

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOUNDATIONS FOR LEARNING POLICY: A CASE  
STUDY OF TWO PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MOBENI WARD**

**BY**

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**(200402025)**

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**2013**

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**SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT**

This mini dissertation is submitted with /without my approval

.....

Mr S.D Bayeni

2013

## DECLARATION

I, Lovedale Busisiwe Zuma declare that:

- i) The research titled, “Implementation **of Foundations for Learning policy in schools: a case study of two primary schools in Mobeni ward**” is my original work.
- ii) This dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any University.
- iii) This dissertation does not contain other person’s data, pictures, graphs or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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vii) This dissertation was submitted for the Masters in Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

**Signed**.....

**Date**.....

**L. B Zuma (200402025)**

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### **DEDICATION**

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### **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ANA- Annual National Assessment

CAPS –Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

CPTD – Continuing Teacher Professional Development

DAS – Developmental Appraisal System

DoE – Department of Education

FFL – Foundations for Learning

GPLS –Gauteng Primary Literacy Strategy

HOD – Head of Department

HODs – Head of Departments

I A E- International Academy of Education

IBE – International Bureau of Education

IQMS –Integrated Quality Management Systems

LTSM- Learner Teacher Support Material

NEPA- National Education Policy

PIRLS – Progress International Reading Literature Study

PMS – Performance Management System

SASA – South African Schools Act

SGBs – School Governing Bodies

WSE – Whole School Evaluation

OBE – Outcomes Based Education

PMG – Parliamentary Monitoring Group

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the Foundations for Learning policy is implemented in two primary schools in Umlazi District. The study primarily looked at teachers' experiences and challenges when implementing the Foundations for learning policy in schools. It is hoped that that teachers' challenges and strategies of dealing with those challenges will help other teachers in a similar situation.

The study employed a qualitative design. Data was collected through the use of semi structured interviews with two heads of departments in the Foundation phase and focus group discussion with ten Foundation phase educators. Documents were also viewed to collect data on the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy in schools. The interviews and discussion were tape recorded. The data collected during the interviews and focus group discussion were transcribed and organised into themes.

The theory adopted in this study is that of policy implementation analysis. This theory stresses that there are two factors of policy implementation which are *capacity* and *will*. These two



factors should be taken into consideration when implementing policies. Policy implementers need proper training and this will make them to implement the policy effectively. Lack of understanding the policy can also influence the manner in which the policy is implemented. The achievement of the policy objectives is dependent on policy implementers who may accept or reject change.

The main findings show that there are fundamental challenges when the Foundations for Learning policy is implemented. Some these challenges are that learners have a problem of understanding the language of teaching in schools. Insufficient resources make it difficult for educators to implement the policy. Educators need more support from the Department in order to be able to cope with the policy implementation.

The study recommends that teachers be well trained before the policy is implemented and that subject advisors be available at appropriate times to help teachers with problems that they encounter. It is also suggested that teachers at the tertiary institutions be trained in the new curriculum because they get frustrated if they do not get help the subject.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

There have been lots of educational changes in South Africa since it became a democratic country in 1994. These changes were closely linked to the political transformation in the country. Educational changes were introduced through various educational policies, such as the abolition of corporal punishment, national policy on teacher education and policy on assessment of learners.

The primary aim of these educational policies were to improve the quality of education. Educators are at the forefront to drive these changes (McLaughlin, 1987). My contention is that, if educators do not have the buy in, it is unlikely that these changes will be successfully implemented.

Due to the political nature of these changes, it has become common in South Africa that when a new education minister takes over, a number of changes are introduced. This occurs because each minister wishes to introduce new quality measures in the schools (Department of Education, 1997). The Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was introduced by the then Minister of Education, Prof. S. M. E. Bhengu in 1997 (Department of Education, 1997). Outcomes Based Education did not meet the government's expectations. Various communities too could not successfully implement OBE due to a number of factors. One of them is that physical resources and infrastructure (such as overcrowded classrooms) did not meet implementation requirements (Department of Education, 2002). Therefore, this policy was revised in 2002 by Naledi Pandor who was the Minister of Education at that time. The revised version was called Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 2002).

In addition to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), Naledi Pandor also introduced the Foundations for Learning programme (Department of Education, 2008). The current minister for basic education, Mrs Angie Motsega, has now introduced the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) as another strategy of improving the Foundations for Learning (Department of Education, 2011). The focus on the quality of literacy and numeracy in primary schools seems to be an important aspect that each education minister wanted to achieve. This is because they have raised their concerns about learners' poor skills in numeracy and literacy (Department of Education, 2008).

In 1994, South Africa saw the demise of the apartheid system and a new democratic dispensation was introduced. In line with democracy, the education system also had to be restructured and the new curriculum initiatives formed part of that drive to restructure education. In 1996, classes were renamed; the label 'standard' was replaced by the label 'grades'. Similarly the term 'subjects' was replaced by the term 'learning areas'. Public primary schools were categorised into two phases, namely, the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. The Foundation Phase included Grades R, 1, 2 and 3 and the Intermediate Phase included Grades 4, 5 and 6 respectively. Grade 7 learners fell into the Senior Phase, but Grade 7 learners continued to be housed in primary schools.

In the Outcomes Based Education, educators taught according to specified themes. These themes were called Phase Organisers (Department of Education, 1997). These themes were the following:

- Personal Development
- Communication
- Society
- Health and safety

- Environment
- Entrepreneurship

Learners in the Foundation Phase were taught using ‘Whole Word Recognition’ approach. In the Foundation Phase, this method emphasised reading using pictures. From my teaching experience as a Foundation Phase educator and my interaction with other Foundation Phase educators, learners that were taught in this way, which was whole word recognition method, could not make words on their own.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Learners have increasingly become less able to read and write as it is expected at their grade levels. Consequently, learners have consistently produced poor results in the national tests. The commitment of the government to bring about transformation and to redress the inequalities of the past was very important to all South Africans. This is because these inequalities and contradictions have affected the education sector in South Africa (Department of Education, 2006). To ensure that democracy prevailed in all sectors and structures of the society in 1996, South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996, hereafter SASA) was enacted. This policy, among other things, put emphasis on the participation of stakeholders in the governance of schools. It gave power to the various stakeholders, namely, parents, educators and non-educators to participate in the decision-making in schools. The SASA gave rise to the mandatory formation of democratically elected School Governing Bodies (SGBs).

The SGBs had a huge responsibility of governing their respective schools. More importantly, the SGBs had the task of recruiting educators. They were also expected to secure the best possible resources for their children. It was hoped that such resources would assist in producing learners with good reading and numeracy skills.

Parents, for the very first time, had the opportunity to engage and get involved in the affairs of the schools. After a few years, schools found it difficult to involve parents in the decision-making process (Williamson, 2001). It was alleged in some schools that the decline in parental involvement was due to their unavailability. It was further alleged that some parents found it demanding to attend the SGB meetings which were held after business hours. Other parents felt that it was not worth attending such meetings as they were not compensated for their travelling costs or paid for their time and skills. Parents therefore, started to shy away from school responsibilities. Various scholars have indicated that when parents are involved in school activities, reading and writing skills of the learners, improve (Gold, 2005). Therefore, when parents moved away from their schools, the hope of producing learners with reading and counting skills, particularly in rural schools, opportunities for improving literacy and numeracy were compromised. Some other means of addressing this problem had to be found.

### **1.3 Background of the study**

The current status of literacy and numeracy in South Africa has become a cause of concern to all citizens. This has been observed in the Grade 12 results which are not up to the standard in some areas. It was reported that the level of literacy and numeracy on the Annual National Assessments for Grades 3 and 6 have been found to be very poor. These assessments results indicated that only 35% of the learners could read. In Mpumalanga province these results ranged from 12% to 36%. The province to obtain the highest pass rate was the Western Cape which obtained 43% Modiasoatsile (2011). Mundy (2011) argues that it is clear that more concentration should be focused on education. This is also supported by Modiasoatsile (2011) who argues that there is a drop in the standard of education and the government needs to identify the factors contributing in this problem.

Since the NCS was introduced, there was no significant improvement in the learner achievement in the Foundation Phase (Department of Education, 2008). The Department of Education at



national level saw a need to design a new programme aimed at improving the results in numeracy and literacy in schools. When South Africa was compared with other countries, in terms of learner achievement, it was found that South Africa's Grade 3 and Grade 6 learners did not do well in those tests.

The annual testing was later conducted in all classes from Grade 1 up to Grade 6. Naledi Pandor (the then Minister of Education), when responding to the release of the Progress International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted in 2006, introduced the Foundations for Learning as a way of improving reading writing and counting in primary schools (Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman, & Archie, 2007). The PIRLS had revealed that most South African learners could not read or write at the appropriate levels in Grades 4 and 5 (Department of Education, 2006). The results of that study received attention at every level of education structures in the country.

Naledi Pandor then declared that the South African system of education was a cause for concern. In 2008, she gazetted a three-year, 'Foundation for Learning' (FFL) strategy in terms of the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996) (NEPA). After the launch of the Foundations for Learning strategy in 2009, the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) developed a checklist of what was expected of the educators in the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy. The check list also specified what the Department of Education needed to have done to make sure that the policy was successfully implemented.

This strategy involved the annual testing of all children from Grade 1 to Grade 3. South African learners could not read at appropriate levels. The use of Foundations for Learning is very important. Montessori (1963) cited in the DoE (2008), regards the period between birth and six

years as a golden hour. This means that it is important that the foundation that is laid at this age in the learning process is proper as it has a great effect on the journey of the child's education.

The Foundations for Learning (FFL) was announced as a four-year campaign which aimed to improve reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children. This campaign was launched in 2008. The FFL campaign was conceived and implemented as a response to the fact that learners were unable to read, write and count at the required levels within their grades. In addition, the learners were unable to perform basic skills associated with literacy and numeracy.

Specific milestones were designed for performance in numeracy and literacy. In addition, formal assessments were specified for each term. In other words educators had to follow what was required in each milestone. It outlined the requirements for each grade. If certain milestones were not completed for that particular week that would mean that educators had to carry over those milestones to the following week. For instance, the education department stipulated that every teacher in the Foundation and Intermediate Phase had to spend at least 30 minutes daily on reading for enjoyment and at least one hour on extended writing every week (Department of Education, 2008). Every teacher in the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase had to also teach Numeracy (Mathematics) for at least one hour every day. This would include 10 minutes of stimulating mental mathematics (arithmetic) exercises at the appropriate levels in all grades.

The implementation of the FFL in Grades 1, 2 and 3 might not have been the same because of different contexts to which schools were located. Educators may have used different methods for individual learners in class due to their uniqueness. Some learners need special attention in spelling, reading and word formation, while others need special attention in counting and mathematical basic operation.

Although there was a good strategic approach introduced by the government to improve the education system, there seemed to be some shortcomings and difficulties in respect of the performance of learners. Hence, in the light of these anecdotal accounts of problems of the FFL policy, I decided to conduct research on the implementation of the FFL in two primary schools.

#### **1.4 Purpose**

The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of educators when implementing the FFL policy in schools. In examining this phenomenon, focus was placed on the challenges that educators were faced with when implementing the FFL policy.

#### **1.5 Critical Questions**

To investigate the implementation of the FFL, three main research questions were used to frame the study:

- 1. What are the experiences of educators when they implemented the Foundations for Learning policy in schools?*
- 2. What are the challenges of educators when they implemented the Foundations for Learning policy in schools?*

#### **1.6 Rationale**

I am a Foundation Phase educator and, I have a long experience of teaching learners reading, counting and writing skills in the Foundation Phase. Before the introduction of the new curriculum, teaching them how to read and count did not pose a problem for me. The new problem that emerged beg the questions: Are the educators able to implement the curriculum as expected? Are the educators properly trained to deal with these changes? Two areas of concern

need to be highlighted. First, learners cannot read, write and express themselves fluently. Second, learners' performance in Mathematics is poor.

In this study, I examined how educators implement the FFL policy in two schools and the challenges that they may have faced when implementing this policy. Drawing from my teaching experience, it is most likely that many educators may complain about their conditions of service, remuneration, and heavy workloads. As an experienced educator, I have found that there was an increase in the workload of educators. The completion of forms and unnecessary record keeping demanded by the supervisors took a lot of teaching time and remedial work that educators could use to help slow learners.

During my interaction with educators in various schools, I found that there were vast differences between teachers who graduated from training colleges (some of which are private institutions) and those that graduated from the universities in terms of the teaching methods that they applied in class. One aspect that was clearly evident was that university graduates were often grounded more strongly in the academic domain. The focus here was more on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge by students rather than its application in practice. Teachers who graduated in teacher colleges of education use their skills and methods of teaching to try and understand the implementation of the policy though sometimes they have to ignore some of the ideas stipulated in the policy.

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

This study may be of help to the national, provincial and regional curriculum policy designers as well as other implementers. Before policies are designed, the national and regional stakeholders may be aware of the challenges and difficulties that educators face when implementing FFL policy in the classroom. Policy makers may then consider these challenges

and adjust accordingly. Curriculum researchers may identify the gaps in the policy and may conduct further research. Further research may create an area for debate and discussion. These discussions may lead to more ideas and to improvements in the policy.

The research findings may assist Superintendents of Education and subject advisers to help educators in areas where they found challenges when implementing this policy and may organise seminars to address some of these problems. The study may also be beneficial to the country as a whole. Being a country with very low literacy results, this study may at least assist in improving learners' fluency in languages and competency in numeracy.

## **1.8 Organisation of the study**

The study is organised into five chapters and these are outlined in this section.

### **Chapter One**

This chapter sets the scene for the study. It outlines various components of the research including the background of the study, the purpose, research questions, the rationale and the significance of the study.

### **Chapter Two**

This chapter presents literature review on the implementation of the Foundations for Learning in schools as well as the theoretical framework that underpinned the study.

### **Chapter Three**

This chapter presents a detailed and comprehensive discussion of the research design and methodology that was used in the research.

#### **Chapter Four**

This chapter provided details about how the data that generated through the use of various methods, was presented and discussed.

#### **Chapter Five**

This chapter discusses the findings that were drawn from the data presented in Chapter Four. Based on the findings, recommendations are then made.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents literature review on education policy implementation and the role that educators play in that process. The literature review also focuses on how educational programmes affect the progress of learners in schools. Different countries have different education programmes. These education programmes are set to fulfil educational needs of the country. When such programmes do not meet the set goals of the country, education planners have a responsibility to revise or come up with new programmes altogether (McLaughlin, 1987) in discussing education policy implementation, both local and international perspectives are presented.

