in the previous chapter. To reiterate for emphasis purposes, Patton (1990) defines data analysis as the process of bringing order to the data and organising it into patterns, categories and basic descriptive units. De Vos et al. (2011) state that data analysis involves retelling and interpreting data gathered. The data analysis method that I used for the study is thematic analysis. It is through themes that I sought to make meaning of the participants' responses (De Vos et al., 2011). The study aimed at exploring and understanding teachers' experiences of formative assessment, in particular within isiNdebele in home language. It also attempts to understand the significant of experience in teaching and learning. Data from the observation, reflective journal and semi- structured interviews was analysed and used to respond to the key research questions in order to understand the phenomenon in-depth. The themes that emerged from the data that was generated and analysed are presented in this chapter. These emerged themes are: a) Concept of assessment and formative assessment b) The use of formative assessment in isiNdebele c) Experiences of using formative assessment. The emerged themes will be chronologically presented below.

Table 3: Graphic presentation of emerged themes

Source: Author

EMERGED THEME	RESEARCH QUESTION
1. Concept of assessment and formative assessment	How do foundation phase teachers select different formative assessment strategies for assessing isiNdebele as home language in their classroom
2. The use of formative assessment in isiNdebele	Why do foundation phase teachers select different formative strategies for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classroom the way they do?
3. Experiences of using formative	What is foundation phase teachers'

assessment	experience of using formative assessment for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classroom?

5.1. Concept of assessment and formative assessment

Assessment is the most important part in learning, which often guides and informs both the teacher and learner about learning. Therefore, one must know what assessment is as well as how to implement it (William, 2011). Teachers are the driving force for education. They enact curriculum and assessment by drawing from their experiences and knowledge. It is therefore, expected of teachers to possess knowledge of what assessment is, its purpose and skills of conducting assessment in schools. According to Popham (2008), an individual's understanding of assessment is likely to influence their educational decisions. Formative assessment as the main focus of this study is about how assessment informs teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase classroom (McMillan, 2001). The participants were asked the interview question related to their experience of using formative assessment in isiNdebele. Below are their responses on their understanding of what assessment is.

> **Nozipho:** *"Assessment is when you test a learner. It can be formal or informal. In formal assessment, a learner is tested through class activities and informal assessment they are being tested verbally as you have seen I asked them questions about the story."*

> **Nombuzo:** *"Is to check if the learner has understood what you taught because if you do not assess you would not know whether they have understood or not, when you give them an activity you able to see if they understand."*

> **Dineo:** *"Assessment is a whole; is when you check on a learner; on how much does she/he knows on what you have taught or how the learner communicates and how can you help the learner."*

The above excerpts of participants' responses in relation to their understanding of assessment indicate an understanding of assessment as a tool that is used to establish whether learners have understood what was taught. William (2003) asserts that it is through assessment that we can

discover how effective the instructional activities are, and whether they lead the learners to the intended objectives. This suggests that when there is an indication that learners require more assistance, and they do not understand, teachers are expected to assist them. Conducting assessment from the position of the teacher requires experience. Kolb's (1984) reflective observation stage shows that a teacher needs to reflect on previous experience on how formative assessment was used to assist learners to improve their learning. Furthermore, the teacher has to observe the ways in which the learners are responding to the assessment methods used; whether the methods chosen are suitable for learners or not.. I asked the participant "how can she define assessment" in order to understand whether the conducted assessments depend on knowing the learner and his/her needs. While I acknowledge Rose's expression, but I found it ambiguous. She provided an important aspect that was central to the FP. Teachers at this phase are expected to assist in developing all the domains of learner development (De Witt, 2009). In this context, assessment allows teachers to identify the learning barriers of each learner.

> **Rose:** *"Mmmh, how do I define assessment? Assessment, it is the steps you use to determine the need of the individual learner."*

The participants' understanding of assessment was different, but what was common between those who understood assessment as a way to improve teaching and learning, and those who understood assessment as a way to determine the needs of the learners. Both of them are directed at improving assessment practices. When teachers introspect on their practice and improving experience, they are constantly in need of knowledge of assessment and ways that it can be used in different contexts (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2008; Nitko & Brookhart, 2011).

Knowing assessment extends to the small aspects such as the appropriate tools that will accommodate every learner in the classroom. I present participants' understanding of assessment in general. I present findings on their understanding of formative assessment. According to Popham (2008), formative assessment enables teachers to improve teaching and learning through providing constructive feedback. Teaching in the FP, especially learners from grades R-3, require skills that will facilitate the process of feedback amongst other things, and which are age and developmental appropriate. Through formative assessment, it is hoped that the academic strength of each learner will be enhanced (Jonath, 2011). In this section, I asked participants "to define formative assessment". By asking them this question, I wanted them to explain their understanding of what formative assessment is. These are the selected responses:

Nozipho: *"Formative assessment is formal and informal assessment."*

Ntokozo: *"Formative assessment is formal assessment."*

No doubt, the participants' responses were similar to each other and ambiguous. Nozipho and Ntokozo understand formative assessment around the binary of formal and informal. To unpack this further, the Department of Education (1998) defines formal assessment as planned assessment that provides teachers with a systematic way of assessing learners' progress and provides teachers with evidence of learners' performance. Informal assessment is unplanned assessment that takes place through observation and practical work that does not require evidence. The above is consistent with the participants' expressions because formative assessment can be carried out in either a formal or informal way (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2004).

From Nozipho and Ntokozo's responses, they did not make it clear whether they meant formal or informal assessment. On my first visit to Nozipho's school to meet her, I introduced the topic and the purpose of the study to her. She asked what formative assessment was and immediately after I explained she said: *"Hawu (shockingly), is that how it is called now?"*
It appeared as if Nozipho was hearing the word for the first time. Rose responded with shock aswell;

> **Rose:** *"Oh we used to call it continuous assessment that is the term I know […] the curriculum changes are confusing us for an example you are now talking about formative assessment and the term I knowchanged."*

The reaction made by both Nozipho and Rose was representative of the reality that South African teachers found themselves in. Many scholars such as Combrinck (2003), Kanjee (2003); Pryor and Lubisi (2002); Vandeyar (2005); Vandeyar and Killen (2007) assert that there are number of aspects that affect successful implementation of assessment. These include teachers' inadequate expertise and content knowledge about assessment, and the inability to adapt to the changing demands that come with the new education system. Sebate (2011) also states that the changing terminologies are what confuse the teachers. Continuous assessment is part of formative assessment.

