

University of KwaZulu-Natal

**Quality Education:
A School Perspective**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Ayesha Abdool Hay declare that:

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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To God Almighty for his presence in my life and throughout this incredible journey. *“In the name of God, the infinitely Compassionate and Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of all the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Ruler of the Day of Reckoning. You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help. Guide us on the straight path, the path of those who have received your grace: not the path of those who have brought down wrath, nor of those who wander astray. Ameen..” – Surah Al – Fatihah (The Opening) Quraan.*

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DEDICATION

To my mum and dad, Mr Yusuf Abdool Hay and Mrs Moonira Abdool Hay. Thank you for your loving support during my academic years. Your wisdom and encouragement have been a pillar of strength in the difficult times throughout my learning career. Your belief in my success is greatly appreciated. Thank you for always and willingly supporting me every step of the way. I could write another thesis on how grateful I am for all that you have done for me throughout my life and still continue to do. No amount of money or time can account for everything. I wish to become as humble as two of you are and serve as you do. Thank you for putting up with all my stressful days and nights. I hope to make the two of you proud.

ABSTRACT

The South African schooling system has been in a constant state of transition. This has involved the significant shift from apartheid to post-apartheid education. Furthermore, the latter has also incorporated various curricular changes in an attempt to determine an improvement in the standard of education.

This study focuses on understanding the notion of quality education: perspective from a school and how does a school promote quality education. This is done by using the following instruments: descriptive essays, semi-structured interviews as a means to generate rich, thick data required for the understanding of teachers' feelings and experiences in promoting quality education.

A case study approach within a qualitative design was employed. Five teachers were selected and deemed appropriate for this study. In this regard the case study was Marvel Primary School, which is an urban primary school situated in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings generated from the five experienced teachers were analysed and represented within the context of the teachers' teaching experiences, the school context and the prescript of the CAPS policy framework. The findings offer an understanding of how these teachers take into account the promotion of quality education to their learners and how this shapes teaching and learning in their respective classrooms.

In 2007, Cohen, Manion and Mannison, provided a framework – research design, a process to achieve a particular research purpose thereby incorporating an understanding of how teachers mediate the various forces that operate within a schooling system and has emphasised the need for teachers to be more autonomous professionals within this force field.

The findings reveal in this research study, that notions of quality are consistent with literature such that they are not able to clearly express what quality education means to them. The evidence from the data generated reveals that various stakeholders in school education have their own perspectives of what quality education is. Teachers in this study have revealed and expressed that. These findings were extended to form key findings of the study. The key findings are discussed and explained using appropriate constructs from the theoretical frameworks of Akoi and Pinar. This dissertation concludes with a brief summary of the major conclusions that can be drawn from the study, and offers recommendations in light of the conclusions drawn.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Description	Page	
DECLARATION	2	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3	
DEDICATION	4	
ABSTRACT	5	
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	6	
CHAPTER 1 – SETTING THE SCENE		
1.1 INTRODUCTION	12	
1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	13	
1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	13 - 15	
1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY	14-15	
1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	15-16	
1.6 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS	16	
1.6.1	What are the teacher’s and school leadership’s notions of quality education within primary schools?	16
1.6.2	What are the teacher’s and school leadership’s perspectives on quality primary education?	16
1.6.3	How do teachers and school leadership promote quality education in their schools?	16

1.6.4	How do teachers and school leadership identify challenges in promoting quality primary school education within their schools?	17
1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN		17
1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY		17
1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY		18
1.10 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS		18
CHAPTER 2 -	TOWARDS A QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY	
2.1 INTRODUCTION		19-20
2.2 DEFINITION OF QUALITY		20-21
2.3 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A QUALITY EDUCATION?		21-22
2.4 QUALITY EDUCATION WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA		22-23
2.5 CURRICULUM SHIFTS IN PROVIDING QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA		23-25
2.6 TEACHER DEVELOPMENT POLICY SHIFTS IN PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION		25
2.7 INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCE POLICY SHIFTS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION		26
2.7 HOW DOES ONE VIEW QUALITY EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA?		26-28
2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK INFORMING THE STUDY		28-30
2.9 CONCLUSION		30-31

CHAPTER 3 -	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.1 INTRODUCTION		32
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THIS STUDY		32
3.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE TAKEN IN THE STUDY		33-34
3.4 QUALITATIVE INQUIRY AS A RESEARCH APPROACH FOR THE STUDY		34
3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY		34-35
3.6 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS FOR THE STUDY		35-36
3.7 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION		36
3.8 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS IN THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS		37-38
3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES WITHIN THE RESEARCH PROCESS		38
3.10 LIMITATIONS FOR THE STUDY		38
CHAPTER 4 -	DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	
4.1 INTRODUCTION		39
4.2 THE ANALYTICAL PROCESS FOLLOWED IN WORKING WITH THE DATA		39
4.3 THEME 1: NOTIONS OF QUALITY EDUCATION		40
4.3.1 The elusive notions of quality education		40-42
4.3.2 How have teachers come to their understanding of Quality Education?		42-44
4.4 THEME 2: MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH QUALITY EDUCATION IS PROMOTED		44
4.4.1 Curriculum as a conduit for quality education		44-46
4.4.2 Policy environment through which quality education is promoted		46-47