Since 1994, South African schools have been engaged in a plethora of curriculum changes. These changes were aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past that were created by the apartheid regime (Gultig, Ndhlovu, & Betram, 1999). The National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996) was passed in order to, among other things; enable the education minister to formulate policies in education sector in South Africa.

The Department of Education (DoE) introduced Outcome Based Education (OBE). The main aim was to produce competent learners who were going to be assessed, not only on their knowledge, but also on their skills, attitude and values that would be considered for promotion to the next grade (Gultig, Ndhlovu & Betram, 1999). OBE was introduced because it had become evident that the system of education that was followed before 1994, favoured some groups while others were disadvantaged (Gultig, Ndhlovu & Betram, 1999). However, it was also discovered

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later that OBE approach did not do much in terms of improving reading, writing and calculating skills (Pandor, 2008).

It was evident that the past inequalities in the education system persisted in the schools, particularly when one looks at the physical resources such as school buildings. The environments where learners are taught also affected the level of understanding by the learners and that of acquiring knowledge (Bruce, 2001). Learners' understanding of concepts can also be affected by the way they are taught by the educators. Such a notion is supported by Hargreaves (1994, p.54) when he argues that, "what the teacher thinks; what the teacher believes and what the teacher assumes- all these three things have a powerful implication for the process in which the curriculum is translated into practice".

This also applies to the teachers who have not been exposed to some of the resources that are used to enhance learning. A teacher who is teaching in an environment that does not stretch the parameters of the learners' will not produce good results (Gold, 2005). For example, in some schools, educators could not use modern technologies like computers to design teaching and learning aids whereas, some educators in many urban and semi-urban schools could. In that way, these educators are in a position to design attractive worksheets using computers and thus, arousing interest in the learners (Bruce, 2001). The struggle among educators in using modern technologies may affects the performance of learners as their minds are not stimulated or challenged by the learning activities that are provided by schools( Gold, 2005).

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Because of the above inequalities that took place in schools, the new government had to do something to redress these imbalances. When describing the new system that was to be used in education, Samoff, Renseburg and Groener (1994. p.1) maintain that:



*It is important to recognize the widespread expectations that the policy making authority would be transferred from the apartheid government to the African National Congress (ANC), which then proceed to implement its education agenda. That transfer might be halting, spasmodic, and rocky, but its direction would be clear in practice, the transition from critique to consultation to curriculum is far more contested than commonly anticipated.*

The state has gone the extra mile, trying to improve the status of education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2008). The DoE has put a lot of policies in place. Most of these policies were aimed at developing educators so that they would improve the quality of their performance in schools (Department of Education, 2008). The DoE has also provided an allocation of financial resources to all schools. This allocation is 'ring fenced' for schools in order to buy Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) (Department of Education, 1996). These funds cannot be used to buy anything that the schools may need, but only the books and other materials related to teaching and learning (Department of Education, 1996). These funds are allocated according to learner enrolment in each school. However, this initiative has not made any significant changes in reading, writing and counting skills (Department of Education, 2008).

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The DoE has continued to make policies to develop teachers in order to improve teaching and learning in schools. One of the latest policies that the DoE has developed is the policy on Continuing Teacher Professional Development (CTPD). The Department of Education (2008), argues that the purpose of this policy is to improve schooling and the quality of learner achievements. Reading, writing and counting is a problem among Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3 learners (Pandor, 2008). This was evident when learners were engaged in the Systemic Evaluation which was conducted in 2001. When the learners have not achieved their reading skills at their early ages, it is likely that their learning progress will be affected at their school-going ages (Gold, 2005). Countries have different strategies of improving the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Phase classes.

## **2.2 Language Development**

According to Gold (2005), literacy is the ability to read, write and understand what you are reading. Gold (2005) also stresses that while learners learn to read in the Foundation Phase, they are also being prepared to read in order to learn in the Intermediate Phase. She further argues that most of the literature about Early Childhood Education always mentions some ideas about language development. Language development forms the basis of Foundations for Learning. Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are the most important elements of language development.

When the learners learn the language for the first time, they become confused because they need to learn more than just one language skills at the same time. These language skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Grouws and Cebulla (1999) suggest that schools, as learning institutions, should implement more than one programme in order to help the learners to increase their learning skills. These programmes should be linked to their daily life activities so that they provide them with daily practice of what they have learnt at school (Gold, 2005). Wolfendale and Lindsay (1999) argue that in the reception class, educators have to emphasise the basic language skills by encouraging the learners to recognise letters in order to become good readers in the elementary class. This has not been easy for the teachers in other areas of the country. This is because some learners did not attend reception classes before they came to Grade 1.

Bruce (2001) suggests that children should be introduced to writing skills while playing and while still young. This can happen even before they come to school, but they need not be rushed into writing, Bruce (2001) argues. Good handwriting should be emphasised while playing so that their love of writing and reading will be developed (Gold, 2005). The ways in which teachers teach in schools, have an effect on learners learning to read. Learning to read, write and count depends on how these skills are introduced to the learners. Strickland and Morrow (2000) argue that one of the important factors that can promote language development in young children is to adopt a “pretend play” approach. Pretend play approach entails children transforming valuable

resources into useful means to understand complex situations (Gold, 2005). Children understand the complex world through the use of available resources such as pictures and toys (Gold, 2005).

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According to Kurland (2000), the relationship between reading and writing is that all writers must be readers because writers need to read what they are writing. Readers need to improve the elements of reading which are a description of the text that they are reading, restatement and their interpretation of what is being read. In South Africa, the learners were taught in their mother tongue and started learning other languages in Grade 2 (Gultig, Ndhlovu & Betram, 1999). However, now it is encouraged that learners, whose language is not English, should be taught this language as early as Grade 1.

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Kurland (2000) further argues that reading some text in a book can make us realise some of the things that we did not know about the language, but reading good essays develops a reader to become a writer. Writers can also be made good writers when they spend most of their time reading other people's work. In this regard, it is important that communities and schools provide libraries so that children can get used to reading materials. Bruce (2001) argues that all schools should provide libraries because it is where learners stretch their learning parameters. If learners have freedom of information, they also need to have access to information as well. Information that children get from libraries and other resources that are provided by their respective communities, helps them to debate among themselves and with their peers as well. In 2008, the DoE conducted a research and its findings indicated that only 39% of the learners could read and write at the age of 8 years. Most of the learners at the age of eight are in Grade 3.

The education department in KwaZulu-Natal province has launched a new programme called 'The Schooling 2025'. This programme was designed in order to address the problem of the learners who have reading and writing difficulties. Using this programme, the learners will be

taught in their mother tongue but English will be taught as a subject and not to replace the mother tongue. In this case, the learners whose mother tongue is English will have an advantage of better understanding concepts in Numeracy when they come to Grade 4 because the medium of instruction in this grade is English.

### **2.3 Numeracy Development**

According to Thompson (2006), Numeracy is the knowledge of numbers and how they operate. This knowledge includes the learners' ability to apply numerical understanding in practice. Brombacher (2010) has the idea that the understanding of numbers prepares the learners and develops their skills to solve their daily problems.

There are different views about young children and their involvement with numbers. It is argued that the learners become interested in numbers at an early stage (Clarke, B., Clarke, D. & Cheeseman, 2006). Brombacher (2010) also supports this idea by explaining that some children develop their number skills as early as pre-school age. Hausken and Rathbun (2004) contend that most children do not spend time engaging in mathematical activities at numeracy and calculating activities before they come to school. Clement and Sarama (2009) support the idea that children become less interested in numbers at their early ages. Blevins–Knabe (2008) contends that though children get involved in numbers at their early ages, the quality of knowledge depends on their parents' involvement in providing supportive learning environment.

Brombacher (2010) views parents, families and caregivers as valued partners in the children's learning. These partners need to give support in the process of beginning to read and deal with numbers. The parents and the care givers are very important to the learners in their learning of Mathematics because they use concrete material with which the children are familiar. Learning is informal and mistakes are corrected with love (Gold, 2005). The idea of using concrete materials

is supported by Grouws and Cebulla (1999, p. 27) who say that “long– term use of concrete materials is positively related to increases in student mathematics and achievement and improved attitudes towards mathematics”. Grouws and Cebulla (1999) also recommend that the small number of learners can increase the learners’ performance in doing numeracy.

Brombacher (2010) argues that when working with numbers, there are two kinds of counting. One kind of counting is called rote counting where the learner memorises the list of number names one after the other. With this kind of counting one cannot assume that the child knows his/her numbers. However, the teacher can assume that when the child is able to match the given objects with the correct numeral, then teacher can be able to give more work on counting like skipping other number to make a certain number sequence. This method of counting is referred to as rational counting.

Brombacher (2011) contends that when educators teach Mathematics in class, they should not solve problems for the learners. He maintains that teacher should be, “allowing children to be curious and to develop their skills in making sense of what they are doing when they get involved in problem solving activity.” This means that the learners will understand problem-solving issues if they are allowed to do them on their own and at their pace.

## **2.4 International and local perspectives**

To understand programmes that are put in place in order to improve the quality of teaching of Numeracy and Literacy in schools, I have looked at some of the programmes that have been developed internationally and locally. I thought that this would help me understand some of the ways in which different counties implement programmes that they use to improve the teaching of Numeracy and Literacy in their schools.

#### **2.4.1 International perspective**

According to Grouws and Cebulla (1999) there are non-profit bodies that are much concerned about the improvement of the learners' learning of Numeracy and Literacy. Some of these bodies are International Bureau of Education (IBE) founded in 1925, and the International Academy of Education (IAE) which was founded in 1986. The intention of developing IAE was to ensure that in all fields of education, excellence was maintained. Educational policies are implemented by different countries in different ways. These countries have different strategies of policy implementation to improve basic education in schools. Policy implementation in some countries has been successful in improving the learning of Numeracy and Literacy as the foundation for all children's learning.

Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntire and Demmers (2008) argue that the implementation of education policy has raised some concerns in the sense that the availability of instructional material to the educators who need to implement the policy is questionable. They also highlight the problem of large classes which makes it difficult for the teachers to teach effectively. The learners need individual attention, and it is not possible to attend to each learner when classes are large.

The Department of Education in the United Kingdom (UK) introduced the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy in 2001. The National Strategies is the programme that is used in the United Kingdom to improve the teaching of numeracy and literacy skills in primary schools. These strategies can be regarded as the equivalent of the Foundations for Learning in the context of South Africa. In terms of that programme, the teaching strategies are designed by the Department and the teachers have to follow what is laid down by the Department just as it is the case with the Foundations for Learning policy.

According to Brombacher (2009) educators felt helpless when they were in front of the learners while they were in the process of implementing the National Strategies for Literacy. This was because the National Strategies for Literacy had no flexibility. This means that it did not allow the educators to use their teaching skills when they were teaching in the classroom. In this case the learners' individual needs were not catered for and the dynamic educators could not divert from what was stipulated in the name of suiting learners' individual needs.

In response to the challenges of that policy implementation, it was announced in 2009 that the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy programme was to be phased out in 2011. Currently; schools are expected to make their own choices about what their learners need to learn as well as the methods of teaching it. This means that in 2011, the content that those learners learned was differentiated as each school would choose its own content that would suit the learners' needs and background. Learners from the same country would learn different content because the choice of content would be done at school level, and not by the Department at national level.

The gap in the National Strategies that is used in the United Kingdom is that it is silent on the question of how teachers are going to help the learners that are transferred into their schools. This is mainly because such learners would have been learning different contents in their previous schools and provinces. This has a potential to cause the learners to struggle if the quality of the content learnt in the previous school was poor when compared to that of the new school. Murutowa (2003) argues that although books are important learning resource materials, it is very important that they are supplemented with other learning materials.

In the Korean education system, they use books as the only source of information. This is regarded as the best method of teaching because it enhances the opportunities of gaining knowledge. Since the Koreans seem to rely more on the books for teaching, their students cannot be compared with the learners from countries that use different resources when teaching in the classroom. This could be problematic when books are not delivered to schools on time as it happens in South Africa.

One of the negative effects of focussing on books is that it encourages the learners to reproduce subject content and hence the learners cannot think beyond the textbook. In this way, it is possible that the learners become incompetent citizens when compared to the students from other countries. The positive effect about the use of the book as a resource is that the learners gain knowledge and skills that are also essential for effective learning. This also encourages the learners to read as one of the basis of their learning.

With regards to the Namibian education system, Murutowa (2003) asserts that the learners in Namibia are taught in their mother tongue. They only start learning English in Grade 3. This makes it difficult for the learners to understand English in their primary school learning especially because learners encounter problems in the learning of other subjects that are taught in English or any other second language for that matter. Similar scenarios exist in some areas of the country where children are taught in their mother tongue in the Foundation Phase and shift the language of teaching in the Intermediate Phase.

Some Black South African learners who pass Grade 3 and join Grade 4 class where foreign language is used, experience the problem of learning in that language. From Grade R to Grade 2, learners are only taught in their mother tongue. The first additional language is introduced in Grade 3 as a subject, and not as a medium of instruction. It is only recently that the Department



of Education encouraged schools to start introducing English (in the case of IsiZulu medium schools) from as early as Grade 1.

The reason for stressing the use of English language is that all other subjects are taught in English, and this makes it difficult for the children to understand these subjects if they do not understand English. The gap that has been found in the literature in and Grouws and Cebulla, (1999) Murutowa, (2003) and Rembe (2006 ) about Namibian curriculum is that it does not state how curriculum planners accommodate learners who have a problem in understanding English. The literature states that there is a shortage of books in schools that are located in the low socio-economic environment. However, what has been found challenging is that the government does not have any strategic plan to help learners in the affected schools to cope with the demanding syllabus.

#### **2.4.2 Local Perspectives**

There are many policies that the Department of Education in South Africa has put in place in order to improve quality of teaching and learning in schools. This is because the acquisition of reading, writing and counting skills has become a problem in South Africa. Among the policies, are the Foundations for Learning programme which is applicable as from Grade 1 to Grade 6. Pandor (2008) points out that Foundations for Learning programme is an extensive teaching and learning tool for understanding literacy and numeracy She further asserts that Literacy and Numeracy are the key learning areas in the Foundation Phase. This is because other learning areas that are taught in the Intermediate Phase are built on the foundation of numeracy and literacy.