This means teachers' professional development workshops, which ought to aid the experiential learning process, were not sufficient to the extent of addressing the confusion. According to Kolb's (1984) theory, in abstract conceptualization, knowledge is constructed through integrating the

existing knowledge with assessment policies, and knowledge gained through workshops or reading policy documents. In this case, teachers were unfamiliar with the terminologies, suggesting that they were not workshopped, insufficiently workshopped or unfamiliar with the recent policy documents.

Formative assessment is defined as assessment for learning specifically meant to assist the teachers to modify teaching and learning (Earl, 2013). The nature of assessment for learning is symbolic of experiential learning in that, the previous experience informs the next lesson.

The participants' responses below show a different understanding to the debates within the existing literature. The participants stated the following when asked to define formative assessment;

> **Fakazile:** *"Formative assessment, it is when there are learners who have learning barriers (remedial learners) then the teacher must help the learners with extra classes (afternoon classes)."*

> **Nombuso: "***Formative assessment is to help a learner when he/she has a problem and with formative, I am able to explain to each learner if they have challenges."*

> **Phumi:** *"Formative assessment is when you help a learner who has learning difficulties, maybe with sounds. Some omit vowels when they are writing words that is where you help them."*

The above excerpts indicate that teachers understood formative assessment as a method of assisting a learner who has difficulties (learning barriers), in order for them to understand what was taught.

According to Fakazile and Phumi's understanding of formative assessment, it targets learners who have major challenges in isiNdebele; such as the inability to read as well as inability to identify sounds (phonemic awareness). The findings were silent on learners without learning barriers, especially how formative assessment was conducted for them. Teachers offered support in form of afternoon classes as suggested above. According to Aftsika (2014), the purpose of formative assessment is to bring about change in learners' language by constantly providing support.

For Rose below, despite the confusion in terminology, formative assessment was about scaffolding the content, knowledge or skills for learners to improve learning.

> **Rose:** *"Formative assessment is to help the learner to move forward in their learning and to form or shape their development"*

Even though Rose articulated her understanding above, Lerato in the excerpt below saw formative assessment as a form of communication meant to work on the misunderstandings the learners might have.

> **Lerato:** "*Formative assessment is a way of communicating with the learners to find out if they understand or they do not. As a teacher, you are able to help them individually*".

The communication was carried out in isiNdebele, a home language for the learners. Lerato communicated her feedback. However, it was not clear whether it was verbal or textual feedback. However, in most cases, the nature of Foundation Phase classroom warranted verbal feedback, because some of the learners were still struggling to read. King (2016) asserts that interacting and communicating with the learner gives the teacher a clear indication of the learners' challenges.

Assessment during curriculum 2005 was largely competence based, paying attention to the nuances of the learners' competence in terms of their work, and how they interacted with others (Kanjee & Sayed, 2013). This therefore brings my discussion to Dineo's understanding of formative assessment below.

> **Dineo:** "*It is where you assess a learner every day, for sending them to fetch water or sending them to library or instructing them to do something on the chalk board. That's where you assess the learner*"

Following the teacher's instructions is formative assessment according to Dineo's understanding. Her explanation is different to that of other participants. Could this suggest that Dineo's understanding was still couched within a competence approach, especially now that curriculum and assessment policy was a performance-based curriculum? Performance curriculum places emphasis on the output or product, and the learner is expected to construct and display what was acquired, so to measure it (Bernstein, 2000). In contrast, according to Bernstein (2000, p. 43) in a competence curriculum "all learners are inherently competent and able to construct their own world of meaning and practice." It also suggests that her understanding of this type of assessment was linked to activities in Life Skills aimed to develop the learners' fine and gross motor skills. The response from all the participants indicated that every teacher understood both assessment and formative assessment in their own way, relative to their experiences and knowledge. With formative assessment, most participants showed that they either did not know the term "formative

assessment" or they understood it using a different terminology, as evident in Nozipho and Rose responses. The findings further showed that teachers used formative assessment as a method to assist learners who had challenges with isiNdebele and offer additional support. What was most intriguing about all the varied understandings was what impact it had on the day to day teaching and learning and how that contributed to a national project that sought to provide a standardised education as well as assessment.

5.2 The use formative assessment in isiNdebele

The core aspect of formative assessment is feedback and interaction between the teacher and the learner. Another theme that emerged from the findings is the use of formative assessment in isiNdebele. Scholars such as Yorke (2003), Black and William (1998), and National Mathematic Advisory Panel (2008) have recommended formative assessment as an assessment that enhances teaching and learning. Successful implementation of the curriculum and learner's progress depends on how well the teacher uses or implements formative assessment in the classroom. Consistent implementation of formative assessment, informed by a reflective practice to learn from the previous experience, ensures an improved teaching and learning. Gattullo (2000) indicates that formative assessment happens during the learner and teacher interaction that takes place on a daily basis with the aim of providing immediate feedback.

Participants were asked how often they used formative assessments in their classrooms to assess learners' understanding of isiNdebele. Teachers had different responses about the use of formative assessment in the classroom.

> **Fakazile:** "*I use formative assessment twice a week for the remedial learners.*"

> **Nombuso:** "*I use formative assessment every day when marking books so that I can explain to the learners.*

> **Ntokozo:** "*Ahhh…. formative maybe on a weekly basis.*"

> **Nozipho:** "*Yes I use it every day because when I ask questions and learners respond, for me that is formative assessment.*"

Based on the responses above, Fakazile used formative assessment on a particular time, focusing on learners with learning barriers in isiNdebele. According to Fakazile, formative assessment is only reserved for activities that are meant to provide support for the learners. Fakazile's and

Ntokozo's (who uses formative assessment on weekly basis) practice of formative assessment was inconsistent with curriculum policy in South Africa. According to C A P S, Grade two isiNdebele is allocated 8 hours a week (DBE, 2011). However, Fakazile's use of formative assessment did not make up the required hours as stipulated by the curriculum policy. There was also less significant learning interpreting this from the lens of Kolb's experiential learning (1984). Nombuso suggested that she implemented formative assessment during class activities; and during the time she marked the work, she would actually be in the process of formative assessment. Literature reveals that formative assessment can be carried out in many ways, including in the classroom activities and providing feedback (Lewy, 1990). It was interesting to note that Nozipho's question and answer on formative assessment can also be interpreted as reflecting diagnostic assessment. With diagnostic assessment, a teacher seeks to establish what the learners' prior knowledge is, in order to depart from what they already know. Basically, the intention is to improve teaching and learning. Assessment can only be regarded as formative if the results given to the learners are to enhance their learning (Vernon & Blake, 1993). The successful and effective assessment is determined by how it is used in the classroom, whether it enhances the learning or not. The findings suggest that the implementation of formative assessment requires a teacher to know how to use it in a way that will enhance diverse learners. King (2016) states that the purpose of formative assessment is to set goals, provide meaningful feedback, and identify the strength and weakness each learner in order to provide efficient and effective learning. Participants shared their different opinions on their ways of formative assessment in isiNdebele.