4.4.3 Teaching beyond the formal curriculum as factors influencing quality education	48
4.4.4 Other activities that promote quality school education	49
4.5 THEME 3: CHALLENGES FACED IN PROMOTING QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION	49
4.5.1 Challenges faced by teachers within the school	50-51
4.5.2 Factors outside the school that comprise quality education	51-52
4.5.3 Parental involvement in school education	52-53
4.6 KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	53-54
4.7 CONCLUSION	54
CHAPTER 5 -	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1 INTRODUCTION	55
5.2 RESPONSES TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS POSED BY THIS STUDY	55-56
5.2.1 What are the teacher's and school leadership's notions of quality education within primary schools?	55-56
5.2.2 What are the teacher's and school leadership's perspectives on quality primary education?	55-56
5.2.3 How do teachers and school leadership identify challenges in promoting quality primary school education within their schools?	55-56
5.2.4 How teachers and school leadership identify challenges in promoting quality primary school education within their schools?	55-56
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS DRAWN FROM THIS STUDY	57
5.4 CONCLUSION	57

REFERENCES:	58-64
APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER	65
APPENDIX B: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY	66
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER	67
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS	68

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Mandela, N. (2003): Lighting your way to a better future. Address at the launch of Mindset Network, held in JHB, 16 July 2003. South Africa.

In this address by Nelson Mandela, education was seen as a life changing opportunity, not just for an individual, but for a whole nation. While the sentiments expressed by Nelson Mandela are consistent with literature on education and development expressing the value of education in developing states as well as the literature on education for all relating to universal access to basic education, the quality of education is the key factor in realising the benefits of such education. It is in this vein that I embark on a research study that attempts to explore what quality education is and how it is promoted within the school education system. The exploration also includes a perspective from teachers by engaging teachers on their understandings of the notions of quality education and their experiences in promoting quality education. With the transition from apartheid education to the present education system, South Africa has been plagued by a number of curricular changes and educational innovations to make it accessible to all and to address the ills of apartheid. Education has been seen as a weapon of transformation (Msila, 2007) within the South Africa debates on the nation’s transformation agenda and as has such become a core means to transform the country.

Several changes have been made to the school education system and these changes include amongst others, structural changes, governance changes, funding changes and curriculum changes, all driven through policy prescripts. This means that the policy environment for quality education is in place. Of concern is that the realisation of the envisaged outcomes are emerging in pockets of success with major gaps still being found in the policy implementation processes. Hence, this study is also conceptualised within this policy implementation gap with a focus on quality education provisioning within primary school education. This study therefore provides teachers with a platform to share and express themselves in promoting good quality education. The objective of any education system is one of providing quality education for all learners, regardless of their educational level. All learners deserve nothing less than a quality education and training that will provide them with opportunities for lifelong learning,

the world of work and meaningful participation in society as productive citizens. In realising this objective of an education system, one needs to explore what is happening at the various levels of education starting from the basic education system. This study limits its focus to the primary school to explore what quality education means at that level and how teachers attempt to contribute to such quality education.

The school education system within South Africa is framed within a curriculum policy statement, the most recent being that of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This curriculum framing suggests that some notion of quality education is being envisaged through the curriculum that is offered in schools. In this respect, this study focuses on teachers' perspectives on the CAPS curriculum as it relates to quality school education.

In this chapter, I present the purpose of the study, the background, the rationale for doing the study and the significance of this study.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The focus of this study is on quality school education as conceptualised and experienced from a school perspective. Within this focus area the purpose, then, of this study was to explore the notions of quality from a school perspective within the context of a prescribed school curriculum. This study centred on teachers notions of quality as well as their experiences and challenges within a classroom and within a prescribed school curriculum. This study also explores the quality of teaching in a primary school to achieve the envisaged objectives of the CAPS curriculum.

1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In pursuit of quality education within the context of political transformation, social justice and redress of the past in-equalities, the South African school system has been in a periodic state of transition. Tracing the transition from apartheid education, there has been a significant shift in the provisioning of school education. Some of these shifts include curriculum transformation within an outcomes based framework informed by the introduction of several curriculum policies, the latest of which is the CAPS curriculum policy. Other shifts include structural and regulatory policies that attempted to provide a conducive teaching and learning environment with a view to improving the quality of school education. It is within these policy shifts that I explore quality education as conceptualised and experienced within a primary school.

Another perspective on quality education emanates from the concerns related to learner performance, especially within the context of global rankings such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) where South Africa feature amongst the bottom performances despite the sizable investment in school education. Hence, quality education is also looked at from the perspective of the efficiency of school education and in this respect several initiatives have been implemented to improve learner performance. One such initiative is the policy development of teacher training, the most recent of which is the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) (Department of Higher Education, 2015). Qualified teachers who have the requisite knowledge and skills are seen as the key element in providing quality education at the level of the school education. Teacher knowledge and skills was considered very crucial in teaching.

A third concern relating to quality education relates to global discourses and debates on what quality education is and how can this be realised within the context of universal and free basic education. The Education for All agenda in relation to access to universal primary education for all children globally has suggested core provisioning as essential for quality education. These include: a well-qualified teaching staff, teaching and learning resources for optimal learning experiences and completion of primary education with useful outputs.