#### **2.4.3 Provincial Strategies**

To examine how South Africa has tried to improve the teaching of Literacy and Numeracy in primary schools, I have looked at strategies that were adopted at national and provincial levels. This is because some provinces have designed their own strategies of improving teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase and, parallel to such strategies, there are others that are developed at national level. For example, the Western Cape Province has developed its own strategies of improving teaching and learning (Department of Education, 2011)

The Department of Education in the Western Cape has adopted a different approach in teaching Literacy and Numeracy in schools. Grant (2011) cited in Department of Education, (2011) believes that the Western Cape Province is leading the country in producing better results because the Department of Education in this province has its own way of improving the teaching and learning of Literacy and Numeracy. They conduct workshops and conferences throughout the year, focussing on the improvement of teaching Numeracy and Literacy in their schools. This is done because each and every province has different learning and teaching needs.

The Department of Education in Gauteng Province designed its own strategies of improving the teaching and learning of reading, writing and counting skills. These strategies were in line with the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grade R-9, Foundations for Learning Gazette no 30880 and the National Assessment Framework of 2008. This strategy is called Gauteng Primary Literacy Strategy (GPLS). This is the strategy that they have adopted in order to improve the teaching and learning of Literacy in this province.

The Foundations for Learning policy can be explained as a call by the government at national level for commitment to teaching and learning. It also aims at improving the basics of learning such as calculating, reading and writing. This is done in order to ensure that the country produces competent citizens (Department of Education, 2008). This policy targeted the Foundation Phase

and Intermediate Phase educators (Grade R to 6) in order to enforce numeracy and literacy skills in primary schools. The launch of the Foundations for Learning was in response to the systemic evaluation report (Department of Education, 2007). This evaluation report was about the pass rate which was below 50%; it also proved that most of the learners in South Africa could not read with understanding and write at their grade levels. The Foundations for Learning also includes an Assessment Booklet which gives the teachers a guideline on what tasks and activities to assess.

McKay (2010) cited in the Department of Education (2011) asserts that the Foundations for Learning campaign runs parallel to the KhariGude Mass Literacy campaign. KhariGude was introduced in 2008 as a way of enabling illiterate South Africans to become literate and be able to work with numbers. KhariGude was described as one of the strategies of helping all South African citizens that were unable to attend basic education in their primary school age. This campaign is operated in the mother tongue of the learner. Both KhariGude Mass Literacy campaign and the Foundations for Learning aim at promoting the teaching and learning to the basics of numeracy and literacy in South African schools.

The difference between the Foundations for Learning campaign and The KhariGude Literacy Mass campaign is that the target groups for The KhariGude Mass Literacy are the teenagers who dropped out of school before they could master reading and writing skills. Homeless people and adults who could not attend school at their primary school age were also targeted by this campaign. Contrary to this campaign, the Foundation for Learning was introduced for learners in the Foundation Phase to improve their reading writing and counting skills. The advantage of these two campaigns is that they can support each other. Adults who are attending KhariGude classes can be able to help their children with reading skills. This may help both the children and their parents to improve their reading skills. The FFL policy is implemented from Grade R- to Grade 6. It is hoped that if the programme is successfully implemented, learners would be able to read by the time they reach Grade 6.

It is not always the way of teaching that affects the implementation of the programme. Rather, there are other factors that affect implementation. These include the way that the programme is designed, and the lack of understanding, due to insufficient training, on the side of the implementers (Gonzalez, Brown & Slate, 2008). The lack of relevant resources also affects the implementation of the programme (Greenfield, 1995). When a policy is not well implemented, then the results of the expected outcome are not achieved (Ashby, 2008). For every policy to be successfully implemented, it needs all the stakeholders to work collaboratively (Langford, 2003).

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

The theory that this study is based on is the policy implementation analysis theory. This theory suggests that implementing a policy is not an easy process. This is because policy designers cannot predict what implementers will do at the point of implementation (McLaughlin, 1987). People who are responsible for the implementation of policy sometimes resist change. This can result in a policy implementation failure as there would be no link between policy and practice. The achievement of policy objectives is dependent on policy implementers who may accept or reject change. Durlak and Dupre (2008) argue that research has focused on effectiveness of the intervention and neglected the effectiveness of the implementation process. When designing a policy there are factors that need to be taken into consideration such as pressure, support and motivation (Fullen, 1986). McLaughlin (1987) argues that the two main factors that influence implementation are capacity and will.

Capacity, in the context of implementation, involves the workshops that are offered to build capacity of the people who will be involved in the implementation. Vince Whitman (2005) argues that capacity building is more than training; it also includes human development where

individuals are equipped with knowledge and skills, and they are enabled to access information. Will is the second factor that affects implementation.

*Will* in the implementation includes attitude, beliefs and motivation of people who are implementing the policy (McLaughlin, 1987). Large sums of money can be spent to capacitate people but this depends on the implementers' willingness to change. It is not easy for the policy designers to deal with willingness of the policy implementers because it is a factor that is within an individual. This view is supported by Durlak and Dupre (2008) who say that the level of implementation affects the outcome obtained in the programme.

*Capacity* and *will* are relevant factors that influence policy implementation for this study. This is because when educators are trained, they get capacitated and the will factor emerges from those training programmes. If educators do not get proper training to implement new policy, their will factor will be disturbed. When capacity and will factors are catered for, then policy implementation will be less difficult.

When implementing an educational programme, one has to consider external factors such as the environment, community values where the institution is built. Children, born in a certain community that is not developing, cannot behave or grasp what is taught at the same speed with those children from developing areas (Gold, 2005). This arises because, in most cases, developed communities have proved to have provided better resources that enhance children's learning compared to undeveloped communities (Kurland, 2000).

Greenfield (1995), cited in Vince Whitman (2005), contends that during the first level of implementation teachers' skills drop. If the teachers do not get enough training before

implementing the new programme, they are likely not to change from what they are doing. This could be the reason that makes it difficult to implement new policies. This arises because educators have to drop their usual practices in order to embrace new policies. Fixten, Naom, Blasé and Friedman (2005, p. 5) describe the policy implementation “as a set of specified activities designed to put into practice”. Vince Whitman (2005) argues that when implementing a programme, sometimes there is a need to attend to external factors. In the implementation of Foundations for Learning policy, learners’ socio-economic background could be one of the external factors that can enhance or hinder the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy in schools.

Some programmes that need to be implemented are affected by the way in which they are delivered to the agents of change (Durlak & Dupre, 2008). In the case of the implementation of Foundations for Learning policy, the agents of change are the educators. Clarke (2010) argues that pupils can do well if their teachers are supported by the department with on-going professional training in the teaching of their learning area. Learners who have learning problems also need to be provided with additional programme to support them.

It is therefore important for the teachers to understand the content as well as methods of teaching a particular learning area and also that they are able to change the methods according to the learners’ needs. This can be attained through training workshops and professional development, especially when there is a new programme to be implemented. It is also important that programmes that are implemented allow teachers to demonstrate their teaching skills so that they can feel that they are indeed agents of change. It is not stated as to, at what point do the teachers need to intervene in the children’s mathematical thinking and their intuitive problems are not addressed. Some writers such as (McLaughlin, (1987), Greenfield, (1995) and Rembe (2006) mention that other countries have used their curriculum for many decades. Problems with the curriculum were also stipulated but we are not given solutions or plans to solve those problems.

## **2.6 Leadership and implementation of education policy**

Leadership styles and teamwork can play an important role in the implementation of policies in schools. This is because new policies may not be effectively implemented when leaders are not adequately trained. The leadership styles are crucial for leaders to work with their colleagues in policy implementation. Working together as a team may help in effective policy implementing. This is because educators might not understand the policy in the same way and at the same pace. When educators are working together they can be in a better position to improve themselves, and to be future leaders by taking a lead in the discussion of new issues about the policy.

## **2.7 Motivation and policy implementation**

Schunk, Pintrich and Meere (2008) argue that motivation of educators will always enhance the implementation of education policies. Schunk, Pintrich, and Meere (2008 p. 235) define motivation as, “a process whereby goal directed activity is instigated and sustained”. When educators implement new education policies, they also need to be motivated so that they can work harder. Motivation is essential to the learners and the parents who are also part of policy implementation. Although educators, learners and parents get confused when changes occur, there will always be a need for motivation so that policy implementation can be a success.

## **2.8 Learning Opportunities**

Every learner can learn if the learning opportunities are provided by the educational institutions and the community. Sykes, Schneider and Plank (2009) contend that in some instances, learners are viewed as failures and yet learning opportunities are not given to them. Learners, in some

countries that provide learning opportunities, excel as opposed to learners in countries which do not provide similar opportunities. Some authors such as Grouws and Cebulla (1999) recommend that the small number of learners can increase their performance in Numeracy. This is because educators can be able to develop and support a group of learners according to their needs.

According to van der Westhuizen (2007), learners' prior learning is very important in the learning process. Learners' previous knowledge, as well as their experience, helps teachers to understand what learners know and what they still need to know. This is also applicable to the teachers where their experience in the teaching profession helps them to survive whenever they are faced with problems of misunderstanding the policy. Some teachers take some time to fully understand a policy; they continue doing the work by using some of aspects of the new the policy and use what they know to teach so that time is not wasted. Clissold (2004) argues that when educators are teaching, whether Literacy or and Numeracy, they need to intervene before much damage is done because they should be laying the foundation. My view is that this will be possible when educators are provided learning opportunities.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In view of the literature that was reviewed and presented in the sections above, I have learnt that it is important for the curriculum planners of each every country to consider the needs of the country before designing the curriculum. The next chapter discusses the methodology that was used to collect data and to analyse it



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research design, methodology and methods that were used in conducting the study. The aim of this study was to explore how the Foundations for Learning policy was implemented in two schools of Umlazi District in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This is qualitative study, and as such, various qualitative methods of collecting data were used in order to understand how Foundations for Learning policy was implemented in the selected schools. This chapter focuses on the methodology that was used to answer the research questions which focuses on how the Foundations for learning policy was implemented in schools.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Monette *et al* (2008) when researchers collect data for the research projects, they need to think more deeply about the nature of the research in order to choose an appropriate research design, method, instruments and setting. Monnette *et al.* (2008) further contend that the research design gives all the necessary details about how the researcher will go about conducting the research project. Choosing the participants also depends on what is being studied and the type of information that is needed for the research project. They argue that researchers can use a number of approaches when conducting a study but the mostly used are qualitative and quantitative approaches.

In this study, I used a qualitative research approach. Corbin and Strauss (2008) argue that one of the reasons that make researchers use the qualitative approach is that it enables them to understand the experiences of the participants. This also helps researchers to understand the formation of the meaning by using the participants' culture.

In qualitative research the aim is to “produce rounded contextual understanding of the basis of the rich nuanced detailed data” (Mason, 2002, p.3). The qualitative research “is an interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary and sometimes counter disciplinary field. It cuts cross the humanities and the social sciences and it is also a range of research strategies that rely upon non-mathematical judgments” (Denzin& Lincoln, 2008, p.10).

McEwan and McEwan (2003) contend that the quality of the qualitative research is that it is naturalistic and descriptive in nature and that is one of the reasons researchers sometimes observe the research setting in order to explain and give details of their findings. If the researcher decided not to use observation as a tool of collecting data, the interviews are used to get information from the people who could have been observing the research setting.

This study was located within the interpretive paradigm. For researchers to understand a phenomenon, they need to view it at different places and from their different aspects (Heining, Gravett& Van Rensberg, 2005).Maree (2007) states that people's interpretation is also influenced by what they know as their experiences and how they attach meaning to those experiences. The reason for choosing an interpretive paradigm is that qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities. People's understanding of reality depends on how they attach meaning to their situation, and therefore, depend on the subjectivity of the person (Maree, 2007).

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In the implementation of the Foundations for Learning programme in schools, the educators are part of the event which, in this case, is its implementation. However, it is possible for them to have different meanings and understandings of the Foundations for Learning policy although they work in the same environment.

### **3.3 Target population**

Two primary schools in the Umlazi District were targeted for participation in the study. The reason for choosing the two schools was based on convenience and easy access as I was teaching in the same area. These two schools were located in the same ward as mine. The schools admitted learners that came, largely from the informal settlements in the area. Both schools had a large population of African learners that were taught in English, which in fact was their second language or first additional language, as they are now called. In School-A there is only one educator who could speak IsiZulu while in School-B there was no educator who could speak IsiZulu, which was the learners' home language. In both schools, Literacy and Numeracy was taught, and I wanted to find out if the educators encountered any problems regarding these Learning Areas.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) contend that it is not possible for the researchers to gather information from the whole population that is being studied as that can be too expensive and the study may never be finished. Therefore, a representation of a wider population is therefore drawn up where many participants can be involved. This representation of participants is called sampling (Cresswell, 2008). Monnette, Sullivan and De Jonge (2008) describe sampling as a technical way of choosing a smaller group of people to represent the whole population.

In the context of this study, purposive sampling was used as a method of identifying the two primary schools. Purposive sampling was deemed suitable for the study because qualitative

researchers do not seek to draw up a representative sample due to the fact that no generalisation of the findings is intended. Choosing the Foundation Phase educators was appropriate because they were the first people to implement the Foundations for Learning policy (Monette, Sullivan & De Jonge, 2008). Foundation Phase educators were the first ones to understand the way in which milestones work in the implementation of the Foundations for learning policy. They had the experience of implementing this policy more than any other educators in the two primary schools.

### **3.4 Research Setting**

Fetterman (1998), cited in Creswell (2008) defines research setting as the situation or the environment that surround the cultural group being studied and it is the interrelation of factors of the social group such as their history, their beliefs, politics, as well as, their environment. There are many factors that can affect the research setting. Some of the factors can be peoples' behaviours and their attitudes towards the research project. In the context of this research teachers may have unhelpful attitude when asked about the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy if they do not understand it. What was common among the participating schools was that both school primary schools started from Grade 1 to Grade 7.

I visited School-A in the morning to make the appointment, and I was warmly received by the principal. I was told that some of the educators also taught in the Intermediate Phase. We both agreed to meet with them at any day after 13:30 in order to avoid the disruption of teaching. To make an appointment to meet the educators on a Friday at 13:30, I phoned the principal. On the same day, I faxed the questions to the educators to enable them to browse through them before our discussions.

When I came on the scheduled date, I found that the school had closed earlier than its usual time because only a few learners had turned up that day. The reason for poor attendance was that most schools had applied for the two days leave for the days which were between the public holidays. Although this school had decided not to take those two days, learner attendance was poor because most learners that attend other schools did not attend.

One Monday I made another appointment for Thursday of that week. When I arrived at the school as arranged, the principal had gone to collect the school cheque book. I was warmly received by one of the educators from the Intermediate Phase. He gave me a rundown of what was happening in that school, such as the drop in learner enrolment, learner behaviour, as well as, the delays made by the DoE to place promoted teachers in their posts.