I wanted to understand how the formative assessment could make to the development of isiNdebele and indeed to improving the teachers' pedagogical knowledge, Nombuso and Rose stated that;

> **Nombuso:** "*I use this assessment by letting each learner read in order for me to see whether they are able to read isiNdebele, because the most important thing a learner must know is to read, know phonics. If the learner knows these, then he/she will be able to read and answer question.*"

> **Rose:** "*Uhm…… we use formative assessment in spelling activities' and the correction of the pronunciation in order to see if the learner is capable of reading and writing.*"

Nombuso stated that to develop isiNdebele, learners needed to know how to read and know phonics as those were the most fundamental aspects in a language. This indicated that Nombuso's use

formative assessment on reading and on phonics enabled her to see the strengths and the weakness of every learner. During a lesson observation in grade three, Nombuso read a story to the learners and when she was done, she randomly pointed a learner to read the story again. While the learner was reading, there were sounds or words that were omitted and which others found difficult to pronounce. Nombuso was constantly giving feedback to the learners during the lesson, which eventually had a greater impact. All these took place during the lesson. According to Hunt and Pellegrino (2002), it is important to constantly offer feedback during the lesson.

Using Kolb's (1984) theoretical perspective, the teacher used the policy with a combination of their past experience to guide the learner and give meaningful feedback, which the teacher later on used to determine whether the feedback was effective. Rose indicated that she used formative assessment in phonics, where, she focused on how learners spelt the words, in particular their pronunciation and writing. The pronunciation and spelling of words plays a crucial role in the development of the learner's language competence (Lawrence, 2011). During classroom observation, she taught phonics and introduced new sounds. She briefly introduced the lesson including the sound, and the learners had to come up with a word that matched the sound. For learners who did not know how to read the words, she would assist them by reading the words slowly or breaking them up. During the lesson, her focus was on those with learning barriers. She constantly interacted with them, during spellings, and would work it through with the learners slowly. Rose assessed the learners based on their individual capabilities. Rose's goal was to develop the learner's language competence fully. This meant that Rose used formative assessment to engage with the learners who had challenges with reading and spellings. Hattie (2009) asserts that effective feedback can improve learning and close the knowledge gap.

Using observation as a data generation method, I realized that the main focus on isiNdebele to her was the learners' ability to read and spell. During the lesson, she taught phonics. Lerato started the lesson with a story and during the story; she would pause and ask questions about the story. At the end, the learners expected to take out the most recurring sound from the story. During the lesson, Lerato attended to individual learners' needs, and at the end, there was a class activity based on sounds. The learners who scored below three out of ten marks from the class activity were identified as those who required attention. Identifying the gap was very important as it allowed the teacher to see what the learners knew and needed to know (Madison-Harris & Muoneke, 2012). Based on my observation, Lerato used the learners' results to diagnose areas that required extra lessons. Scriven (1967) asserts that formative assessment feedback helps in identifying the gap in

learning programmes so that the teacher can know where and how to add or detract from the curricular. Furthermore, in Kolb's (1984) theory, under active experimentation, the teaching and assessment methods are put into practice and they are tested during the lesson, and the learner's results will assist to configure and re-configure the practice.

Based on my observation, I asked Lerato why she assessed her learners the way she did. She said: "*IsiNdebele is one of the most difficult subjects, especially in the Foundation Phase. The learners are having so many challenges with reading and phonics.*"

Drawing from Lerato's statement on isiNdebele being challenging to the learners, Phumi provided a different way of conducting formative assessment in her classroom.

> **Phumi:** "*I use it throughout my lesson […] when I am done with the lesson, while they are writing I walk around the rows to see how the learners are writing and sometimes I have to explain further on things that they don't understand.*"

In Phumi's response, it was evident that she used formative assessment although she was not specific on how often. When I observed her lesson, she used a similar method that other participants used, such as interacting with the learners and checking for understanding. Ketabi and Ketabi (2014) assert that learners' performance depends highly on the appropriate feedback and interaction during the lesson. Based on Kolb's theory, knowledge is acquired through grasping and transforming new information, where a learner receives new information through feedback, analyse it and put it into practice.

Furthermore, it is only feedback that is timely in nature and which offers additional insights into learning, which can be effective (Brink, 2007). Participants also shared their views, arguing that formative assessment is the best to use in isiNdebele. Lerato and Dineo noted the following:

> **Dineo:** "*Yes, formative assessment does help because you are able to identify the needs of a learner. For example, if the learner has speech challenges, you are able to communicate with and see how you can help them.*"

> **Lerato:** "*Yes, it does help because you will be able to identify a learner and the problem they have, and through formative assessment, you are able to attend the learner individually so that you can help them and be able to involve their parent*".

Lerato and Dineo's responses indicated that through formative assessment, they were able to identify the shortcomings that each learner had in isiNdebele and assist them. According to Kame'enui (2004), teachers need to monitor learners' performance on a daily basis to identify areas that need intervention, and to evaluate whether learners are making progress or not so that teaching and assessment strategies can be evaluated. This indicated that teachers were able to track the learners' progress in isiNdebele through formative assessment. Lerato further indicated that formative assessment allowed the teacher to interact with the learners and assist them individually, as well as involve the parent in the process (when a need arises). Formative assessment provides information about learners' performance to learners, parents and teachers (Brown & Hirschfield, 2008). Nombuso also shared her views on formative assessment below;

> **Nombuso: "**_Yes, formative assessment does help in improving isiNdebele because you are able to interact with the learners; I guide them so that they will be able to do independent writing."_

> **Phumi: "**_Formative assessment helps because you are able to see if learners have mastered phonics, and once they have mastered them they will be able to read."_