The above three areas of engagement in quality education are part of a large discourse on quality education that attracts much research that is diverse in nature but speaks to the issue of quality education (Mertens, 2014). This study, therefore contributes to the larger discourse on quality education by taking a school's perspective on what and how they view quality education.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

I am a qualified teacher, having been recently qualified and in search of a permanent position at a school. I have worked in several schools as a temporary teacher and I have noted varying conceptions of quality education across the schools. As a novice teacher, these varying conceptions of quality education compromise my perspective of what providing quality education as a qualified teacher is. This study therefore provides me with a theoretical understanding of quality school education, the debates related to the provisioning of quality education and the empirical study of quality education as conceptualised, experienced and provided by my perspective on quality education will be enhanced and will inform my teaching practices. Hence, this study has personal relevance to me as a qualified teacher.

As Mertens (2014) claims that there is much research on quality education, the diversity of such research makes this field of research complex and difficult for a school and the teachers of a school to fathom what it means to provide quality school education. In the background section of this chapter I alluded to three aspects related to quality education, each with a different vantage point of engagement. This study thus provides a glimpse of this phenomenon through the lived realities of teaching and learning within a school context that purports to be offering quality education. This study, therefore, will contribute to the complex engagement on quality education.

The most recent curriculum changes to school education was through the implementation of the CAPS curriculum policy that attempted to provide quality education within a structured and prescribed teaching, learning and assessing framework that all schools are expected to follow. As a teacher I have been affected by the policy changes that have taken place in South Africa with the introduction of the CAPS curriculum as my training to become a teacher was informed by a previous curriculum policy. As an educator, I have personally gone through these changes that have impacted on my teacher identity, classroom practice and teaching styles. I believe that these effects as a professional educator engaging in this study have been a way in which I can explore my understanding of the CAPS policy document. I also believe that teachers drive the curriculum policy within and they are responsible for the delivery of the curriculum in classrooms. With the introduction of the CAPS curriculum, as an educator, my role has changed to the extent I see myself following directives as opposed to actually driving the curriculum.

This study has brought to me the values of school education and insights into the CAPS curriculum as a way of providing quality education. This study also motivates me to understand the dynamics of school leadership and teachers when faced with promoting quality education at schools and how professional lives are affected and one can be influenced by policy thus to ensure that quality education is given.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To determine what teachers' and school leaderships' notions of quality education is within primary schools.
- To establish teachers' and school leaderships' perspective on quality primary education.
- To determine how teachers and school leadership promote quality education in their schools.

- To identify challenges that teachers and school leadership face in promoting quality primary school education within their schools.

1.6 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My study addressed key research questions that assisted me in understanding teachers and school leadership's perspective of quality education at a primary school. I explored and understood the teacher's experiences in implementing the CAPS curriculum to ensure quality education given, I have also investigated how teachers have come to their understanding of quality education as well as how they facilitate quality education within their school. The following research questions, therefore, guided my research.

i. What are the teachers' and school leadership's notions of quality education within primary schools?

This question provided a platform for teachers and school principals to describe their understanding on the notion of quality education and how they derive the above at a primary school level.

ii. What are the teachers and school leadership's perspectives on quality primary education?

By posing the above question, I was able to gain insight into how teachers and principals feel about the nature and extent of quality education. I also sensed how they felt about implementing the CAPS curriculum in promoting quality education.

iii. How do teachers and school leadership promote quality education in their schools?

This question I posed and I gathered the viewpoints on how the teachers and school leadership promote quality education in their schools.

iv. How do teachers and school leadership identify challenges in promoting quality primary school education within their schools?

This question enabled me to ascertain the degree to which teachers are able to use their agency, if at all, in dealing with curricular challenges and evolving educational demands. It also provided me with a contextualised understanding of their agency, and how this shapes teaching and learning in their respective classrooms.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design for my study was of a qualitative approach that allowed me to explore and understand the notions of quality from a teacher's perspective. This design allowed me to further understand and appreciate my selected participants and how they had perceived the notion of quality; listening to their views and observing them was like understanding them practising in their classroom as teachers promoting quality education. My study comprised of teachers within a specific school. The selection criteria for my research was very important. Many different methodologies can be selected, but for my study I had chosen the case study methodology as this methodology was best suited for my study. I felt that the case study methodology was the most appropriate methodology to contextually understand quality school education grounded in the realities of a normal school. The details of the research design are presented in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant to several persons, institutions, policy makers and the Department of Basic Education. The school leadership will benefit from this study through concerted attempts to understand what notions of quality education pervade their school and how this notion is being lived, enculturated and facilitated. Having this perspective, the school leadership then has the opportunity to reinforce, change or make minor adjustments to the schools' drive to provide quality education. To the teachers within a school, this study is significant in that it provides a scope for teachers to interrogate their practices as teachers in promoting quality education. The school, as an institution, may benefit from this study as it has the potential to illuminate, articulate and capitalise on quality education that are provided in the respective schools. The benefits to the school include its marketability for recruiting new learners, recognition by the Department of Basic Education and other agencies as a school that provides quality education and for the image building of the school. For the Department of Basic Education, this study is useful in that it provides exemplars of quality education as well as issues related to the provisioning of quality education. For policy makers, this study has the potential to inform curriculum and resourcing policies in the provisioning of quality education.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This study utilised participants that have been in the field of education for more than two decades. It would however, not be suitable for educators that have just entered the profession or novice teachers to give much clarity or insight into this study. This is only a small scale study that describes and highlights the issues that quality education as conceptualised and promoted at a primary school level. As I am also an educator by profession, I am aware of some of the opinions, concerns, and some of the biases that I may uphold and I am therefore unable to guarantee the effect this may unintentionally have had during the generation of data. Furthermore, the views that are expressed in this study are merely the views of some of the teachers and I have excluded the voices and views of parents, department officials, policy makers and various other educationists. Therefore, it is comprised of only the views and opinions expressed by micro-level players in education and it excludes views and the vision of macro-level players.