### **3.5 Gaining access**

To conduct the study I requested the permission from the gatekeepers but more details are discussed under ethical issue section. I asked them for permission to record focus group interviews. I explained that participating in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time without giving me explanation.

### **3. 6. Methods of gathering data**

Research methods are explained as devices that researchers use to collect relevant data to the research project (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). In the qualitative study the common research methods that are used to collect data are, observation and interviews and focus group discussion. There is no research method that is better than the other but the use of research method depends on what the researcher wants to know as well as the type of the participants that will be used for the research project (Sommeck and Lewin (2005)). Some methods are not suitable for certain participants. For example, a researcher cannot use questionnaires for illiterate participants and young children.

In this study I used semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and document reviews as methods of gathering data. Semi-structured interviews are described as ways of exchanging information between the researcher and the participants (Monette, Sullivan & De Jonge, 2008).

### **3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Monette, *et al* (2008) describe semi-structured interviews as a social relationship that is designed to exchange information between interviewer and the participants. The interviewer needs to use his or her own skills and creativity to manage the relationship that he or she has created in the interview process in order to get the quality of information that he or she needs to get.

I decided to conduct the interviews in person with the HODs because they were in the position to provide information regarding the implementation of Foundations for Learning in their schools.- I also took some field notes while interviewing the participants. When taking the notes, I would, among other things, be writing about the environment, educators' gestures and expression. These field notes would be used when doing data analysis. Semi-structured interviews focused on the challenges that they faced when implementing the policy; resources that they used, and the support that they got from the department officials

Some of the questions that were prepared for focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews were largely similar although there were a few that were specifically designed for the HODs. This is because the HODs and the teachers in a department do more or less the same work; the only difference is that the HODs do the management duties in addition. This therefore, means that there were questions that were prepared for management issues and which needed to be answered by the members of the management only.

I conducted semi- structured interviews with both the HODs of School-A and School-B. I conducted the interviews in the rooms which were quiet and conducive to holding interviews. The HOD in School- A had prepared herself well for the interview. She told me that when she read my interview questions, there were issues that made her think deeply about the purpose of the policy. She felt that there was still a lot that needed to be done in order to improve the quality of teaching in schools.

What I noticed about that the HOD in School-B is that she had written all the responses in a piece of paper and that made our interview to be faster than I had thought. It took less than thirty minutes to finish the interview. It was about time for the teachers to leave. I thanked her for her contribution and support as she had organised the teachers to take part in the study. She was kind enough to allow us to continue when other colleagues had gone. This interview also lasted for about an hour.

### **3.6.2 Focus group discussion**

To get information from the Foundation Phase educators, I used focus group discussion. Anderson (1996), cited in Wilkson and Bermingham (2003) describe focus groups as a carefully planned, moderated, informal discussion when one's ideas are bounced off another's. This creates a chain of reaction of information dialogue with the purpose of addressing a specific topic in-depth and in a comfortable environment. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2004) describe focus group discussion as a way of collecting data in an inter-subjective experience. They claim that inter-subjective experience is an experience that is shared by people living in the area.

Focus group discussion was used to collect data among the 4 Foundation Phase educators from School-A and 6 Foundation Phase educators from School-B. Foundation Phase HODs of both schools were not involved in the focus group discussion, but were interviewed separately. Foundation Phase educators were chosen because of their experience, knowledge and understanding of the implementation of the Foundation for Learning policy in schools. The Foundation Phase HODs were also chosen because of their experience in supervising educators in their respective departments

I decided to use focus group discussion with the Foundation Phase teachers because they are from the same school, have more or less the same experiences, strategies and challenges when implementing the Foundations for Learning policy. It would have been a waste of time to interview them one by one when they could discuss it together. In focus group discussion with participants working in the same institution, one is likely to get one and the same information.

I used focus group discussion in order to create a relaxed atmosphere so that they would feel free to discuss and raise their concerns, if any. As a school management team member of the neighbouring school, I wanted to be at their level. I did not want them to look at me as a person who was there to interrogate them. I became part of the group discussion. I made sure that the seating is informal. In School-A 4 educators constituted the focus group while in School-B 6 educators were involved in a focus group.

I designed my group discussion questions in more or less the same way I had with the questions for the HODs. The group discussion also started from general to specific questions. The purpose of doing this was to break the ice before getting to serious discussions. I used empirical questions when conducting focus group discussion. Moulton (2001), cited in Stephens (2009), defines empirical questions as those questions that researchers use to enquire about real life. I used it in a



descriptive case study where teachers would describe how they implemented the Foundations for Learning policy.

Focus of the focus group discussion was based on the understanding of the implementation of the policy and the resources that they needed in order to implement the policy. Questions asked were based on the educators' state of readiness to implement the policy, training that they went through before implementing the policy as well as, the effectiveness of the policy implementation. Other questions focused on the challenges that educators faced when implementing the Foundation for Learning policy. Focus group discussion with the 4 educators in School- A lasted for an hour.

While we were busy with the discussion the bus came to collect the learners who made a lot of noise as it was their time to go home. At the same time other educators were moving up and down as they were also preparing to leave for home. She explained that this group discussion would contribute to the development of the Foundation Phase teachers. I recorded our discussion so that an accurate record of the discussions could be kept. The discussion went on very well; the teachers gave one another a chance to speak, which made it easier for the discussion to flow good. The discussion was only disturbed by the ringing of the siren, signalling that it was time for the learners to go home.

The discussion time was a bit shorter as it lasted for about 45 minutes. This is because there was a lot of agreement among the educators as they shared similar experiences and challenges. When the discussion was over, I thanked them for their time and their contribution towards this study.

### **3.6.3 Documents review**

I reviewed documents from the Head of Department of each school. The documents that were reviewed were the learners' books, teachers' files, the phase meeting minute book and the summary of results of the Annual National Assessments from 2008 to 2010. The reason for using these documents was to compare the data that was to be collected using interviews and focus group discussion.

### **3.7 Trustworthiness**

To ensure that there is trustworthiness, I cross-checked data by comparing data that was found in the artefact collection for example minutes of the meetings, school documents, letters and other school correspondence. I also did a cross-check of the elicited data between the participants at the interview for example, and the group discussion that was conducted with the educators and the HODs. I compared responses from all educators with those of their HODs as a way of validating the data collected.

To foster triangulation in this study, I triangulated the methods and the participants. Singleton and Straits (1999) describe triangulation as situation where two or more dissimilar methods to measure what the researcher wants to measure. Richards and Morse (2002, p. 76) says "Triangulation refers to the way of gaining multiple perspectives through completed studies that have been conducted on the same topic and directly address each other's findings". In this study, triangulation occurred first, through various methods that were used to ensure that every possible data were gathered. Second, it occurred through getting information about the Foundation for Learning, from two HODs and Foundation Phase educators were interviewed. The HODs and teachers were able to give their own stories about the implementation of the Foundations for learning. I was therefore able to contrast and compare the data from the different participants

Validity means that the state of being true. Gravetter and Forzano (2009) describe validity in research as the accuracy of results of what was researched. Sommeck and Lewin (2005) describe validity as the genuineness of the research instrument that it has measured what it was supposed to measure. In order to get the valid data, researchers should be aware that validity requires an accurate presentation of data (Morse & Richards, 2002). This actually means that the researchers should and make sure that they are driving their studies to the goal that they want to achieve by doing that particular study.

Gravetter and Forzano (2009) argue that there is internal validity and external validity. Internal validity is described as the situation where the research study produces a single and unambiguous explanation. I decided that internal validity is suitable for the study since the goal of the study is to obtain the cause and effect. In this study one of the questions is about the effect of implementing Foundations for learning policy on teaching and learning. I collected data from two schools about the implementation of the Foundations for Learning in school. The discussion was recorded and transcribed. I made copies and gave them to the participants to read all what was discussed to check if there were any errors in the transcripts.

### **3.8 Ethical issues**

According to Lohor (1995), cited in Barbie (2007), there are questions that researchers need to ask themselves before starting the research. These questions are meant to correct mistakes that often take place in the research process. As a researcher, I made my participants to be aware of their rights. For example, they were made aware that they were not forced to take part in the study. I was also cautious that the study would not cause any harm to the subject.

Barbie and Mouton (2006); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007); Kimmel (2007) describe the ethical issues as moral rules of behaviour that need to be considered before the study can be

conducted. These authors' advice to the researchers is that, it is important that before a study could be conducted, permission should be granted to the researchers. Research ethics is defined as the responsibility of the researchers to be honest and respectful to all individuals who are affected by the research study (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). They further say "researchers are usually governed by a set of ethical guidelines that assist them to make proper decisions and choose proper actions" (Gravette & Forzano, p.594).

For ethical reasons, before I started doing the study, I sought permission from the gatekeepers, that is, the Department of Education in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the principals of the two schools where I intended to conduct the study, seeking permission to conduct the research. I also wrote to the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ethical Committee to approve my research problem, methodology, instruments and the entire process for compliance with ethical conduct. I also wrote letters to individual participants requesting them to take part in this study.

Maree and van der Westhuizen (2007) suggest that confidentiality and identity of participants are important aspects of ethical aspect in conducting the research. I respected the participants' confidentiality and autonomy. I made it clear that the participants' names and that of their respective institutions would remain anonymous, and that fictitious names would be used to protect the identities of individuals and the institutions. I also visited the schools to introduce the study and left the interview schedules with the principals and the HODs in order to give them to educators who were going to take part in the study.

### **3.9 Limitations of the Study**

The study was conducted in two schools in the Umlazi District, and therefore, the findings cannot be generalised throughout the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the design and methodology that was used in collecting the data that would help us understand the educators' experiences of implementing Foundations for Learning policy in the two schools. This was a qualitative study that was located

within the interpretive paradigm. A detailed description is also provided about all the steps that were followed in carrying out the research. The next chapter presents the actual data that was collected using the methods that have been described in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTING VOICES OF EDUCATORS AND HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented a detailed discussion of the methodology that was used to collect data on the implementation of the Foundations for Learning Policy (FFL) in two schools. This chapter presents data that was collected from the two schools. Ten educators were involved in group discussion, that is, 4 educators from School-A and 6 educators from School-B. Interviews were conducted with two HODs from both schools. The actual words of the participants were used as evidence of their views regarding their experiences of implementing the Foundations for Learning policy in their respective schools. Before discussing the issues that emerged from the data I would like to present the schools' profiles of the two schools and those of the participants.

#### **Profiling school A**

School-A was established in 1967 and is situated in Chatsworth Township. It is former Indian school which now admits learners from all racial groups as a result of a new democratic dispensation in South Africa. Although the school was established more than 45 years ago, its buildings are still in good condition. There are about 20 classrooms. The school has an administration block which consists of offices for management members, a staff room and a library. The learner enrolment stands at less than 200 learners and are mostly African. The staff complement consists of seven educators. Two of these educators are paid by the School Governing Body (SGB). There are 2 male Indian and 3 female teachers. The other 2 female

teachers are African, and of the 2 African teachers, one is a South African and the other is a foreign national. There is only 1 HOD is also acting as a school principal.

The school offers all the subjects that are contained in the South African curriculum for primary schools. The medium of instruction is English from Grade 1 to Grade 7. This is despite the fact that most of the learners in this school are African. The school has a security guard who also works as a cleaner, and is paid by the SGB.

#### *Profiling the HOD-A*

The HOD-A is a female of 46 years of age. She completed both her primary and secondary school education in Chatsworth. Her highest qualification is a Bachelors' degree in education. She is a well experienced teacher in the Foundation phase. She also teaches in the Intermediate phase. She is acting as a HOD in the Foundation Phase because the school enrolment is low.

#### *Profiling Sharon*

Sharon is an Indian female teacher of 47 years of age. She too completed both her primary and secondary school education in Chatsworth. Her highest qualification is a Junior Primary and teaches in the Foundation Phase.

#### *Profiling Mimmie*

Mimmie is an African female teacher of 39 years of age. She completed both her primary and secondary school education in the Umlazi Township. Her highest qualification is a Higher Diploma in Education. She is current studying towards a Bachelors Degree in education and teaches in the Foundation Phase.

#### *Profiling Connie*

Connie is a female teacher of 37 years of age. She completed her primary and secondary school education in Kenya, her mother country. She resigned as a teacher and came to South Africa for better job opportunities. She teaches in the Foundation Phase, and is paid by the SGB. She is unfamiliar with the system of education in South Africa. She is not studying to further her education, nor has she attended any workshop that is organised by the Department but she is learning from other teachers in school.

#### *Profiling Patience*

Patience is a female teacher of 55 years of age. She grew up in Umhlathuzana area in Chatsworth and completed her primary and secondary school education in Chatsworth. Her highest qualification is a Bachelors degree in Education. She is an experienced educator in the teaching in a primary school and teaches in the Foundation Phase. She attended most of the workshops in educational changes that have taken place.

#### **Profiling School-B**

School-B is a Section 21 that was established in 1968 to cater for Indian learners only but now admits learners from all racial groups. Because it is a Section 21 school, means that the funds that it gets from the government go directly to the school's account. The school has about 29 classrooms. Some of the classrooms are built on the ground floor while other room are on the first floor. The school has an administration block which consists of management offices. There are about 500 learners in the school.

The school has a male principal, a male deputy principal 2 HODs and 15 teachers. Two educators are employed by the SGB. The school is from Grade R to Grade 7. The overwhelming majority of the learners in the school are African with only two Grade 7 learners are Indian. Most of the educators teaching in this school are Indian and only the principal and a Grade R teacher are African.

### *Profiling the HOD-B*

The HOD is a female of 52 years of age. She completed her primary and secondary school education in the Scottburgh area. Her highest qualification is a PTD (Primary Teachers Diploma). She is active in professional development activities; she organises workshops for her staff members so that they are developed on curriculum change issues. She also teaches in the Foundation Phase.

### *Profiling Lucy*

Lucy is a female teacher of 48 years of age. She completed her primary and secondary school education in Phoenix, where she grew up. Her highest qualification is a Bachelors degree in education. She is an experienced educator in the teaching in a primary school, and teaches in the Foundation Phase. She has attended most of the workshops in educational changes that have taken place.

### *Profiling Kim*

Kim is a female teacher of 40 years of age. She completed her primary and secondary school education in Chatsworth. Her highest qualification is a Bachelors degree in education. She is an experienced educator in the teaching in a primary school and teaches in the Foundation Phase.

### *Profiling Prim*

Prim is a female teacher of 36 years of age. She completed her primary and secondary school education in Phoenix, where she grew up. Her highest qualification is a Bachelors degree in education. She is an experienced educator in the teaching in a primary school, and teaches in the Foundation Phase. She has attended most of the workshops in educational changes that have taken place.