What Phumi and Nombuso stated was how they benefited from using formative assessment in isiNdebele. They indicated the significance of interacting and giving feedback which allowed them to see if they were improving in their teaching and assessment of isiNdebele home language. Nombuso further stated that when learners were given meaningful feedback, they became independent. Providing learners with necessary skills, knowledge and effective feedback led them to become independent thinkers (Jonathan, 2011). Phumi also stated the importance of developing phonics in a home language. When learners have mastered phonics, they can be able to read and write. Moreover, they can be able to learn another language once they have mastered their own (Lenyai, 2011). Teaching phonics in the Foundation Phase improves their reading abilities and language proficiency (Rowling in Lerner & John, 2009). The general reception of assessment is punitive, instead of its role such as supporting learners in developing their language (Afflerbach & Cho, 2011). What can be seen from the participants' responses was that most of them used formative assessment throughout the lesson by interacting with the learners and diagnose them

5.3 Experience of using formative assessment

The knowledge and experience of the participants were key elements that emerged from the

findings. According to Pajares (1992), teachers' experiences were influenced by their beliefs and practices in teaching and assessment. Often teachers reflect on their previous experiences, especially their teaching and assessment experiences. Thus, teaching cannot be separated from experience. Zhang (2008) argues that policymakers regard teachers with more experience as having potential to produce good results compared to novice teachers. Most of the teachers who participated in the study had more than 20 years' experience teaching in the Foundation Phase and specifically teaching isiNdebele. The participants shared their different opinions about their experience of formative assessment. In this section, I discuss how experience and the curriculum changes contributed to the ways in which they implemented assessment practices in their classrooms.

> **Lerato:** "*There is no much effect and difference it is just terminologies here and there [….] There's no difference.*"

> **Fakazile:** "*No, because the old ways of assessing were much better than the current one. Previously, learners were given sufficient opportunity to learn. Learners started school at the age of 7 years when they were ready. Unlike now, they begin school at 6 years and they are not ready. In this education, there's lot of work for learners.*"

> **Lerato:** "Previous *experience is the one that I think still works better in helping to see if the learners understand or not. Now, there's too much paper work, but previously you will start teaching a learner from scratch, start with phonics and see what they do not understand.*"

Based on the participants' responses above, their experiences of formative assessment and the curriculum changes in South Africa did not affect how they assessed learners presently, because there was no difference between how they used to assess back then and now; except for the terminologies. In addition, Lerato highlighted paper work (evidence based assessment) as the key focus of the current assessment practices. Considering that the current curriculum is CAPS, the concerns of workload are still a challenge in South Africa. This finding is similar to the work of Bantwini (2010) on Curriculum 2005, where workload and curriculum terminologies were a concern for teachers. In essence, especially taking to account Fakazile's argument, assessment practices are inconsistent with the current assessment policy which is performance curriculum. However, the country's curriculum policy continue to appear as advocating formative assessment

but in practice summative assessment take priority (Kanjee & Sayed, 2013). Teachers are able to reflect on their experience of formative assessment, conceptualise and integrate it with their current experiences without any effects. It is their reflections which showed that there were no significant changes in practice – apart from the curriculum ones. The work of Kolb (1984) reminds us that knowledge is constructed through the combination of previous experience and the present experience. Another important point which is worth noting is from Fakazile, who flagged the age of the learner's admission to start school. My interpretation of her statement is that in terms of the level of development, learners at 6 years of age were not ready for schooling. Schooling in South Africa, although it is informal, begins in Grade R. Usually at this grade, learners are aged 5. Considering the Grade R age, it suggests that Fakazile will be more concerned. However, school readiness is actually determined by learners age of which is 8 for example, the work of Jean Piaget on child development, as well as the work of Erik Erikson, affirms the current age for learners to start schooling. Fakazile demonstrate an ability to reflect on her practice. However, what shows from her reflection is a preference of olden methods of assessment over the current ones. Some of the participants in the study held different views. For example, Phumi and Rose, responding on their previous experiences, stated;

> **Phumi:** "*Yes, it does because now we do not give learners enough time to learn and understand what is being taught because we put more focus on the Annual Teaching Plan while some learners are left behind.*"

> **Rose:** "*It was teacher orientated. Yes, it does affect because before, we were doing more talking than the learner and learners listen only and now we give learners a chance to express themselves so that we can see whether learners have gain skill of writing or speaking.*"

Phumi's and Rose's responses indicated that their experiences about formative assessment affected how they assessed learners as their attention was often moved by the constant focus on the annual teaching plan (ATP). The purpose of the annual teaching plan was to guide teachers about the content they had to teach and the timeframe which the content should be completed. What was implied by Phumi was that the way in which learners were assessed was different to her previous experience. Furthermore, Phumi was unable to integrate her previous experience with the current one. She felt that the current ways of assessment did not give learners sufficient time to learn and understand a concept. Instead, they had to rush and finish the syllabus on time. Carrying out an

assessment in this way suggested a more product-driven (numbers that the teachers are producing, in terms of pass rates) rather than process-driven assessment practice (which is mainly about the rich and in-depth process of learning). It also raised concern on whether the results reflected the classroom reality. Such practice amounted to what Jansen (2002) referred to as political symbolism in education. Jansen (2002) highlights that despite the much anticipated educational changes on the policies; there was still a policy-practice gap. Rose stated that her experience about formative assessment did affect how she assessed the learners because, previously, learning and teaching was teacher oriented. Teachers were doing the talking and learners listened; whereas currently, it has changed to learner-cantered. Experience plays a significant role in how teachers use formative assessment to develop learners' language competence. Experience is a continuous act which often influences future experience (Dewey, 1997). Participants shared different opinions on how they used their experience of formative assessment to develop IsiNdebele, thus;

> **Fikile:** "*I divide them according to their abilities. Divide them into groups. Group 1, it is those who are capable, group 2 follows group 1, group 3 moderate and group 4, those who still need help then we have group that other 4.*"

> **Ntokozo:** "*Hmmm... when I teach learners, I teach according to their level and ability.*"

Fakazile and Ntokozo's responses indicated that teaching learners according to their ability allowed them to be able to assist learners with isiNdebele. Fakazile indicated that she divided learners based on their capabilities so that she is able to see who and where assistance is needed. What was observed during isiNdebele lesson was that Fakazile conducted a lesson where learners had to construct a sentence. She gave the fourth group simple and shorts sentences to construct and would often guide them how to write, but other groups would get long sentences. Fakazile also said "*it is pointless to give group four long sentences while they have not mastered other sounds; so, I give them short sentences until I can see that now they know more sounds.*" Knowing the abilities of each learner will assist the teacher to select the suitable methods to use. Ntokozo also indicated that she taught learners according to their abilities. As indicated earlier in the chapter, during the lesson observation, Ntokozo was teaching phonics and new sound using a story and all learners where taught and wrote the same activity. When she was marking the class activity, she assisted learners with low marks through explanation and additional support. The immense support that Ntokozo provides to the learners assisted her to reflect and evaluate her teaching as well as

assessment methods. McMillan (2013) states that formative assessment is interaction that takes place throughout the lesson, helping the teacher to gauge how well learners have mastered what was taught and what assistance they need.