1.10 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The following is an outline of my study which was to explore teacher agency within the context of a prescribed school curriculum. My dissertation consists of five chapters.

Chapter 1 has set the scene and introduced my study project. It presented an explanation as to why this study was conducted; the focus and purpose of the study and the significance of this study.

Chapter 2 provides a literature background to the study and discusses the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 highlights the research design and the methodology selected for the study.

Chapter 4 provides the detailed findings and analysis of the data.

Chapter 5 concludes the study and provides a summative understanding of my entire understanding of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARDS A QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

2.1 Introduction

Drawing from Nelson Mandela's statement about the value of education, it can be said that education is the key to eliminating gender inequality, reducing poverty, creating a sustainable planet, preventing deaths and illnesses and fostering peace. This statement also sums up the importance of the role of education in creating a better South Africa. This chapter provides an analysis on the quality of education in South Africa. The key concepts under review is the main focus of this chapter and the theme within this literature review is used to explore the analysis of quality education.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the notion of quality. The South African schooling system has been in a constant state of transition. This has involved the significant shift from apartheid to post-apartheid education. Furthermore, the latter form has also incorporated various curricular changes in an effort to improve the standard of education. Despite these numerous changes, the quality of education in South Africa is alarmingly poor and in need of improvement. Much research has been put forth on quality education at schools. South Africa is still struggling to improve the quality of its education system. As an educator in an urban school, I have noticed that a significant number of learners in my school perform poorly. At this school, learners have access to a wide variety of school resources and moreover qualified and well-trained teachers are employed. Quality education is maintained at the school by control measures that are put in place for teacher evaluation and improvement. Quality is viewed within a political perspective of moving away from the ills of apartheid, seems to be aligned with the constitutional goals of the country. In this respect it focuses on social justice, redress, equity and transformation and democratic values.

On an annual basis, more especially when the national senior certificate results are announced, the issue of quality of the school education and that of the matric class became a media hype. Is quality education based on pass rates in national examinations or in what constitutes a good and useful education. Yusuf and Ahmed (2011) in their article on education quality in post-apartheid South Africa claim that there are numerous definitions of quality, but little consensus of what quality means within a context. This lack of consensus is at the heart in this study, in that, whilst

acknowledging that there are numerous definitions of quality, what and how schools view quality education is the subject of inquiry and one vantage point in understanding quality education.

2.2 Definition of Quality

Drawing on literature, this review explores the definition of quality education and the notion of quality. There is no consensus on the definition of quality, however, leading scholars have similar views on the notion of quality. The discussions around the concept of quality of education remain unclear and need clarification as well as a common understanding of what is meant by the term quality.

The topic of quality has been widely debated across the globe and the need for quality in schools is seen as a major challenge in South Africa. In education, many researchers have regarded quality as a difficult and complex concept to define (Harvey, 2004). In 1993, Harvey and Green had said that quality in education can be seen as a relative idea to the person who uses the term including the learners, employers, teaching and non-teaching staff, government, funding agencies and the conditions to meet the desired outcomes. However, the World Bank (2008:190) defines quality education as "... ensuring that student actually learn." In 2003, Stephens agreed with the above definition and had stated that quality in basic education relates to the learning outcomes of learners; for school managers it embraces the improvement of the general standards of reading, handwriting and mathematics; and in the classroom the teacher may define quality in relation to the improved conditions of service. Hence, the importance on the notion of quality can then be based on the relationship between the teacher and the learner; time on task; quality of the classroom and effective school management which would lead to the improvement of the learning outcomes of learners.

According to the article Unesco Education Research and Foresight (2012), quality in education is a notion which commands a seemingly intuitive understanding but seems to escape definition. The fact that this is a notion it can be captured through any approach. It is also not just about imparting information but also quality education is the better class of education. In 2012 Sayed and Motala characterised quality education as "meaningful learning" thus ensuring that students have the basic literacy and numeracy skills to progress to secondary and tertiary levels of education. It is not only based on the basic skills acquired by the students, but also on that which takes place in the classroom and other learning environments (Sayed & Motala, 2012). However, the Department of Education (2010) defines quality education as "measurable learning outcomes

achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills.” whereas Sharma & Ravikala (2006) define quality education not only by academic achievement; but also by what is expected of schools to develop well-rounded learners. The concern regarding education quality has perhaps become the most defining characteristic of international and national policy. Quality education can ensure security, welfare and prosperity of a nation. The key factors that influence the quality of education at the heart of a school as the institution are curriculum standards, infrastructure, administrative policies, financing and good governance.

According to UNESCO (2000), quality education should contribute to “developing skills and a capacity to work, to participate in society, and take control of lives and continue learning.” (Sharma & Ravikala, 2006; Slee, 2011) have said that the provision of a quality education allows learners to develop the necessary skills to cultivate the mind and contribute to social change and development. Knowing that quality education has the ability to ensure security, it also has the ability to break the poverty cycle and redress past injustices as it educates learners to be aware of issues of discrimination and intolerance (Delors *et al*, 1996; Sayed & Ahmed, 2011).