### *Profiling Sue*



Sue is a female teacher of 38 years of age. She completed her primary and secondary school education in Phoenix, where she grew up. Her highest qualification is a Bachelors degree in education. She is an experienced educator in the teaching in a primary school, and teaches in the Foundation Phase. She has attended most of the workshops in educational changes that have taken place.

#### *Profiling Aretha*

Aretha is a female teacher of 51 years of age. She completed her primary and secondary school education at Isipingo, where she grew up. Her highest qualification is Bachelors degree in education. She is an experienced educator in the teaching in a primary school, and teaches in the Foundation Phase. She has attended all the workshops on educational changes that have been organised by both the Department of Education and her HOD in her school.

#### *Profiling Lorraine*

Lorraine is a female teacher of 36 years of age. Sue is a female teacher of 38 years of age. She completed her primary and secondary school education in Mobeni Heights, where she grew up. Her highest qualification is a Bachelors degree in education. She is an experienced educator in the teaching in a primary school, and teaches in the Foundation Phase. She has attended most of the workshops in educational changes that have taken place.

## **4.2 Data Analysis**

Educators and their respective schools were given pseudonyms in this report as a way of protecting their identities. For example, School-A has been used to refer to the first school and School-B to refer to the second school. The false names were also given to educators from Schools-A, and were Sharon, Mimmie, Connie and Patience. The 6 educators from School-B were given the following names: Lucy, Kim, Prim, Sue, Aretha and Lorraine. HOD-A and HOD-B were the names given to HODs of School-A and School-B respectively.

The two schools that participated in the study served poor communities in a township around Durban. In an informal discussion educators reported that most of the parents, whose children attended these schools, were unemployed and some were employed as domestic workers in the area. Some of these learners were orphans who lost their parents largely due to HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Content analysis method was used to analyse the data. I used this method to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of text. Usually researchers quantify and analyse the presence of meaning and the relationships of such words, then make certain inferences about the message within the text (Henning, Gravett & van Rensburg, 2005). Text can be broadly defined as books, minutes of meetings, essays, interviews, discussions, newspapers and articles, historical documents speeches and conversations (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2004). Krippendorff (2004) argues that content analysis is potentially one of the most research techniques. Steve (2001) also shares similar views about it, and claims that content analysis allows many researchers to sift through large volumes of data with ease and in a systematic way. Furthermore, content analysis can be a useful technique for allowing researchers to uncover and describe the main focus of individuals, group and institutional (Krippendorff (2004). The advantage is that it allows inferences to emerge which can then be triangulated using other methods of data collection. Hence, I have used content analysis in this research.

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Furthermore, content analysis was deemed relevant for the study because I collected data through the use of interviews and this method works well with this type of data (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2004). There coded data was transcribed verbatim. In my analysis, I looked for common words and gave them the specific codes. I put the different codes into categories and called them themes. The following section presents the themes that emerged from the analysis of data.

### **4.3 Emerging themes from the data**

The data generated from both school was analysed and grouped into themes. The following themes emerged from the data, and they are: Significance of policy; Policy influencing their teaching; Policy implementation process; Support from managers and officials; Resources used in the implementation; Policy impact on teaching and learning; Challenges in the policy implementation.

#### **4.3.1 Significance of Policy**

When the ten educators discussed the significance of proper policy implementation in the schools, they emphasised the need for a clear understanding of what policy is all about. This aspect is important for them because educators are implementers of policy. When educators were asked about the significance of the Foundations for Learning policy, it became clear that educators viewed the policy as significance in different ways. Some educators believed that it was meant to help the teachers in their teaching and other activities such as planning, teaching and assessment of learners. However, others looked at it as a way of helping educators to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Educators believed that the Foundations for Learning Policy may eventually impact on learners' reading, writing and the understanding of Mathematics.

Sharon, a Grade 3 educator in School-A, stressed that by saying:

*Foundations for Learning is a procedure to be followed. When it was introduced to us, we were told that we had to strictly follow it. It gives a clear break down of what we have to teach each term.*

Sharon believed that the Foundations for Learning Policy laid down the procedures for teachers to follow in their teaching. The educators who held the point view were apprehensive about the

role of the Foundations for Learning policy because they were told to strictly stick to these guidelines. This sounded like a top down approach in teaching. However, she stated that the assessment tasks were clearly written down in the Foundations for Learning Policy document. Educators gave me an impression that they were satisfied with it thus had a positive attitude towards the Foundation for Learning policy document, which they regarded as useful.

Mimmie, another educator who taught Grade 2 in School-A, contradicted what was said by her colleague when she stated that FFL policy was only a guide that had to be implemented with some element of discretion. Sharon also echoed a similar view by stressing that the educators' implementation of the Foundations for Learning Policy depended on the level of learners' intelligence. Educators had to take note of where the learners were in terms of their capabilities and performance. She added that the Foundations for Learning Policy was just like a syllabus that has to be followed, and the learners progressed, depending on the educator's initiatives and creativity. Mimmie also believed that the Foundations for Learning Policy presented guidelines for the educators to understand how they can go about achieving the milestones for the term. She further stated that the given number of milestones in the Mathematics, it is evident that teaching it cannot be completed within a term. She stressed this by saying:

*There many milestones that need to e completed in one term. This makes us to rush without considering whether each milestone has been achieved or not*

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All three educators from School-A and some educators from School-B, believed that the policy was good and that it was some kind of a framework or guidelines which teachers could follow in order to improve their teaching of Literacy and Numeracy. All the educators from School-A agreed that the Foundations for Learning Policy helped them in planning and assessing for their learners' work. They felt that it made their work easier because they had to merely follow the procedures thus achieving the required milestones. Another educator in School-B expressed positive comments about the policy, stating that it was a good thing to have because its

implementation was national and that all educators would teach the same concept at the specified time.

Kim, a teacher from School- B, had a different view about this policy. She mentioned that the Foundations for Learning Policy did not cater for her learners. She stressed this by saying:

*“All my learners are isiZulu speaking children. The policy is in English and English is their second language”.*

She expressed reservations about the policy itself, saying that she had to basically teach English before she could teach mathematical concepts. Furthermore, she had to first explain the questions, instructions and procedures in English. To her, a Mathematics lesson had become an English lesson. Lorraine said that she liked the Foundations for Learning Policy, but also cautioned that it was not suitable for her children because they did not understand English which is the language of teaching. This made it difficult for these learners to understand the concepts. The children at her school were performing at a much lower level in terms of literacy and numeracy. The teachers acknowledged that schools faced a number of challenges and that the learners' performance depended on the context within which the policy is implemented.

The HODs' understanding of Foundations for Learning was a bit different from those of the educators in their departments. When comparing the two HODs understanding of the Foundations for Learning policy, they mentioned that their understanding of the policy mostly dependant on their experiences in the phase, as well as their mentoring and supervisory skills. HOD-A was not a fully appointed HOD; she was acting in the post. She expressed that by saying:

*I am in the acting capacity as an HOD and I have no knowledge of the Foundation Phase content. I got help from the neighbouring schools' HODs. I think I gained a lot of information from those HODs.*

The HOD-B explained that the Foundations for Learning policy was introduced as results of the systemic evaluation of Numeracy and Literacy which was conducted worldwide. The systemic evaluation results showed that Numeracy and Literacy results were very poor in South Africa and the Foundations for Learning Policy was then developed and gazetted. According to HOD-B, the Foundations for Learning policy was a four year campaign which consequently had subjected the learners to the Annual National Assessment exercise. She provided more explanations by saying that the milestones and the learning outcomes were designed to serve as a benchmark to monitor learners' progress in the learning of Numeracy and Literacy.

In view of the information presented by the educators and the HODs, it became clear that some of them did not give full details of the policy background but that they did understand the purpose of the Foundations for Learning Policy. All educators that participated in this study believed that it was a policy that gave them some direction in terms of their teaching. This meant that the teachers accepted the Foundations for Learning Policy but some experienced challenges during the implementation process. Some of the challenges that they raised were that the learners still experienced difficulties with regards to their reading, writing and counting skills. This is despite the fact that the Foundations for Learning policy had been implemented in schools.

#### **4.3.2 Policy influencing teaching**

Before the FFL policy was launched in 2008, educators taught Mathematics and Literacy without drilling the learners on basic mathematical and reading skills as it was emphasised in the old curriculum. In the old curriculum, reading, writing and counting were regarded as important areas that had to be considered in order for the learners to progress to the next grade. During the implementation of the C2005, reading was not the only criteria for progression, but values and

attitudes were also used in order to promote the learners to the next grade. This seemed to have decreased interest in reading among the learners in the Foundation Phase.

In response to the problem of learners who seemed to be unable to read, educators had to set aside time that had to be used for teaching reading and counting skills. When educators were asked whether or not the policy had influenced their teaching, they all responded affirmatively. In School-A for instance, all 4 educators indicated that the Foundations for learning policy was assisting them to achieve their teaching goals. Sharon even remarked that her children performed well in the Annual National Assessments (ANA) which were conducted at the beginning of 2011. She stated that she applied the policy and it had enabled her to teach well. In this regard this is what she said:

*The most important reason for producing good results in ANA is that I prepare my learners thoroughly and in accordance with the Foundations for Learning policy document.*

The experiences expressed in the above paragraph were shared by other educators as well. In School-B for instance, some of the educators explained that the policy had not been fully implemented, and therefore minimally influenced their teaching. However, Sue and Patience expressed similar sentiments to those of educators from School-A about whether or not Foundations for Learning policy was influencing their teaching. On the same issue, some educators indicated that they experienced difficulties in implementing the Foundations for Learning Policy. Hence, it did not meet their teaching goals. Kim stated that the Foundations for Learning Policy did not meet her set goals as an educator. She explained the following:

*I am definitively not achieving my goals with my Grade R class that I am teaching. We start with the basics in Grade R but the requirements are too advanced. In the first term the learners are expected to write numbers and letters. The learners in my class are*

*unable even to hold the pencil. Then, how can you expect them to write the letter A? With Grade R's, this is a definitely, no!*

Lucy, another educator from School-B, also indicated that there were difficulties in implementing the Foundations for Learning policy. She highlights the following:

*With the Grade Ones that I am teaching, I had lots of problems because we have learners that did not go to Grade R. We also have new children and they are not ready. Their state of readiness takes a long time. In fact one child is still doing readiness work. He cannot even hold the pencil.*

According to HOD-A, the Foundations for Learning policy was influencing her teaching in her school. The environments where learners came from really affected the educators' goals in School-A. If learners were able to understand English, teachers could have made remarkable progress within reasonable time. In School-A, educators had to drill the learners on spoken language so that it could be easier for them to understand when the actual concepts in specific learning areas were taught. Similarly, the HOD-B explained that the Foundations For Learning policy was barely meeting the set goals. She said that the reason for this was that the goals also were far-fetched, she stressed that by saying the following:

*When they plan the Foundations For Learning, I think they do it nationally, they really do not consider what is happening at grassroots. You will also find that how a school performs depends on the demographics of the school. If you are at where our school is situated, the medium of instruction which is English and we are catering for isiZulu speaking learners, that creates a problem.*



She thought that the reason for the Foundations for Learning policy not to be effective in influencing their teaching, was that the policy designers had planned it nationally without taking into consideration local conditions of different schools. This made it difficult for the teachers to achieve the set goals because of the demographics of the school. From the information supplied by the educators from both schools, it seemed that the Foundations for Learning policy benefited some, while others did not, due to multiple difficulties and challenges that they experienced, more especially at the implementation stage.

#### **4.3.3 Policy Implementation Process**

According to Fullan (2001) policy implementers encounter some problems when implementing education policies in schools. Some policies may seem simple when viewed from their developmental perspective. However, they become difficult when it comes to their implementation. This is caused by different factors in different contexts. Whenever new education policies are designed, the implementation process becomes important to ensure its success (McLaughlin, 1987). The Department of Education conducted workshops to create an awareness of educational changes and it tried to make educators understand the content of the policy. Currently, teacher unions had also taken responsibility for the educators' professional development and training. Sykes, Schneider and Plank (2009) support the idea that teacher unions were part of the decision-making process when it comes to the drafting of education legislation since they have the power to influence policy making process.

Much money is spent to build capacity among educators on the latest teaching strategies and methods of assessment. Recently, various publishing companies have also got involved in providing training workshops for the educators. In some cases they even draw templates of year plans, work schedule and lesson plans. In this way, educators find it easier to plan their teaching. Proper implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy also depends on the factors such as teachers' levels of knowledge and training. Some teachers realised that the terminology used

was too difficult; the concepts were too abstract and the language became a barrier to understanding and, consequently, it became a major problem during implementation. The educators stated that their learners were predominantly African and were taught in English, their second language. Therefore, learners found it difficult to understand what was taught in class. Aretha also believed that the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy was difficult. She reported the following:

*The terminology written in the milestones was a bit difficult especially when we speak of the terminology in Mathematics.*

These difficult terminologies made it even hard for the parents to help their children when doing their homework. The Department of Education (1997) argues that parents were not empowered to provide necessary support towards enhancing the learners' progress in schools and in that way, their progress was negatively affected. This was directly linked to the fact that parents have been marginalised by the education system (The Department of Education (1997) and yet they are important partners who can have profound influence on their children when it comes to educational changes.

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The HOD-B explained that they were trying their best to implement this policy as it is supposed to be. However, this HOD also highlighted that it proving to be difficult to follow it as is. In School-B, they had a problem with the language of teaching. They had always tried to teach basic reading and writing skills, and the Foundations for Learning milestones were quite vast and too diverse. She also believed that the learners in her school may not have learnt as much as they should. Nevertheless, all knowledge that had been taught had been well learnt

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The data that was collected from the educators from both schools suggests that the learners' background had a negative effect on the implementation of educational polices. This was evident

when the learners could not be helped at home. Some of the work required parental involvement in respect of explaining and supervision of the homework. Parents themselves did not understand the instructions that were given by the teachers in schools due to the fact that their home language was IsiZulu and instructions were in English. Educators in the school could not achieve certain milestones at a given time because of because of the learners' home background and language barrier.

When checking the learners' homework books, they found that these were incomplete because the learners had not done their homework at all. According to Barker (2001), cited in Vince Whitman (2005), the context becomes an important issue on any school's functioning. The context variables such as socio-economic status and urban-rural dichotomies were important determinants of whether the school was functioning well or not. Communities with low socio-economic background tended to produce poor results. This may be linked to the fact that many of them did not have adequate resources and many members of their communities did not understand the ways in which their children's learning could be enhanced.