The curriculum changes in South Africa since 1994 affect teachers' pedagogical practices. Every curriculum comes with its own amendments; therefore, teachers must learn and adapt to the new curriculum and be able to implement it. Mandukwini (2016) asserts that the change in curriculum affects teachers' educational experience and working patterns amongst the teachers. In essence, curriculum changes create anxiety for teachers, and as Bantwini (2010) has shown, the inadequacy of teacher development adds to these challenges. Lerato shared her brief experience on curriculum changes.

> **Lerato:** "*Uhmmm…. Any change is stressful; it could be a good change or bad change. There is a way that it will affect you. When we started being workshopped about C2005, we were workshopped by people I cannot say they had no knowledge but they could not explain properly and they will tell you about things you did at school (university) and expect you to stick it out within a day or two. Even their workshops were not sufficient. You ought to study on your own to gain knowledge*"

Lerato indicated that they were not given enough time to understand and master the new changes. Instead, they were expected to implement them immediately. Despite the lack of knowledge, support and appropriate resources, teachers had to implement the policy based on their own experience and interpretation. Malaka (1995) asserts that teachers acquire assessment skills on their own with no proper or effective training from the Department of Education. Lerato further indicated the poor introduction to Curriculum 2005, the unclear guidelines for its implementation, and pressure on teachers to implement. For teachers to implement assessment effectively and successfully, they need support and to get clear guidelines on how to disseminate the policy (Kanjee & Moloi, 2014).

Nombuso in the excerpt below provided some of the changes relevant to the phase;

> **Nombuso:** "*Classroom assessment was affected. We have to assess many things as it is divided. There is listening and speaking, phonic, writing and language use. We no longer just test everything, but we assess component by component.*"

Nombuso pointed out that the change in the assessment policy had brought new ways of assessing

learners. Previously, they had to test randomly on everything covered, but currently they focused on each component, and she considered this as many things. Kanjee (2007) argues that the introduction of the new assessment policy placed emphasis on a range of assessment information, such as the frequency and type of assessment that should be assessed. According to Kolb (1984) learning is a continuous process that is grounded in experience. Experience can either be effective or can it hinder learning. The teachers also expressed their views on the significance of experience in teaching. Phumi share her views about experience;

> **Phumi: "***experience does not help much because learners differ***"**

What can be drawn from Phumi's statement was that due to the changes and learners' diverse experience that has not been reflected and critiqued does not serve any purpose in teaching because every learner is different and has different needs. According to Kolb (1984), knowledge is developed through transforming experience, reflecting from previous experience, analyzed and implemented (experimented). Robert (2018) indicates that there are many factors that affect the effectiveness of experience such as the socioeconomic factors and curriculum, thus, the use of experience can be ineffective. Dineo also shared her thoughts about experience in education;

> **Dineo: "***No, or maybe I can say experience is both important and not important. It is important because when you have experience, you have high chances of getting a promotional post. It is not important because we are teachers every day; meaning we learn new things daily, be it at home, community even here at school.***"**

> **Rose:** *"Yes, experience is important because when you first enter the classroom, you need to know what you are doing. Also, with experience, the skills you have will assist you in developing learning. It contributes more on how you teach as you will know how to identify learners with learning challenges.***"**

Dineo indicated that the significance of experience was only applicable when you wanted a higher position in education e.g. Head of Department or Principal. Rice (2010) argues that, in Education, experience is a key factor in personnel policies that affects the employee's status in terms of salary and seniority. What can be drawn from this is that experience is still considered a factor that contributes to the effectiveness of a teacher. Teacher experience is related to teacher productivity (Rice, 2010). Dineo did not see experience as a learning platform in which each of us could use to improve the lives of others. According to Kolb (1984), knowledge is influenced by factors such as personal and environmental experiences. She further adds on the reflective observation stage that

knowledge can be gained by observing others. Borg (2003) note that teachers' experience is shaped by school and classroom environments which include parents, school policy, and the way in which learners behave. Rose also shared her though on experience

Rose's response indicated that experience was very important in learning, especially to teachers. It helps when they first start teaching, to know various requirements of their profession. Nel (2011) asserts that teachers should know how to teach and assess, how to change instruction if it is not working, and how to address the needs of every individual learner. Rose stated that the skills gained over the years assisted the teacher when there were challenges. According to Dewey (1983), learning is a continuous process grounded in experience; meaning every experience is derived from those who have gone through it before and is modified it to suit those who come after. Lerato's sentiments of experience are as follows;

> **Lerato: "***Yes, is important, especially if you are teaching in the Foundation Phase. If it was possible, teachers with limited experience they must teach intermediate and teachers with many years teaching experience should teach the Foundation Phase. Foundation Phase learners need a teacher who has been teaching for many years, who has patience compared to the new one.***"*

Lerato pointed out teaching in the Foundation Phase required someone who had sufficient experience and who was able to constantly reflect on their previous experiences. For teaching the early year's group, the teacher needs to support and scaffolding to enable learners to learn and develop their confidence, knowledge and skills (Jonathan, 2011). Thus, teachers need to know how and which aspects need to be developed. Kini and Podolsky (2016) argues that teachers' effectiveness is associated with the experience they have, and the teachers who have ample years of teaching experience are associated with learner achievement. Lerato's notion indicated that teachers with limited experiences struggled to understand the classroom dynamics in the Foundation Phase. The argument she made is debatable because she conceptualised experience as quantity and not as the in-depth day to day lived experiences acquired from the social interaction with the learners. According to Kolb (1984), learning occurs through transformation of new knowledge, grasping it and accommodating it with the existing knowledge. While others teachers are due to the changes within the curriculum their experience does affects their pedagogy.