According to (Sayed & Ahmed, 2011; Sayed & Motala, 2012), providing quality education to primary school learners encourages the learners and parents to seek secondary education, thus this contributes to the necessary skills to seek more skilled employment. With the above, it can be said that this protects individuals against exploitative, unskilled or the lack of employment (Delors *et al*, 1996: Sayed & Ahmed, 2011).

2.3. What do we mean by a Quality Education?

The United Nations ratified 17 sustainable development goals to serve as benchmarks for every nation to ensure prosperity and an eradication of poverty. The Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) was a unique goal that was focused on education and this is one of the first ever to be ratified.

Goal 4 – Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning

Quality education in this context does not necessarily mean access to education but it is every that each child gets a quality education. Education is not a content delivery system but rather a system designed to help all children reach their goals, their full potential and enter society as productive citizens. In 2000, at the World Economic Forum in Dakar, the South African

government along with 166 other governments, agencies and other organisations committed themselves to improving all aspects of quality education and in this regard the forum noted that:

Quality is at the heart of education, and what takes place in the classrooms and other learning environments is fundamentally important to the future well-being of children, young people and adults. A quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs, and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living. Evidence over the past decade has shown that efforts to expand enrolment must be accompanied by attempts to enhance educational quality if children are to be attracted to school, stay there and achieve meaningful learning outcomes (World Economic Forum 2000).

By looking at the above, one can deduce that access to good education evades many in South Africa. The government tries and still continues to strive to achieve quality education for all by introducing new methods, interventions and good governance.

The focus of the study is on quality education as experienced in schools. In foregrounding this, it is prudent to understand what quality is and what quality education means within the South African schooling system. Having presented a conceptual understanding of quality education it is necessary then, to explore the various policy regulatory frameworks in order to identify and explore how these regulatory frameworks promote quality education for the South African public school. In the sections to follow, I take three policy documents and explain what quality education means. These three documents include: the CAPS document, the Teacher Development Framework and the Infrastructure Norms and Standards.

2.4 Quality education within South Africa

While several strides have been made to improve the quality of school education within South Africa, Sayed and Motala (2012) argue that education quality in South Africa remains a key challenge. As part of the Education for All commitment, South Africa strives to achieve the goals set by this world organisation centred on the notion that *quality is at the heart of education and what takes place in the classrooms and other learning environments is fundamentally important to the future well-being of the children* (World Education Forum as cited by Sayed and Motala, 2012, p 106). Through their engagement with school education Sayed and Motala (2012) argue that despite the high rates of enrolments in basic education, the majority of black learners continue to be marginalised. The reasons for this marginalisation are located within the ills of apartheid discourses that consciously promote a bifurcated, or as Spaul (2013) calls it, a two

world education system. In this section of the literature I engage with some of the policy shifts that have been made to improve the quality of school education within South Africa, commencing with the curriculum shifts, followed by shifts related to teacher development and conclude with shifts made in infrastructure and resourcing of basic education in South Africa.

Policy formulations was seen as the mechanism through which various changes to the education system were made. Whilst there seems to be some consensus regarding the various policy formulations, the function of policy remains contentious. Scholars such as Sayed (1997) and Jansen (1998) suggest that policies must be analysed within a socio-historical context, which in the case of South Africa, is seen against the redress of the past inequalities entrenched by the apartheid system. Policies can be transformative, but they function as symbolic devices that promote the illusion of change (Jansen, 1998). In post-apartheid South Africa, the education was faced with a huge challenge of transforming a radically divided, fragmented and inequitable education system which required regulatory, distributory and symbolic policies (Samuel, 2010).

2.5 Curriculum shifts in providing quality basic education in South Africa

Since apartheid there have been several shifts in curriculum policy informing the basic education system in South Africa. Initially, guided by the constitutional drive of social justice and re-dress, an outcomes based curriculum for school education was introduced through a curriculum policy named Curriculum 2005 (C2005), the intention of which was to transform all grades of school within an outcomes based approach to learning and teaching. This policy implementation drew several critiques based on readiness of the school system for a sophisticated outcomes based education (Jansen, 1998; Lemon, 2004). A review of C2005 led to the next policy shift being the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) that attempted to address some of the critiques of C2005, but equally drew criticisms, especially that of the lack of subject content (Chisholm, 2007). The current curriculum policy that informs school education in South Africa is the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which some consider as prescriptive (Msibi and Mchunu, 2013; Singh, 2015). Drawing from the CAPS policy, quality resides in the clear articulation of purpose, process, content and assessment of learning. The CAPS curriculum gives an expression to the purpose of ensuring that learners are well-equipped, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country. The purpose of the curriculum is to ensure that children acquire knowledge and apply the skills as meaningful in their own lives. The

curriculum is structured in terms of learning methods, content and how it will be assessed. Here the curriculum determines how learners will be taught in classrooms such as teaching methods with textbooks and resource materials. The content delivered for each grade shows progression from simplex to complex as well as the quality and quantity being efficient, providing good quality education. The curriculum assesses learners in terms of active and critical learning is with baseline assessments, formal and informal assessments. The CAPS curriculum is set at aiming high standards for each grade.