With the explanation given in the above paragraph, it was clear that the implementation of the Foundations for Learning led to a lot of frustration among educators. Educators viewed language as a barrier during implementation. Other challenges and difficulties experienced during implementation included failure by the teachers to understand the content and the terminology of the policy.

#### **4.3.4 Support by managers and officials**

Educators always need support from their immediate supervisors when implementing the new educational policies in schools. For these immediate supervisors to perform their supervisory duties in schools, they need to get support from the department officials. Previous discussions in this report indicate that subject advisors did not come to the schools to monitor the

implementation of the policies in place. Principals in the studied schools have shown that they had tried their best efforts to monitoring educators. Unfortunately, some of them lacked the understanding of the Foundations for Learning policy, and therefore, could not provide effective monitoring. They too, needed to be fully trained in order to be able to help new educators in their schools. Educators were also not happy about the support that they got from the department. They felt that the policy was just thrown onto them and no follow-up was made to check whether or not they were coping with the implementation.

#### 4.3.4 .1 Managers

One of the requirements of the employment of HODs in schools is the number of years that they must have taught in the phase. The experience gained by the HODs in a particular phase gives them the opportunity to understand the requirements of that particular phase. The recently promoted HODs in schools were frequently invited by the Department of Education for induction and capacity building workshops. Induction and orientation workshops helped the educators to understand some of the problems and gave them suitable solutions pertinent to that phase. It is therefore, imperative that the HODs are able to support their cohort of teachers in order to ensure maximum output in terms of learner performance.

Mentoring is also an important aspect in the supervision of educators. Mentoring provides support to the teachers and is fundamentally a personal relationship that is built on trust, respect and empathy (Rembe, 2003). According to Sykes, Schneider and Plank (2009), supervisors who are experienced and knowledgeable help to improve the quality of work within their departments. The HODs have to lead their teachers in such a manner that the fear of venturing into the unknown can be minimised (McLaughlin, 1987). This will enable the teachers to easily accept and try new initiatives. Effective leadership by the HODs is necessary in order to implement policy changes successfully (Vince Whitman (2005). The school-based HODs are allocated less numbers of teaching hours, and this is done so that they will have enough time to

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perform their supervisory and their administrative duties. For their supervisory duties, they can also set some time to develop their teachers by conducting workshops within the school. Therefore, if the school does not have an HOD for a particular phase, it is evident that teachers within that phase suffer in the absence of the HOD's guidance, advice and general support.

In School-A for instance, the educators explained that they did not have a Foundation Phase HOD. However, an acting HOD had been appointed within the school. Furthermore, the acting HOD was not trained as the Foundation Phase educator. They strongly felt that they were not getting enough support and guidance from her. They did not have somebody to guide them sufficiently and effectively in the implementation of the Foundations for Learning. Sharon stressed the following:

*We don't have a qualified Foundation Phase HOD. We need somebody who has experience in teaching in the Foundation Phase class. She must be able to tell us how we should do things in the classroom. It is very difficult at the moment because we don't have a supervisor.*

Contradicting what Sharon said, HOD-A mentioned that she provided support to educators when they have problems and they did consult the acting principal for further assistance. She highlighted that they have learnt a lot from the previous HOD who was in that school some years ago. She also mentioned that it was helping them to meet as the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase when conducting the learning area meetings in the school.

In School-B, the educators commented the Foundation Phase HOD by explaining that she tries her best to support educators in her department. All educators confirmed that the policy was new to all of them. They stated that, if there was a problem which cannot be solved in school, the HOD would contact the subject advisor for solutions. This showed that the HOD did provide

some kind of support to her teachers. If the HOD was unable to provide answers, she would seek outside help, for instance, from the Department of Education

The HOD-B stated that she gave support to the educators to the best of her ability; she herself had invited the subject advisors to come to the school to help educators with the implementation of the Foundations For Learning policy. In addition, she invited a lady from the Non-Governmental Organisation to conduct workshops in the school, where the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase educators were invited, as well as, educators from neighbouring schools.

In 2010 the HOD also supported educators when they were faced with the problem of understanding assessment tasks. The Foundation Phase educators in this school had encountered a problem when they wanted to assess the learners; the HOD from School-B felt that the assessment tasks were too broad and they did not know what to do. She then invited the subject advisor, who conducted the workshop for educators in school and those from neighbouring schools. There were times when this HOD found it difficult to help educators when she did not have the solution to the problem; she telephoned the subject advisors. In that instance, the subject advisor was not helpful as she claimed that she had not looked at the documents. This made the HOD to resort to her own experience to solve the problem facing her department.

In view of the information gathered from the educators in these schools, I have learnt that the teachers were not confident when they were supervised by a person who was in an acting capacity. The educators simply lost trust in their HOD because it was evident she also lacked understanding his meant that these educators were struggling in their teaching. The teachers in Schools-B found that their immediate supervisor was an active person who provided support to their teachers all the time. It is important to have a supervisor who has good mentoring skills and sound knowledge of the content of the work to be done.

#### 4.3.4.2 Departmental Officials

The Department of Education (2008) states that mentoring and support will be done at national level and in the provinces. It says that the district officials will visit all the schools a least once a term, with more frequent visits to schools that require stronger support, for monitoring and guidance. Educators in these two schools were unhappy about the support that they received from the Department officials.

However, the two HODs had different ideas about the support they get from their department officials. Besides the two HODs, educators from School- A were also unhappy about the support that they received from the Department of Education. They stated that the materials that they received from the Department of Education were not in line with the milestones as indicated in the Foundations for Learning. With regards to that issue, this is what Sharon had to say:

*I think that the support material that the Department of Education provided is shifting from what the policy expects. The Department of Education must send us appropriate resources.*

The teachers stated that they even thought of not using the workbooks that were supplied by the DoE. In fact, Sharon confessed that she was not using the workbooks supplied by the DoE but that she tried to make the learners achieve the milestones in her own way. On the contrary their HOD-A expressed appreciation of the DoE for the support it provided their school, and that it was helpful. According to this HOD, these books were setting the right direction but her teachers

have realised that the work in these workbooks was not substantial enough; they needed to take the entire time to complete their work.

The HOD –A highlighted that their school was visited by the departmental officials. Further to that, she said that these officials were very pleased with the work that their school had produced in the last few years. The HOD mentioned that the DoE did not send books on time and that they did not have sufficient supply of the books. She mentioned that the school had sent the returns for the learning material but nothing had happened.

#### **4.4 The effects of the Department of Education’s support on the implementation of Foundations for Learning Policy**

Our education system has been engaged in many curriculum changes. It is important for the DoE to provide enough support so that the teachers do not get lost on the way. Educators are also in need of capacity building to empower themselves so that they can have a greater impact of the performance of their learners. Support can be in the form of short workshops, in-service training or guidance and support at school level. Houston (1999), cited in Smith, Feinman-Nemsar, McIntire and Demmer (2008), argues that the educators expect support from their employer and their immediate supervisors in schools.

Lehman, Greener and Simpson (2002) further states that whenever the teachers are capacitated during curriculum change, they perform better in class and learner performance improves. On the other hand, Mouthrop (2005), cited in Sykes, Schneider, and Plank (2009) states that educators experience many problems in teaching and due to low morale, they are unlikely to make a difference with short workshops. He argues that the teachers must be taken out of their schools for a longer period in order for them to fully understand curriculum changes.



The educators in School-A believed that the Department of Education should support them fully. In this way they can be able to implement the policy smoothly. The bone of contention is that when the officials from the Department of Education arrived at schools, they always asked the educators about the problems they experienced during the implementation process. However, these Department officials never came back to schools with solutions to those problems. The educators explained that the lack of support from Departmental officials had a negative impact on their teaching. Supporting this view, Sharon had the following to say:

*We need them to come into a class and show us how it is done. The officials must show us how to teach an oral lesson, reading and life skills. They need to demonstrate a model lessons to us. We are unqualified teachers and we need that. We are coming from the Senior Primary; we need to be guided to teach like that. This is where they are lacking.*

The educators from School-B believed that books were not the only resources that should be provided for proper teaching and learning. The educators from School-A believed that there are a lot of materials that can be provided by the school and the Department of Education. Poor communities are fully dependant on the school for the learners' needs. This was because they were unable to pay school fees. Consequently, teaching and learning had suffered in those schools. The educators from School-B believed that enough supply of resources could have made the implementation process easier. Lucy stressed the following:

*Our learners need resources from the school because there are things that they cannot get from homes.*

Patience believed that the resources could have been of great help to make learners understand. Sue pointed out that they could achieve their goals when more resources were provided. The educators from School-B had no doubt that the support from the Department of Education would

make them best policy implementers and that it could make a difference on the learners' progress. They needed guidance from the Departmental officials who also needed to monitor progress of the policy implementation in the schools. Prim said that the Departmental officials needed to know the problems that they were faced with when implementing the policy in their schools. She added that it was important that officials visited schools to check on what the educators needed in order to successfully implement the Foundation for Learning policy.

Many educators from School-B explained that they needed guidance to implement the Foundations for Learning Policy. Lucy believed that the support from the DoE was very important for schools that were situated in poor communities. Aretha was also worried about the latest curriculum changes. She explained that the new curriculum called "Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statements" (CAPS) has come with new problems. She stated that since the teachers did not get the support from the Department of Education for the Foundations for Learning policy, then it would be difficult to understand CAPS as well.

The teachers from School-B remarked that they really needed support since they had a problem of using the material that was supplied by the Department of Education. Some of these educators viewed themselves as unqualified educators since they did not have Junior Primary qualifications. However, they were qualified to teach in the primary schools. They stated that they also needed to upgrade their qualifications so that they would be able to teach in the Foundation Phase.

#### **4. 5 Resources provided to support the implementation of the Foundation for Learning Policy**

The Foundations for Learning policy (2008) clearly states that "every teacher must have sufficient resources to ensure the effective teaching and learning of Literacy and Numeracy. This

should include wall charts, numbers and phonic friezes, writing material, suitable apparatus for teaching concepts, textbooks, reading series, workbooks and writing materials". Schools are provided with a financial allocation which must be used to purchase resources to support curriculum implementation in the schools.

Some schools need more resources than others. This is due to the inequalities and imbalances of the past. On one hand, schools with a higher quintile ranking (meaning advantaged schools) received a lower financial allocation. On the other hand, schools with a lower quintile ranking (meaning disadvantaged schools) received a higher financial allocation. Some schools use their allocation to buy resources while other schools just top up their existing stock.

Two of these educators said that they did not have resources that they needed. These educators stressed that although they did not have enough resources, they did have books for each child. The educators believed that the lack of resources was caused by the low allocation that is received from the Department of Education. The lack of sufficient funds had a direct impact on the nature of resources that can be purchased. The teachers stated that they could not purchase the resources as much as they needed. I checked the Phase minute book which stated that they would use some of the funds to buy resources which they needed. In view of the information elicited from educators, it is clear that the school had a meagre allocation from the Department of Education when compared to their actual needs.

It was also reported that the insufficient financial allocation affected the smooth running of the schools. This included teaching and learning and other support services in schools. Some educators in the two schools believed that teaching and learning was being promoted using books while some thought that they needed more resources to provoke or stimulate learners' thoughts. When listening to what they were saying about their resources, it was clear that the educators

needed more than what they were provided. The policy specifies the type of resource that is suitable for each and every lesson that is conducted in class. Therefore, the Department needed to provide more resources, particularly to school that cannot buy their own in order to achieve the goals.

The educators from School-A explained that they did not have enough resources. They believed that the implementation of the Foundation for Learning would be much easier if they had all the resources they needed. The educators also mentioned that the lack of resources had caused them to struggle when they were doing their work with their learners. The educators believed that the provision of resources played an important role in their teaching. The provision of resources would result in the policy being well implemented which would eventually improve the teaching and learning in their school.

The educators from School-B also expressed a concern about the lack of resources in their schools. Educators stated that they were in need of tape recorders. They believed that tape recorders were very important for learners in terms of listening comprehension. They sadly explained that the only class that had a tape recorder was Grade R class because they had their own funding. The teachers stated that they also needed more books for shared reading. Books for reading were not enough for all the learners in the school. Teachers could not engage in reading with their classes because they had to wait for the other teachers to finish their lessons. Thereafter, these reading books could be borrowed and used for our own learners.

The HOD from School-B mentioned that they had resources simply because they only had textbooks. She was concerned that because their allocation was so little they could not afford to get books for each child. She said that the educators made their own worksheets, charts and anything that could be useful in teaching. They used counters that they had been using for the

past years. According to Vince Whitman (2005), there is a relationship between the provision of resources and learners' progress in schools. They further clarify that the resources that learners use in schools challenge their minds and provoke their thinking.

#### **4.6 The state of readiness to implement the Foundations for Learning Policy**

When educational changes are about to be introduced, several announcements are made before policy changes begin. This gives the teachers enough time to familiarised themselves with policies, programmes and procedures (McLaughlin, 1987). Teachers must prepare themselves for the process of change. The educators from School-A confirmed that they were not ready to implement the Foundations for Learning Policy. For instance, Connie stated that she was a new educator at this school, and that she did not fully understand the South African context regarding education because she was from another country. Furthermore, she stated that she did not attend any of the Foundations for Learning workshops.

Another teacher from School-A, emphasised that she had been at the same school for many years and that she too, did not attend any of the Foundations for Learning workshop. Sharon angrily stated that she attended the workshop but she did not gain anything new. She felt that the workshop was a waste of time. Sharon mentioned that she tried to implement the policy by reading it herself. She explained that she was finding it very difficult to implement the Foundation for Learning policy. When listening to these educators it becomes clear that the workshop did not empower them sufficiently so that they could be able to successfully implement the policy.

The HOD-A contradicted the sentiments that were expressed by the educators from her school. She thought that they were ready when they started to implement the Foundations for Learning policy. She attributed their readiness to the fact that they had attended workshops. She explained

that in her school, they had started developing all teachers from the time it started. She argued that the introduction of the Foundations for Learning policy helped them. Educators also noticed that between the Foundations for Learning and Revised National Curriculum Statement (CAPS), there was no correlation. The subject advisor explained that the workbooks were more aligned with CAPS. She believed that when CAPS came into effect they would be given milestones and that implementation would more possible.