 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented data that was produced during my engagement with the eight purposively sampled FP teachers from Kwaggafontein East circuit. The findings that emanated from the data generated through semi-structured interviews, reflective journals and semi-structured observations were also presented in this chapter. The data was analysed and divided into three themes. The data showed how teachers in the Foundation Phase understood assessment in general. It also showed how they understood formative assessment; the phenomenon of this research project. The findings also showed the different ways in which teachers integrated their previous experience on assessment to inform their new learning. Apart from the new learning, the findings showed how teachers reflected and became resistant towards assessment and the methods brought by the new curriculum. Formative assessment is an interactive type of assessment and this was discussed at great length in the analysis. Nonetheless, the findings showed that learner-centered approach was not practical as there was no sufficient time. The next chapter marks the conclusion of the study. It discusses the summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion.

Chapter 6: Discussion, Recommendation and Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented an analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the participants. The purpose of the study was to explore teachers' experiences in using formative assessment in assessing learners' knowledge of isiNdebele as a home language. The study aimed at exploring and understanding how teachers' use their experience of formative assessment to develop learners' home language (isiNdebele) in the early years of schooling. The focus was on the Foundation Phase teachers who had more than five years of teaching experience, teaching in isiNdebele as a language of teaching and learning in their classrooms. This chapter provides a summary of the findings presented in the previous chapter. The findings are divided according to research questions to demonstrate how they responded to the three key researches questions. As in the previous chapter, I provide this summary through engaging with the literature and theoretical frameworks. The chapter is divided into four parts; the first part is the discussion of the findings

based on the research questions; second, is the implications of the study to policy, practice and future research; and third, is the limitations of the study followed by the conclusion.

6.1 Discussions and findings

The study was guided by the three key research questions; *what are foundation phase teachers' experiences of using formative assessment for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classroom? How do foundation phase teachers select different formative assessment strategies for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classroom? Why do foundation phase teachers select different formative assessment strategies for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classroom the way they do?* The study was based in Mpumalanga, Kwaggafontein East Circuit, where isiNdebele is dominant and is used as a language of teaching and learning in the foundation phase in most schools.

Question 1: What are foundation phase teachers' experiences of using formative assessment for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classroom?

The data showed that teachers' experiences of formative assessment varied. They were all influenced by their backgrounds as well as their understanding of formative assessment. The type of knowledge an individual has is influenced by their past experiences and the new knowledge that emerges when they reflect and critique their experiences. Participants' responses about formative assessment showed that some of the participants had limited knowledge of assessment in general and of formative assessment in particular. A few of the participants, such as Nozipho and Ntokozo, understood formative assessment as formal and informal; meaning learners are assessed through verbal and formal tasks such as a test or examination. Although the "traditional" methods of assessment were reviewed and changed, the findings showed that some of the teachers' understandings were rooted in the old methods of conducting assessment, evincing by and large, a resistance towards assessment transformation in the country. What also emerged from the findings was that the term formative assessment was unfamiliar to the teachers. Some knew the word and others understood it with a different terminology such as continuous assessment – although curriculum changes of this nature happened a while ago. This showed that, through experiential learning and engaging in different stages of the cycle, teachers' experiences are partially transformed. In this instance, the process of assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge does not take place (Kolb, 1984). Furthermore, participants also associated formative assessments with a competence curriculum where learners were assessed based on their

competencies. Their conceptions of assessment were inconsistent with the requirements of the current curriculum which focused more on the performance of the learners. It was clear that teachers either had limited knowledge of formative assessment or they were deliberately hesitant to change. What could also be note was that some of the participants viewed formative assessment as assessment used to assist learners who had learning challenges in isiNdebele. Ramaprasad (1983) and Sadler (1989) argue that formative assessment should assist in two aspects; identifying the gap a learner has and finding ways to close the gap. Participants used a variety of interventions like conducting extra classes to address the challenges with regards to language competency in isiNdebele.

Experience can affect teachers' pedagogical practise of formative assessment which results in either a negative or positive impact in the development of isiNdebele. Dewey (1939) asserts that not all experience is educative. The participants' individual experiences had different impact on how they implemented formative assessment in isiNdebele. What could be commonly seen from the participants was that they still preferred the old method of teaching and assessing. They indicated that the focus previously was on developing the learners thoroughly, allowing them to learn on their own pace with less paper work. When the new curriculum was introduced, the aim was to eliminate the amount of paper work (administrative work) teachers faced. However, Lerato highlighted that the current curriculum had double if not triple amount of administrative work. Thus, there was no sufficient time to assist the learners. Instead, teachers had to work under pressure which meant learners were provided with a lot of work at a short period of time. The excessive administrative work that teachers experienced consumed most of their teaching time; for example, spending much time on the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP). The ATP serves as a guide of what to teach, when to teach and time frame to finish. Thus, teachers are forced to finish the planned work within a particular timeframe. The amount of administrative work participants had to endure resulted in challenges when they had to implement formative assessment. Bell and Cowie (2001) assert that formative assessment is a demanding method that is uncertain, complex and needs more time for it to work effectively. What the findings showed also was the challenge the teachers had with regard to pedagogy; whether teacher or learner- centred. Mandukwini (2016) asserts that teachers are confronted with change and they have to adjust their personal values, beliefs and attitudes which are still rooted on the previous practice Given the ever changing curriculum of South Africa, the findings showed that teachers were expected to implement the new curriculum without adequate knowledge and understanding. Lerato reflected on her Curriculum

2005 workshops which she said were not effective and beneficial as expected.

Question 2: How do foundation phase teachers select different formative assessment strategies for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classroom?

In the previous chapter and in the literature chapter, I extensively demonstrated that formative assessment promotes interaction between a teacher and a learner through feedback. Drawing from the participants' responses, they selected their assessment strategy based on their observation during formative assessment and the manner in which learners received feedback. Feedback provides information to the teacher about learners' progression as well as steps that need to be considered (Heritage, 2007). Participants used formative assessment during the lesson and summative at the end of the lesson to evaluate the learners' knowledge. Based on the feedback given during the lesson, participants were able to select and design assessment strategies. Emerging from the findings were concerns over assessment practices that were not inclusive of the learners with learning challenges. The findings showed that participants (teachers) took consideration when selecting assessment strategies for future purposes. They sought to address the challenges. Moreover, selecting the assessment strategies was dependent on how learners performed in the task given. The manner in which the assessment strategies were selected, in particular for isiNdebele home language was based on learners assessment results, amongst other things learners had to perform on were reading and phonics (identification of letter sound). Thus learners who could not read or write spelling were grouped and given an assessment strategy that aided their understanding. Diagnostic assessment was also used to establish learners' prior learning, and this was carried out at a basic level such as interacting with the learners verbally. Participants used the information gathered from interacting with the learners to modify their lessons and to select assessment strategies which provided a scaffold to learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sato, Wei & Hammond, 2008).