The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 gives expression to the knowledge, skills and values worth learning in South African schools. This curriculum aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. In this regard, the curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global imperatives (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The CAPS Curriculum policy can be considered as powerful knowledge (Young, 2014) in that it specifies the content to be taught within each of the school subjects on offer within the South African public school education system, how and when this content is to be taught and how it is to be assessed. This kind of prescriptiveness leads one to view the CAPS curriculum policy as powerful knowledge. Young (2014) provides three distinctions or criteria for powerful knowledge:

- It is distinct from the ‘common sense’ knowledge we acquire through everyday life.
- It is systematic.
- It is specialised.

We acquire knowledge everyday about all aspects of life related to what we do, how we live and apply such knowledge in our daily experiences. At school the knowledge that learners’ acquire is different from the everyday knowledge. It is distinctive and organised within discipline of scholarship that separates it from common sense, everyday knowledge. The knowledge learnt in schools is systematic and the schedule and pace of learning such knowledge within the CAPS curriculum policy suggests a systematised learning and assessment process. Qualified teachers who have specialised content and pedagogical knowledge and skills are required to teach these school subjects, suggesting that the knowledge gained in schools is specialised. What is taught and learnt in schools is considered powerful knowledge. The concept of powerful knowledge can also be related to groups that we call subjects or disciplines and with powerful knowledge this allows one to generalise and think beyond particular contexts. From this, powerful knowledge has been developed to define groups or fields of inquiry that range from

mathematicians and scientists to musicians. Powerful knowledge enables learners to acquire knowledge that takes them beyond their own experiences (Young *et al.*, 2014, p.7). An educational right of a child is to receive a comprehensive education committed to academic excellence regardless of background or social standing as viewed by Young (2014). The National Curriculum within South Africa frames this powerful knowledge and skill that is deemed necessary to equip learners to learn beyond their own experiences but also taking cognisance of their experiences and exposure to build upon new knowledge. The national curriculum also frames such knowledges within powerful disciplines that have been established over history and which were deemed essential for growth and development, especially within the context of the fourth industrial revolution that, globally, we so firmly are within.

2.6 Teacher development policy shifts in providing quality education

The quality of teachers have been flagged as a central concern in offering quality education (as declared by the Dhaka 2010 meeting on the Education for All signatories) arising from which (the concern) further goals were set in terms of providing quality basic education (UNESCO, Bangkok, 2010). In South Africa, the training of teachers, post-apartheid, was informed by several teacher development policies commencing with the policy developed by the Committee of Teacher Education Policy and commonly referred to as the COTEP document. According to Ramrathan (2017), the COTEP document was largely a symbolic policy that attempted to harness and bring commonality to teacher education programmes that were offered across 281 teacher education institutions that existed then. Since then the Norms and Standards for Education (NSE) framed teacher development within South Africa. The NSE brought together three strands of competence, the academic competence, the occupational competence and the professional competence, all of which were integrated in the seven roles of the teacher (Ramrathan, 2017). The seven roles of the teacher was seen as developing competence in providing specialist knowledge within an accountability framework that included a humanistic aspect of being a teacher (Ramrathan, 2017). The policy shifts on teacher development from Committee of Teacher Education Policy (COTEP) to Minimum Requirement for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) can thus be seen as a policy making process in responding to the challenges of providing quality teachers for quality teaching. The phrase quality teachers for quality teaching has become a common phrase and features in most policy related documents on teacher development. Quality education within South Africa is also informed by a well-qualified teaching force to enable quality outcomes of public schooling.

2.7 Infrastructure and resource policy shifts in school education for quality education

Conducive learning environments for teaching and learning have been flagged as a crucial aspect of teaching and learning for quality education. In this regard the policy on National Norms and Standards for School Funding (Department of Education, 1998), has undergone several amendments, the latest of which was in 2 February 2018 (Department of Basic Education, 2018). School funding policy within the quintile ranking system adopted to address the ills of apartheid and to redress past imbalances, was used to direct the re-dress process and to develop the infrastructure and resources needed to offer quality basic education (Mestry and Ndhlovu, 2014). They (Mestry and Ndhlovu, 2014), claim that what this policy is laudable in attempting to do is achieve equity in educational provisioning, there is a long way to go in achieving quality education in disadvantaged and marginalised communities. Spaul (2013) also alludes to this view and speaks of two school types, one for the economically advantaged and which is categorised as quintile 5 schools and the other being for the impoverished communities and which are categorised as quintile 1 to 3 schools.

2.8 How does one view quality education in South Africa?

Carrim (2013) concurs with much of the current literature on quality education globally, indicating that quality is not a clear-cut issue and that measuring it is not straightforward suggesting that how quality education is viewed within South Africa is just as complicated and diversely conceptualised. How one views quality education within South Africa is, therefore, dependent upon the gaze that one takes. Some of these gazes include learner performance, infrastructural and resources provisioning within schools, adherence to policy prescripts, teacher qualifications and access to higher education. Moyo (2013) adds to the complexity discourse on quality education indicating that although this is a highly contested concept, it is generally understood to be how well the education system is functioning in its various aspects such as infrastructure, learning materials, administration, teacher training, and teaching and learner achievement. Moyo (2013) also suggests that measurement and the best approaches to enhance quality in schools are elusive and depend on the perspective one employs. On learner performance as an indicator of quality education, Chinsamy (2013) argues that despite large financial resources being made available to school education, expected learner performance in relation to the expenditure is elusive, meaning that despite the large amounts of money being spent in education, value for money had not yet been realised. Governance of school education

has devolved down to district levels and further into schools through the School Governing Bodies (SGB). Despite this devolution of governance, Chinsamy (2013) argues that learner attainment through school education has not improved significantly. One can then deduce from Chinsamy's (2013) claim that school governance alone cannot address quality education, even though governance has the potential to monitor, support and sanction schools in providing quality school education. One can further deduce that providing quality education is a complex process and is consistent with scholars' views globally. Chinsamy (2013) pins this inability to make meaningful differences in the quality of school education, as measured by learner attainment or learner performance and policy gaps.