All the Foundation Phase educators from School-B stated that they were also not ready to implement the Foundations for Learning policy. They said that the planning for these workshops was not properly done for the educators. As a result, they were not ready to implement this policy. Kim stressed that they did not attend any workshop and she argued the following:

*We are in the Early Childhood Development level. When we asked our Superintendent of Education-Management (SEM) about the Foundations for Learning workshops, he did not understand it; they themselves were not workshopped on it. They were still waiting for the Department of Education at national level to workshop them.*

The educators also mentioned that the workbooks that were meant to support the Foundations for Learning came late. They remarked that there was no correlation between the content in the Foundations for Learning policy and the workbooks. Prim felt that it was a waste of time to use the workbooks. She added that she was not using them at all. The HOD-B believed that, although the educators felt the way they did, they were prepared to learn. There were workshops that had been organised for them, and they attended. There were still workshops that were going on and she felt that since this policy was something new, the educators needed it and therefore, needed to embrace it.

In view of the information gathered from the HODs and educators from both schools, I have noted that although the Foundations for Learning policy was still new to everyone, the teachers were prepared to accept it. They needed more time to adjust and embrace change. The policy being discussed is part of change that is meant to improve teaching and learning in schools, and it needs some modification because of the contextual problems and challenges.

#### **4.7 Policy effect on teaching and learning**

When educators are implementing policies in schools, such policies have to have a positive or negative effect on teaching and learning. This depends on a number of factors, including the implementers' attitude, the conditions where implementation will take place, as well as, the understanding of the policy by the implementers. Sometimes the negative effect on the implementation is caused by the lack of understanding of the policy itself, or the context in which the policy is implemented.

Sharon stated that when they started implementing the Foundations for Learning, it was not clear. She further stated that even though they seemed to understand it a little but there were doubts about the milestones that they were supposed to achieve for each term. The educators stressed that it was not good to teach something when they have some doubts. This made them feel uneasy when they had to face the practical part of the policy. The teachers stated that they were not sure of what they were doing. Mimmie found it very difficult because she had to learn from other colleagues. Unfortunately, some of her colleagues were also not sure of what they

were doing. The most difficult challenge they faced was the issue of learner assessments. She angrily stressed the following:

*I don't think that our subject advisers know what they are doing with the Foundations for Learning policy. If you ask your subject advisor about the assessment tasks, then she says even if you have two assessments, it depends on your learners. We are unsure of what to do.*

Sharon believed that when it comes to the assessment part of it, teachers needed to do what was stipulated in the policy document. Mimmie stated that she had a problem of doing four assessment tasks in one term because her children were very slow in grasping the concepts. Three teachers from School-B believed that the Foundations for Learning, had a positive effect on teaching and learning. It gave teachers direction in terms of what they were supposed to do. Aretha felt that there was a problem in Mathematics. She felt that there were too many concepts especially for the Grade 1 learners.

Lorraine highlighted this point by saying that the planners did not develop the number operation properly. Work was not done in stages and everything was clustered. This created confusion to both the teachers and the learners. Prim argued this by stating the following:

*The guidelines are not arranged from concrete to abstract. It is thrown to us and we have to teach them. I find it difficult. They do not give a chance for the weak learners to improve. They need to make things easy for the child.*

The two HODs had different ideas on the notion of the Foundations for Learning enhancing teaching and learning in their schools. Their ideas were somehow more or less the same as that of their teachers. The HOD-A believed that the Foundations for Learning had given teachers



direction. The teachers were able to plan and it also allowed flexibility. She thought that it was only the planning that needed to be amended because they gave planning for the term. Planning for the term was bit not easy because there were other activities that could make the number of weeks to be less than actual number of days in a term. This planning did not cater for shortened weeks and for sports; this caused teachers to carry over the plan to the following term.

The HOD-B argued that it had not enhanced teaching and learning. She mentioned that her educators were very frustrated. She explained that with the old method, the planning that was given to teachers was easy to follow; therefore, the HOD-B felt that the old method of planning was far better than this one. She felt that the sub topics were all mixed-up and it was not easy to follow and if you tried to follow it, you easily miss out. This made her to think that the implementation of the Foundations for Learning had not really enhanced teaching and learning in her school.

These two HODs differed when discussing the usefulness of the Foundations for Learning policy in enhancing teaching and learning in their schools. The HOD-A preferred some adjustments in the planning in order to make it work properly because flexibility is allowed. In view of the above information, I have concluded that educators were troubled by the high volume of assessment tasks. Therefore, as a way out, they needed to rush their teaching in order to meet assessment requirements. Teaching has become assessment centred as compared to being sensitive to the needs of learners. My view is that the learner centred approach has lost its value in teaching.

#### **4.8 Challenges of the Foundations for Learning policy implementation**

When new policies are in place, it is always likely that the implementers will encounter some problems. The educators were faced with multiple challenges during the implementation of the

Foundations for Learning Policy. The learners from both School-A and School-B had a problem of understanding the language of teaching. These learners were IsiZulu first language speakers and English was their second language. When the learners came to school for the first time, they did not understand English at all.

One educator from School-A tried code switching because she was the only isiZulu first language speaker in that school, but that did not work out because the second language in that school was Afrikaans. In that case, these learners needed to learn more of their third language, Afrikaans than the language they spoke at home. This meant that their language became the third language in that school.

All educators that participated mentioned that there were too many milestones in a term, but these could not be completed because learners in these schools did not understand the language of teaching. They also mentioned that the terms that were used were too difficult and it was not easy to understand them. One educator from School-A mentioned that they had a problem of learners who came to school at the level of Grade 3. Those learners seemed to have a problem because they were taught in English for the first time; they could not understand the concepts as fast as the learners who were taught in English from Grade 1 could.

Educators from School-B were worried about the amount of paperwork that was taking a lot of their teaching time. The learners could not do their homework; this meant that every work needed to be done at school, and that was impossible. Unfinished homework delayed progress of the learners, yet they needed to finish their work books so that they would be ready to write the Annual National Assessments at the end of the year or at the beginning of the following year.

Sharon felt that those learners needed to be helped but also that the intervention should be organised by the DoE. She explained by saying:

*I think they should have a class in schools where they bridge the gap. They should take a child from class to help them with the language and send them back to class. In some cases remedial work helps a lot.*

The challenges that the educators from School-A faced, were mostly related to the resources. According to the HOD-A, most resources that they needed were books. They have tried to navigate this problem of the shortage of books by among other things, organising classes in smaller groups. This is what HOD-A had to say:

*I think that the biggest challenge is books shortages, but we are working around it in the sense that teachers used what they had. For example, instead of having a big book for a large group, they divide the class into smaller groups, so they use smaller book for the smaller groups. It is a way of adapting.*

The Foundation Phase HODs in these two schools highlighted similar challenges when implementing [it](#). For example, in School-A, the HOD only needed resources, about which she was very specific, namely, the shortage of text books. She further explained that they tried to get around the problems by using big books with other learners, while other classes would use the small books. The terminology that was used for Numeracy was too difficult for the Foundation Phase learners.

The HOD-B explained that some of the challenges that they faced were that the milestones were broad and not specific. She also said that it took a long time to finish the milestones for the term. Those milestones needed to be carried over to the next term if not finished in the previous term. She believed that this depended on the environment where the school was situated; it could happen that in better environments learners do better. One of the challenges was the language of

teaching which the learners did not understand. She explained that the teachers were frustrated by the Foundations for Learning documents. This is what she said:

*The Department of Education has given us lesson preparation and workbooks. The milestones, the lesson preparation from the DoE and the workbooks do not relate because you see one thing in the lesson preparation and in the milestones, it is something else, and that is frustrating.*

The educators from School-B also had a problem with the language issue. The learners did not understand the language of teaching. This made things difficult for the educators to implement the policy; educators from School-B had a similar view with those of the educators from School-A in relation to the difficult terminology which was not easy for the educators to understand. Aretha explained that homework could not be done because the parents could not help their children at home. That was because both the parents and the learners did not understand the language of teaching.

The HOD-A specified that the problem of the language of teaching made things difficult for them because it took sometimes for the learners to understand the language before they understand the concepts. In School-B, the HOD was also worried about the documents which did not correlate. When the teachers were doing their planning, they became confused as they could not match all the three documents.

The educators from School-B also had a problem of the language with the learners. The learners did not understand the language of teaching. This made things difficult for the teachers to implement the policy; these educators shared similar views with the educators from School-A about the difficult terminology which was not easy for the educators to understand. Aretha explained that home work could not be done; parents were unable to help their children because

they also could not understand the language of instruction. In School-B the HOD was also worried about the documents which did not correspond when teachers were doing their planning.

The HOD-A felt that they did not get much support from the workshop that they had attended, and also that they did not get the DoE officials to come to their school in order to check them in the implementation itself. This view was shared by the HOD-B who said that nobody came to check the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy. They did not come to check whether teachers were managing the policy well. The HOD-B was concerned that schools had different problems as they were in different financial conditions. The subject advisors needed to visit the schools in order to monitor progress of the implementation.

This meant that if they encountered a problem in a school that needed solutions to be found, after finding that solution, they needed to come back to check whether the problem persisted or not. They did not visit the school to monitor the progress. She highlighted the uselessness of the workshops that were conducted in some education centres. She explained that individual school's problems could not be attended to because of the number of people attending workshops in one day. In those workshops one and the same thing was being done. She argued her point by saying:

*You find that you get the same kind of information. The teacher went to the workshop at the end of last year (2010); they said to me three quarters of the time was spent giving the history of the Foundations for Learning; we all know that history now.*

The HOD-B also mentioned that the venues were not well organised. They called people to a venue that was not suitable for many people. She suggested that it would have been better if they invited the HOD on one day and educators on another. This is what she said:

*You know, it is a waste of time having extra people there and also it is causing problems of accommodation. People are sitting there, they can't even breathe, and that is what happens in these workshops. It gets chaotic, you know now, we do not get support that we need, as I said, each school is unique; we need that kind that support.*

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

In view of all the data collected from both schools, I have concluded that the Foundations for Learning policy is a good policy and it could be implemented if enough support can be provided by the DoE. That will address educators' concerns that the policy seems to have been thrown to them without proper support from the DoE officials. The next chapter will present the summary of the findings, and the recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins by providing an overview of previous chapters and this includes outlining for the reader the key points as well as the overarching themes. This chapter further provides a summary of the whole study, makes conclusions or findings, as well as, the recommendations that are directed at various stakeholders.

#### **5.2 Summary**

The aim of the study was first to investigate the manner in which the Foundations For Learning policy was implemented in the two schools. Secondly, it also to understand the teachers' experiences regarding their implementation of the Foundations For Learning policy. Chapter One presented the background and the purpose of the study. In that chapter, I also explained the rationale for conducting the research which, in effect, gave me a deeper understanding of what educators do when implementing the policy in their schools.

Chapter Two focused on reviewing literature that is relevant to the study. In conducting literature review, I consulted various journal articles, books, government documents and other electronic sources. The literature review highlighted various views and debates from both international and local perspectives. On the international perspective, I reviewed books, journals and other documents on what educators in other countries do in order to improve the learning of Numeracy and Literacy in the Foundation Phase. A similar pattern was followed when it comes to the review of the local sources. In addition, I also looked at why our Department of Education had designed the Foundations for Learning policy, and more especially, I consulted literature on how educators have implemented this policy in other provinces, given the limited in-service training

that they many of them had received. I also reviewed provincial strategies that different provinces were using in improving Literacy and Numeracy levels among learners.

Chapter Three provides a full description of the research design and methodology that was used in the study. It was explained that the approach that was used for the study was a qualitative case study. The methods that were deemed relevant for the study were focus group discussion, semi-structured interviews, as well as document review. These methods were used in collecting the data from two schools in the Umlazi District on how the Foundations for Learning policy was implemented.

Chapter Four presented the analysis and the discussion of the findings. I engaged in a systematic process of categorising and interpreting the data in order to provide explanations about how the educators in the studied schools implemented the Foundations for Learning policy. The findings generated from the data collected in these two schools indicated that the participants understood the significance of the policy. Further, the educators confirmed that the policy was put in place in order to improve the results of Numeracy and Literacy in the Foundation Phase. The findings also indicated that all educators were familiar with the concepts that were used in the Foundations for Learning policy.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

After a careful examination of the two critical questions, I have made a number of conclusions. One of them is that some participants had a clear understanding of the Foundations For Learning policy while others did not. Among those who did not have a clear understanding were novice educators who had recently joined the teaching profession. Such a lack of understanding by the novice educators affected the implementation of the Foundations For Learning policy in schools. It is evident that while all the educators that participated in this study tried to implement this



policy, however, it could not be successfully implemented due to some unfavourable conditions under which their schools operated. Through the review of literature such as McLaughlin (1987), Gold (2005) and Murutowa (2003), it has also emerged that schools that served richer communities had an advantage and as a result, the policy had been effectively implemented.

Most participants in this study reported that the language of teaching and learning (English) presented some difficulties because their learners did not understand it; instead, they understood IsiZulu, their home language. This negatively affected progress of the learners in terms of their academic achievement as they did not have clear understanding of the instructions that their educators gave them in class. Participants further reported that parents could not help their children with their homework as they too did not understand English. Another finding is that both the educators and the Heads of Department were unhappy about the way in which workshops were conducted. These workshops were characterised by overcrowding. Consequently, educators were not given the opportunity to raise and discuss issues and challenges that confronted them in their schools.

Educators reported that there were too many assessments tasks that were prescribed for one term. As a result, as teachers, they had to rush through their syllabus so that the learners would be able to do the assessment tasks that are prescribed for that particular term. With regards to educator supervision by the SMT, it was reported in one school that the Heads of Department, although they were immediate supervisory personnel, they were not properly trained in Foundations For Learning policy. Hence, these supervisors did not provide appropriate support to the educators in the Foundation Phase. It was also reported that one supervisor who was acting as Head of Department, did not have enough knowledge of the Foundation Phase content. As a result, educators in the school that were affected by this problem were frustrated. Educators in the other school were very happy about the supervision that they received from their HODs as they had sufficient knowledge of Foundation Phase content.

Participants were also concerned that the Department officials did not provide adequate support to them so that the Foundations For Learning policy could be effectively implemented. They were therefore, unsure as to whether they were on the right track in implementing the policy or not. They were also concerned that their subject advisors did not have answers to some of their problems. It was also reported that the teachers in some schools were unhappy with late delivery of the learners' workbooks. In addition, it was observed that there was no correlation between the workbooks that were supplied and the Foundations For Learning policy documents in most aspects.

Most of the challenges that were experienced by the educators could be resolved or reduced by addressing the issues highlighted in this paragraph. Participants reported that there were too many difficult terms in the policy document, and that such a situation compromised their attempts to better understand this policy. It was also reported that some learners come to schools having not attended the reception class. This was a concern, particularly among those teachers who taught Grade One learners.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

The recommendations provided in this study are directed at specific stakeholders such as policy makers, subject advisors at district and regional levels, managers at schools, educators, parents and the community as a whole.