Question 3: Why do foundation phase teachers select different formative assessment strategies for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classrooms the way they do?

Selecting suitable assessment strategies should be based on what the learner needs in order to develop their language proficiency in isiNdebele (Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2007). Looking at the findings, the common reason for selecting the assessment strategies the way the teachers did was to close the gap that the learners had manifest in their inability to read or identify sounds. Daily class-activities were often used as a tool to evaluate learners' performance and the feedback was

used to modify teaching, learning and assessment in general. Clark (2011) asserts that face-to- face interaction promotes interaction that leads to purposeful feedback. Face-to-face interaction allows the teacher to determine the type of assessment that should be used, based on the needs of each learner in the Foundation Phase classroom. Learners have different capabilities, thus; different assessment strategies were selected or designed to improve learning and foster inclusivity. Selecting assessments that were specific to the learners who experienced challenges was useful to develop the learners and enhance their learning activities. The overall assessment that was used by the teachers was summative assessment, which assisted them to draw conclusions about the learners who should progress to the next grade or phase. The participants developed an inclusive and comprehensive approach when they selected their assessment strategies.

6.2 Implications

The previous section discussed the findings with the aim of responding to the three research questions that informed the study. This section discusses the three components that are applicable to the different parts of society, namely; policy, practice and future research.

6.2.1 Policy

From the findings it is apparent that experience has a bigger impact on how teachers use formative assessment to develop learners' language, and in this study isiNdebele. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding of what formative assessment is, with some participants understanding it with an old terminology. I suggest that the Department of Basic Education provide assessment specific training for teachers. The training should cover different assessment strategies that teachers could use particularly in formative assessment. The training should foreground the significance of formative assessment as globally individuals are paying more attention to formative assessment. Furthermore, school assessment policies should be designed in a manner that emphasises the significance and use of formative assessment and a guideline of how to implement it.

6.2.2 Practice

The aim of the study was to explore teachers' experiences of using formative assessment in the Foundation Phase. Teachers should be encouraged to be reflexive and learn from their practices. Once the reflexivity is acknowledged by the teachers and consistently done every day, teachers

will learn from their previous experience and seek ways to improve or enhance their current experiences. What also appeared from the study, although it was not its focus, was the subject of inclusive education. There is an immense need for teachers to be trained in the appropriate language that should be used when referring to learners with learning challenges. There was still room for engagements on matters of inclusive education. What also appeared from the study was that teachers depended more on evaluating or grading to determine learners' performance or to identify the strengths and weaknesses of learners in isiNdebele. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers use formative assessment to diagnose learners.

6.2.3 Future Research

Beyond this small scale study conducted in the former homeland of KwaNdebele with eight FP teachers' participants, more research is needed to explore the use assessment, particularly in the Foundation Phase. The future studies should also focus on the possibilities of peer assessment within the Foundation Phase classroom, interaction between teacher and learners that should take place during the process. Studies can be expanded to include other phases and perhaps, longitudinal studies. Globally the work of early childhood education including the foundation phase is receiving attention. With the attention, scholars should conduct studies that seek to improve the lived experiences of individual learners, teachers and communities. Creating or encouraging the concept of a reflexive teacher should include considering various methodologies such as participatory action research, spending significant time with the teachers, and observing how reflectivity is improving their assessment strategies. Furthermore, there is limited literature on isiNdebele as home language, therefore, more research about isiNdebele is needed, and given the fact that it is still an underdeveloped language is needed and significant.

6.3 Limitations

The study focused on eight participants residing in Mpumalanga province, a former homeland which is KwaNdebele, who had more than five years' teaching experience in the Foundation Phase. Therefore, the views in this study are based on their own experiences and understandings, thus; the findings of this specific study cannot be generalized.

The study used two methods of data collection; semi-structured observations and semi-structured interviews. Conducting interviews was a challenge with some of the participants being uncomfortable with being interviewed when I started. Interviews were conducted after school and most of the teachers did not reside in Kwaggafontein area. They used public transport, therefore,

interviews could not last as long as I desired. I addressed this limitation by making follow ups. I also had 10 participants when I started sampling but ended up with eight.

6.4 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore foundation phase teachers experience of using formative assessment for assessing isiNdebele home language in their classroom. The study demonstrated that experience is important for implementing assessment practices, especially formative assessment, which is depended on feedback. The findings also showed that teachers were still embedded in the old methods of teaching and conducting assessment. There was also a reluctance to familiarise with the new policies and new terminologies. Overall, the study discussed in different chapters and justified reasons for selecting certain methods, methodology, approach and paradigms. I also provided a discussion on how the study responded to the key research questions and its implication.

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Appendix one-Informed Consent form

Informed consent

Dear Participant

I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal doing my Master degree. I would like you to participate in my study. The topic of my study is; exploring teachers' experiences in using

formative assessment strategies in Foundation Phase (isiNdebele) home language within Kwaggafontein East Circuit. The aim of the study is;

- To explore teachers' experiences of formative assessment for home language in the Foundation Phase.

- To understand how teachers select their assessment strategies for isiNdebele home language in foundation phase.

- To explore the reason for selecting the assessment strategies the way they do in isiNdebele Home language

Please take note of the following

1. Your identity would not be revealed in the study false name will be given on your behalf.
2. Answer question according to how you understand them and how they reflect to your personal opinion.
3. There is no right or wrong answer.
4. You have the right to decline to answer question in which you do not feel comfortable with.
5. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time of the study.
6. No information will be disclosed if the participant does not want.
7. The information provided by the participant will kept in a safe place.
8. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 60minutes.