In addressing this policy gap, he explored the intervention of the District Development Support Programme (DDSP) as a manner to understand the find ways of addressing the policy gaps. The objective of the DDSP intervention was to make positive change at school level through building internal capacity to improve the provision of quality education. The approach was to take a whole district and whole school development approach to improving the quality of school education. This was done through:

- Empowering district officials to provide effective curricular and management support to schools in the district.
- Facilitate and mobilise schools to form self-supporting school-to-school relationships within clusters in districts.
- Improve relationships between districts' education support officials and schools.
- Empower the district offices to function as an effective intermediary between schools and jurisdictional levels above the districts (i.e. regional and provincial education department offices)

(Chinsamy, 2013, p 187)

The interventions, amongst others, included developing teachers' content knowledge and pedagogy to provide effective teaching. The outcome of this intervention was that while some improvements in learner performance was noted, follow-up support compromised gains made in the participating schools. Jansen (2013) takes a teacher perspective to quality education. In his appraisal of the factors that he considers as compromising the provision of quality education, he identifies, amongst others, two crucial aspects related to teachers. The first he relates to teachers being unionised and that the teacher unions protects the teachers' rights. An example he cites in

this respect is that of teacher appraisal. Teacher unions, Jansen (2013) argues, is against teacher appraisal, a key issue in providing quality education. By not having any teacher appraisals, it would be extremely difficult to monitor, evaluate and intervene when teachers are struggling to teach effectively. Hence quality of teaching is now measured by other indicators, for example through learner performance and Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). The IQMS has been critiqued for its purpose, its process and for its outcomes (Biputh and Mckenna, 2010). In effect, it is extremely difficult to establish teacher efficiency in terms of quality teaching and learning in the absence of teacher appraisal. Jansen (2013) also suggests that quality education provisioning is also compromised by teacher professionalism wherein he criticises teacher punctuality, teacher absenteeism and their content and pedagogical competence. These elements, amongst others, in terms of teacher professionalism, compromises the respect for teachers as responsible individuals and skilled professionals to effect quality teaching and learning. While teacher professionalism is a broad concept, he raises concerns on the value of being a professional teacher and its concomitant impact on the quality of school education provisioning in South Africa.

2.9 Theoretical framework informing the study

Drawing from the above engagement on some of the literature on quality education and noting its contentious nature that has little agreement on what constitutes quality education globally, it would be inconceivable to find a theory on quality education that is not contentious and that which will receive widespread agreement. Here in this section I present an engagement on some of the theoretical frameworks that have been used within the South African context with a view to arguing for a school focused framework that resonates with the realities of the South African context and its curriculum demands. In brief, Aoki's (1999) notion of curriculum is based as a theoretical framework to inform my presentation of the data and the analysis thereof. Noting that the study is located within a case study design, Aoki's notion of curriculum as planned and curriculum as experienced was deemed most appropriate, the details of which are presented below. Drawing from the Council of Higher Education (2013), report on the state of higher education in the context of high dropout and low throughput and graduation rates noted in higher education across the country, three views of quality education were framed. The first relates to fitness of purpose, the second is fitness for purpose and the third being value for money. Fitness for purpose refers to the internal coherence of a programme, meaning that there is logic, flow and incremental development of knowledge and skills within a programme design. Fitness for

purpose refers to how the programme is responding to the needs of the local situation. Value for money is self-explanatory and refers largely to an evaluation of its benefits in the context of intention and costs. While the Council for Higher Education (CHE)'s framework for quality education is useful, it is largely used in the context of programme evaluations more associated with higher education. There are however, elements of this framework that are important to understand school education in terms of quality offerings. More specifically, fitness for purpose may be more relevant to school education and which could take on a curriculum focus to understand how the immediate environment of teaching and learning of a curriculum can influence what is offered in a school through the curriculum. In this respect, Aoki's (1999) notion of curriculum as lived might be more aligned and useful to the diversity of teaching and learning that have come to characterise the South African school education system. Taking into consideration, the nature of diversity of the teaching and learning contexts and the diversity of learners taking school education, Aoki's framing of curriculum as planned and curriculum as lived would be more appropriate to understand how school defines quality education within its particularity.

Aoki's (1999) notion of curriculum as planned refers to the formal curriculum that is offered within an education system. In the case of South African school education, the CAPS curriculum policy is the curriculum as planned. This means that all schools are expected to offer the same curriculum to all its learners, irrespective of where they take their schooling. The CAPS curriculum is a structured curriculum that defines what learning is to take place within each grade of schooling and within each school subject. It also defines when each content knowledge is to be taught, for how long it is to be taught, how it will be taught and how it will be assessed. This level of detail in the planning suggests that extensive planning had been put in place to develop a detailed policy. Aoki's (1999) notion of curriculum as planned is therefore accentuated by the highly prescriptive and detailed CAPS curriculum (Singh, 2015). Curriculum as planned is therefore seen as something that one cannot deviate from and if one follows the plan, then quality education will be realised. Meaning that the envisaged outcome of the highly structured plan is almost guaranteed if followed by the letter of the law and therefore quality resides in sticking to the plan. Noting the challenges of the South African school education system and the literature reviewed above in terms of the ability of the government to provide quality education, it is inconceivable that quality education is realisable through Aoki's notion of curriculum as planned.