- This study recommends the Department of Education should provide a higher allocation for Learner Teacher Support Material to be used by educators when implementing the Foundations For Learning policy. The current allocation is insufficient in terms of supporting the achievement of the objectives of the above policy.

- Supervisors at district level must work closely with the schools, monitor their progress so that they can be able, for instance to assess the extent to which the educators are successfully implementing the Foundations for Learning policy. In that way they can be able to assist the educators when it comes to problems during the implementation of this policy.
- Subject specialists should be invited to conduct workshops with the teachers on a regular basis. Such workshops have to be based on the schools' identified needs as well as their school improvement plans that are submitted to the Department of Education.
- It is recommended that the school principals should adopt a hands-on approach to monitoring the implementation of the Foundations For Learning policy. Therefore, it is important that the Department of Education conducts in-depth and comprehensive workshops for the principals and HODs so that they will be equipped with the various skills that will enable them to monitor, guide and advise educators as they implement the Foundations for Learning policy.
- Comprehensive training workshops for teachers are suggested wherein learning outcomes and milestones that need to be achieved in each term can be carefully analysed.
- It is also suggested that school-based workshops need to be conducted regularly, and that these workshops should be conducted at the beginning of each term so that all the teachers in the respective schools can gain confidence about what they have to do.
- It is also recommended that the number of assessment tasks should be left to the educators to decide; that will ensure that different contexts can be catered for in planning and execution of that assessment exercise. The one-size-fits all approach that the Department of Education is currently using is unworkable.

- The Foundation For Learning policy must be made available in all official languages in order ensure that the content is accessible to all relevant stakeholders, including the parents.
  
- The Department of Education needs to provide the glossary of all difficult terms and their explanation in order to enhance comprehension by the educators.
  
- The Department of Education needs to provide quick readiness programme for the Grade 1 learners that were disadvantaged due to the fact that they did not attend the Grade R classes.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

[Appendix A](#) – Ethical Clearance Certificate

[Appendix B](#) – Permission letter from the KZN Department of Education

[Appendix C](#) – Letter of Request to the KZN Department of Education

[Appendix D](#) – Letter to the school principals

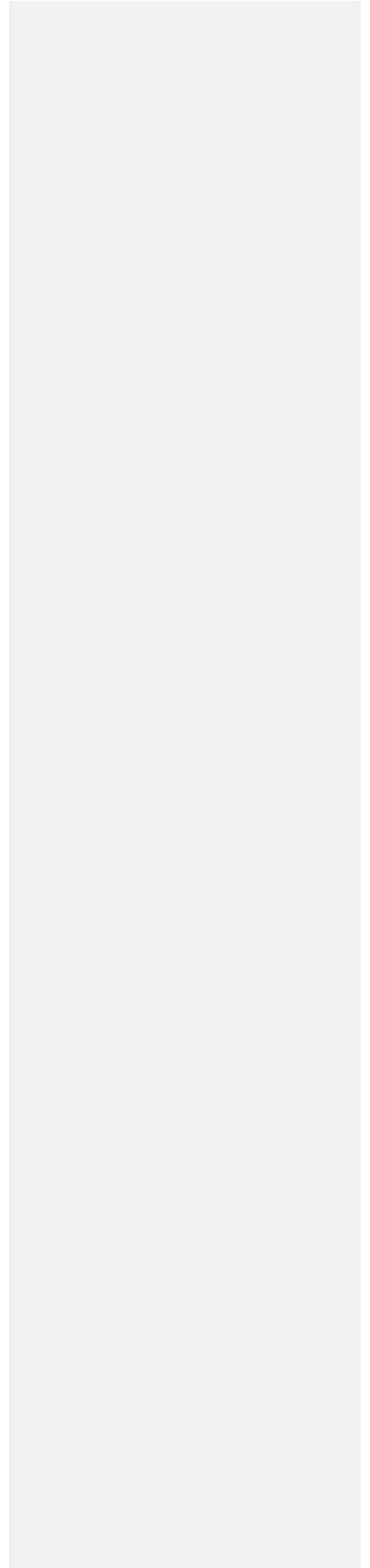
[Appendix E](#) – Letter to the Foundation Phase HODs

[Appendix F](#) – Letter to the Foundation Phase educators

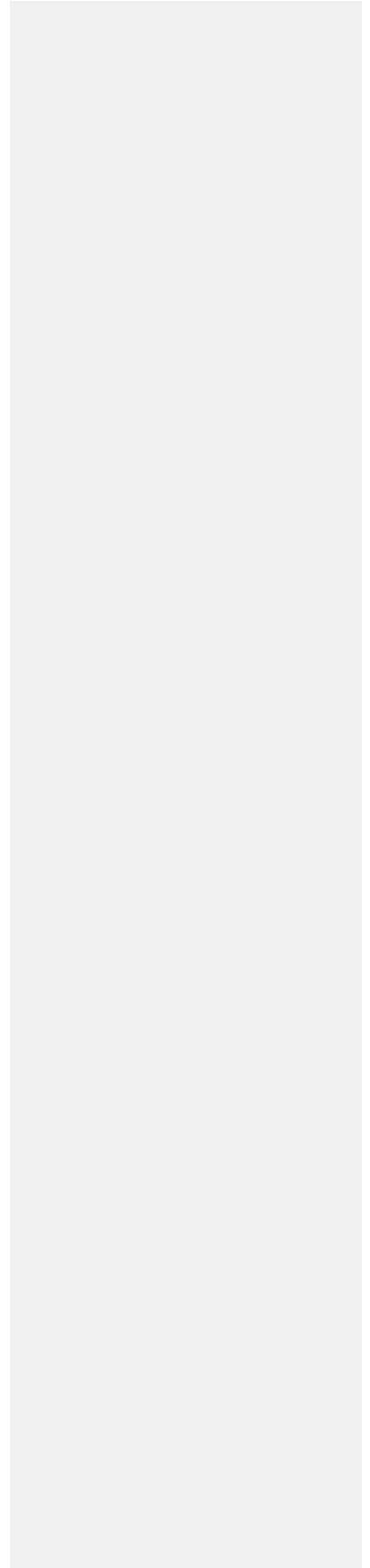
[Appendix G](#) – Interview schedule for the HODs

[Appendix H](#) – Interview schedule for educators

**APPENDIX A**



**APPENDIX B**



APPENDIX C

H.1079 Umlazi Township

P.O Ntokozweni

4066

22 March 2011

KZN Department of Education

The Superintendent General

Department of Education

Province of KwaZulu Natal

Private Bag x 9137

Pietermaritzburg

3201

Dear Sir

**Re Request for permission to do research in two schools**

I wish to request your permission to conduct research in two schools at Mobeni ward. The schools are Rose-Bud and St Paul primary schools. I am a MEd student at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood campus in the faculty of education.



I am required to conduct a research as part of my requirement to complete Med degree. I will conduct interviews with educators and the Head of Department in the Foundation phase concerning the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy in primary schools.

The research title is'' Implementation of Foundations for Learning in primary school: a case study of two primary schools'' The main objectives of the study are:

- 1.To understand teachers experiences in the implementation of Foundations for learning in primary schools.
- 2.To determine the extent to which teachers get support from the Department when implementing the Foundations for learning policy.

If you have any questions you may contact me on 031 9085527 H 031 4003566 w or 0832497658. You may also contact my supervisor Mr Sbusiso Bayeni at Edgewood on 031 2607026

Yours Sincerely

Lovedale Busisiwe Zuma

Signature.....

Date.....

## APPENDIX D

H.1079 Umlazi Township

P.O Ntokozweni

4066

22 March 2011

The Principal

The name of school

### **Re Request for permission to do research in your schools**

I wish to request your permission to conduct research in your schools. I am a MEd student at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood campus in the faculty of education. I am required to conduct a research as part of my requirement to complete Med degree.

I will conduct interviews with educators and the Head of Department in the Foundation phase concerning the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy in primary schools. I also wish review teachers record books. I wish to emphasise that educators contact time with learners will remain unaffected. The research title is'' Implementation of Foundations for Learning in primary school: a case study of two primary schools'' The main objectives of the study are:

1.To understand teachers experiences in the implementation of Foundations for learning in primary schools.

2.To determine the extent to which teachers get support from the Department when implementing the Foundations for learning policy. Findings from this study will be used for writing my dissertation. The school name and participant will not be divulged in the dissertation

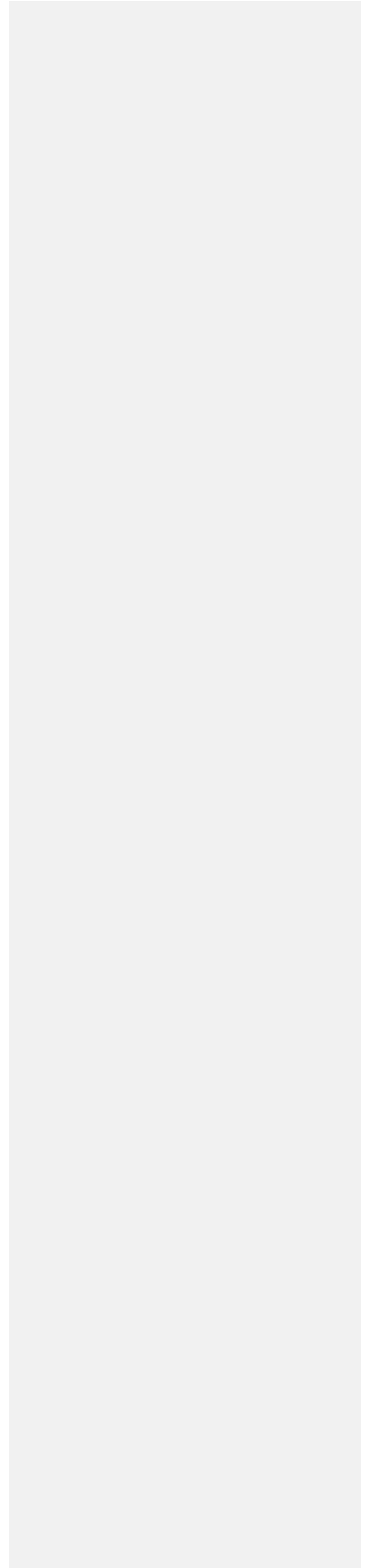
and in any subsequent writing.If you have any questions you may contact me on 031 9085527 (H) 031 4003566 (w) or 0832497658. You may also contact my supervisor Mr Sbusiso Bayeni at Edgewood on 031 2607026

Yours Sincerely

Lovedale Busisiwe Zuma

Signature.....

Date.....



## APPENDIX E

H.1079 Umlazi Township

P.O Ntokozweni

4066

22 March 2011

The Head of Department

The name of school

### **Re Request for permission to do research in your schools**

I wish to request your permission to take part in the research project. I am a MEd student at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood campus in the faculty of education. I am required to conduct a research as part of my requirement to complete Med degree.

I will conduct interviews with educators and the Head of Department in the Foundation phase concerning the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy in primary schools. I also wish review teachers record books. I wish to emphasise that educators contact time with learners will remain unaffected. The research title is'' Implementation of Foundations for Learning in primary school: a case study of two primary schools'' The main objectives of the study are:

1. To understand teachers experiences in the implementation of Foundations for learning in primary schools.
2. To determine the extent to which teachers get support from the Department when implementing the Foundations for learning policy.

You are not compelled to answer all questions asked and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your responses will be treated in a confidential manner Findings from this study will

be used for writing my dissertation. The school name and participant will not be divulged in the dissertation and in any subsequent writing.

If you have any questions you may contact me on 031 9085527 H 031 4003566 w or 0832497658. You may also contact my supervisor Mr Sbusiso Bayeni at Edgewood on 031 2607026

Yours Sincerely

Lovedale Busisiwe Zuma

Signature.....

Date.....

Declaration

I .....( Full names of pparticipants) here confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research project and I consent participating in the research project. I understand that am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should I desire

.....

.....

Signature of Participants (HOD)

Date

## APPENDIX F

H.1079 Umlazi Township

P.O Ntokozweni

4066

22 March 2011

Foundation Phase Educator

The name of school

### **Re Request for permission to do research in your schools**

I wish to request your permission to take part in the research project. I am a MEd student at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood campus in the faculty of education. I am required to conduct a research as part of my requirement to complete Med degree.

I will conduct interviews with educators and the Head of Department in the Foundation phase concerning the implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy in primary schools. I also wish review teachers record books. I wish to emphasise that educators contact time with learners will remain unaffected. The research title is'' Implementation of Foundations for Learning in primary school: a case study of two primary schools'' The main objectives of the study are:

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Yours Sincerely

Lovedale Busisiwe Zuma

Signature.....

Date.....

Declaration

I ..... (Full names of participants) here confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research project and I consent participating in the research project. I understand that am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should you desire.

.....

.....

Signature of Participants (HOD)

Date

## **APPENDIX G**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HOD**

1. Tell me anything about Foundations for Learning policy
2. Do you think the Foundations for Learning is meeting the set goals for your department ?
3. Comment about the implementation of the Foundations for Learning for policy
4. Do you provide the necessary support to teachers in your department in implementing the Foundations for Learning policy?
5. Do you have enough resources to help and teachers in you department to implement the FFL policy?
6. How do give support to teachers in your department to able to implement the Foundations for Learning?
7. Do you get enough support from the Department will make you and you teachers to implement the Foundations for learning policy?
8. Do you think support from the Department will make you and your teachers in your Department better able to implement to implement the Foundations for Learning policy?
9. Were you and teachers in your department ready when you started implementing the Foundations for Learning policy?
10. How does the implementation of Foundations for Learning policy enhance teaching and learning in the Foundations phase?
11. What challenges do you and teachers in your department encounter when implementing Foundations for learning policy



## **APPENDIX H**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EDUCATORS**

1. Tell me anything about Foundations for Learning programme
2. Do you think the Foundations for Learning is meeting the set goals as a teacher ?
3. Comment about the implementation of the Foundations for Learning for policy
4. Is your immediate superior providing necessary support to implement the Foundations for Learning policy?
5. Do you have enough resources to help and you in to implement the FFL policy?
6. If you have enough resources what role is played by resources for proper implementation of the Foundations for Learning policy?
7. Do you need support from the Department to implement the Foundations for learning policy?
8. Do you think support from the Department will make you and better able to implement to implement the Foundations for Learning policy?
9. Were you and ready when you started implementing the Foundations for Learning policy?
10. How does the implementation of Foundations for Learning policy enhance teaching and learning in the Foundations phase?
11. What challenges do you and encounter when implementing Foundations for learning policy?