Thank you for your cooperation

Equipment	Willing	Not Willing
Audio equipment		
Video equipment		
Photograph equipment		

For further enquiries you can contact ne on the following contacts:

Researcher	Supervisor	Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration
Name; Mtshweni N.E Qualifications- Bed Honors Email- nemtshweni@gmail.com Contacts No- 0717377364	Name- Msiza VJ Qualification- Master Degree Email: vusimsi@gmail.com Contact No: 078 300 2709	Research Office, Westville Campus Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban 4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 312604557- Fax: 27 312604609 Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

<u>Declaration</u>

I.. (Full names of participant)

hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the

research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.
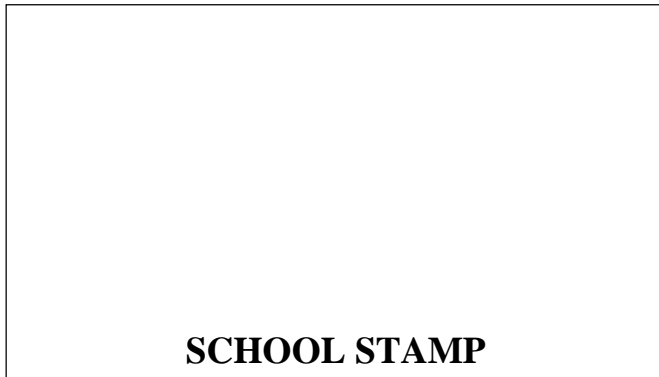

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so

desire.

………………………………   …………………………………………

SIGNATUREOFPARTICIPANT   **DATE**

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LETTER TO THE PRICIPAL

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood campus

Private Bag X03

Ashwood

3605

January 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST PERMISSON TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN FOUNDATION PHASE CLASSROOM

My name is Nompumelelo Emily Mtshweni, student number: 210555277 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal doing master's in education. I would like to request for permission to conduct a research at your school. The title of my study is **EXPLORING TEACHERS EXPERIENCE IN USING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY IN FOUNDATION PHASE ISINDEBELE (HOME LANGUAGE) WITHIN KWAGGA EAST CIRCUIT.** The purpose of the study is to understand teachers' experiences of using formative assessment in the foundation phase.

I intend to conduct observations during isiNdebele lessons and conduct semi-structured interviews. The interviews will be conducted after school so that they do not disturb other lessons. I request to interview only two foundation phase teachers and also observer 2 classes. The interviews and observations will take place between January and February.

I would like to ensure that the information gathered during interviews and observations will be treated with confidentiality as well as the name of the school and of the teachers who will be participating. Furthermore, the information gathered will be solely for the purpose of my degree.

You are kindly requested to complete the attached declaration form to acknowledge the permission granted to me by the school to conduct my study.

Should you wish to contact me or the supervisor here are my contacts;

Researcher	Supervisor	Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration

Name; Mtshweni N.E Qualifications- Bed Honors Email- nemtshweni@gmail.com Contacts No- 0717377364	Name- Msiza VJ Qualification- Master Degree Email: vusimsi@gmail.com Contact No: 078 300 2709	Research Office, Westville Campus Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban 4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 312604557- Fax: 27 312604609 Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Your contribution to the study will be highly appreciated. Thank You

Please sign the following declaration and include your full names asindicated:

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

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

…………………………………………   …………………………………………

SIGNATUREOFPRINCIPAL   DATE

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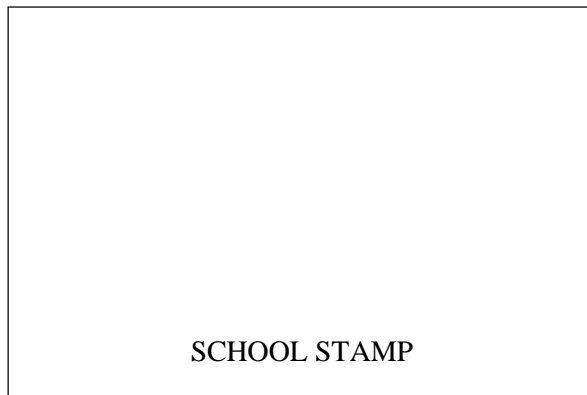
Appendix three- observation schedule

<p align="center">Semi-structured observations schedule</p>

Name of the participants_____

Date of observation_____

Place_____   Time_____

Lesson_____

Aspects to be observed	Results
1. Interaction between the teacher and learners during the lesson	
2. How is feedback being given during the lesson	
3. The use of formative assessment strategies.	
4. Feedback during assessment	
5. Additional information	

Appendix four-Interview schedule

<u>Semi-Structured Interview questions</u>

1. Tell me more about yourself, your name, where you were born and your age?
2. How many years have you been teaching?
3. How many years have you been teaching foundation phase and particularly isiNdebele?
4. Are you also an isiNdebele home or second language speaker?
5. How would you define assessment in your own words?
6. What is your understanding of formative assessment?
7. What methods do you use to assess home language?
8. How often do you use formative assessment?
9. When do you use formative assessment in Home language?
10. Does your experience of formative assessment affect how you assess learners? How?
11. How do you use your experience of formative assessment to enhance learner's isiNdebele and improve your teaching and assessment?
12. What effects does curriculum/policy change have on your pedagogical practice? Looking at the changes, what are some of the major changes you have experienced on formative assessment especially for foundation phase?
13. With your experience in the foundation phase, do you think formative assessment is the best to use in a language (isiNdebele)? Why?
14. How do you incorporate your experience of formative assessment with CAPS

Appendix five- Mpumalanga DOE approval

education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Building No. 5, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200.
Tel: 013 766 5562/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvo, Umnyango we Funde   Departement van Onderwys   Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

Ms Nompumelelo Mtsweni
University of KwaZulu-Natal
PO BOX 1617
EMPUMALANGA
0485

RE: APPROVAL OF YOUR APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: (YOURSELF)

Your application to conduct research was received and is therefore acknowledged. Curriculum management and delivery is the cornerstone of education, therefore your research which focuses on assessment which is part of curriculum delivery is very important to the department. Your request to conduct a study in the department is therefore approved. The approval of your research project is subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the departmental website.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants, however, with proper arrangements; data collection could be collected as per the plan of the researching institution. You are requested to share and update the department regarding your findings with the relevant sections of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present to the relevant sections of the department.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or a.balovi@education.mpu.gov.za.

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

MRS. MOC MHLABANE
HEAD: EDUCATION

14, 5, 18
DATE

MPUMALANGA
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

Appendix six- ethical clearance

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

20 June 2018

Ms Nompumelelo Emily Mtshweni (210555277)
Scool of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Mtshweni,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0461/018M
Project Title: Exploring teachers' experiences in using formative assessment strategies in Foundation Phase (IsiNdebele) home language within Kwaggafontein East Circuit

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 16 May 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

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

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully

Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Mr Vusi J Msiza
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

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Appendix seven-Turnitin