His second construct of curriculum as lived (Aoki, 1999) is perhaps more appropriate to understanding quality education from a school's perspective. Aoki's notion of curriculum as experienced is located within the everyday realities of classroom teaching and focuses on the micro-moments of learning that is relevant to the learners. While the curriculum is planned forms the basis of classroom engagement in teaching and learning, the incidental teaching and learning that happens continuously within and outside the classes becomes the curriculum as lived. Meaning that relevant teaching and learning is enabled through the interactions between the teacher, the learner, the formal curriculum, the teaching contexts and the disruptive elements that constitute everyday teaching. This is what Aoki (1999) envisages as curriculum as lived. The usefulness of this construct in this study is by acknowledging the everyday reality of classroom and school interactions that constitute micro-learning moments that may be construed by teachers and learners as useful learnings that could extend beyond the formal curriculum. This view is consistent with the experiences of teachers and school leader of the case study school as they relate their notion of quality school education from a school perspective, an elaboration of which will follow in the data presentation and analysis chapter of the dissertation.

The fourth industrial revolution is determined by a range of new technologies that is digital and impacting all disciplines, economies and industries, and even challenging ideas about what it means to be human. In my study, the fourth industrial revolution is powered by artificial intelligence and perhaps this would transform the workplace from tasks based characteristics to human centred characteristics. The above impacts on educators as in recent years new technologies and online connectivity have introduced many changes in our everyday lives and Educators have the responsibility to prepare students providing them not only with all the knowledge but also ensuring that students understand technology, its trends and ensure that they have the skills to make the right career change decision and to thrive in their workplace.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented a review of relevant literature on quality education from a global to a national perspective. While there seems to be some correlation between some of the elements of quality education between global discourses and national and local discourses, the notion of quality and of quality education remains elusive and contextual bound. Aspects of quality education through policy intervention was presented in this chapter to highlight the on-going changes that are being made to improve and regulate quality education provisioning in South Africa. The literature reviews conclude with some empirical studies that have been done in the

focus area of quality school education to highlight the gains and the challenges that we as a country still face in terms of providing quality education. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the theoretical framework used in this study to frame the data presentation and analysis in this study. The next chapter focuses on the presentation of the data and the analysis thereof.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The South African schooling system has been in a constant state of transition. This has involved the significant shift from apartheid to post-apartheid education. Furthermore, the latter has also incorporated various curricular changes in an attempt to determine an improvement in the standard of education. This study focuses on understanding the notion of quality education: perspective from a school and how a school can promote quality education. I have examined teachers' experiences and their understandings of the notion of quality and explored and understood their challenges in promoting quality education within the CAPS curriculum.

In this section, I will briefly discuss the theory of research methodology. Research methodology simply comprises various ways and types of techniques that are used to collect information and data, analysing the information within a specific framework of research. Redman and Mory (1923) define research as a "systematised effort to gain new knowledge." The type of research conducted was that of semi-structured interviews and descriptive essays as a means to generate rich, thick data required for the understanding of teachers' feelings and experiences in promoting quality education. Within this study, research also includes the research design; reasons for the participants selected; data analysis, as well as, instruments used for the process of data analysis. Then, the ethical clearance consideration, confidentiality issues being discussed and any shortcomings and limitations to this study are addressed.

3.2 Research Design for this study :

According to authors Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), research design is a blueprint for a research process to achieve a particular research purpose. A research design is a blueprint for the collection, measurement, analysis of data, based on the research questions of the study (Sekaran and Bougie 2013, p 95). The research design for this study therefore, includes a description of the epistemological stance taken in this research, the methodology selected and argued for, the data collection plan and issues of rigour, credibility, ethics and biases that guided this study.

3.3 Epistemological stance taken in the study

Epistemology has its own aetiology in the Greek language where the word episteme, means knowledge. So, to put this in order, epistemology is used to describe how we come to know something; how we know of or about the truth or reality or as Cooksey and McDonald (2011) put it, what counts as knowledge within the world. Epistemology is concerned with the very bases of knowledge – its nature, and forms, how it can be acquired and how it can be communicated to other human beings. The focus is on the nature of human knowledge and comprehension that one as a researcher can possibly acquire and is able to extend, broaden and have a deeper understanding in the field of research. Schwandt (1997) defines it as the study of the nature of knowledge and justification whereas Crotty (1998) explains that epistemology is important to provide a philosophical foundation to decide what knowledge is possible and how to ensure that knowledge is both adequate and legitimate. Cohen (2007) has explained that epistemology is associated with the nature and forms of knowledge with assumptions thereof in producing such knowledge. I have acknowledged that there are several types of epistemological knowledge, with their own assumptions on how knowledge can be created, acquired and communicated.

The interpretivist paradigm can often be found conflated with terms such as post-positivism, qualitative inquiry, naturalistic paradigm, qualitative research and constructivism. It has been described as an umbrella term subsuming several different schools of thought, including phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical theory, symbolic interaction and ethnomethodology, as well as featuring ideas that align with late nineteenth to early twentieth century pragmatism and later twentieth-century feminist theories (Yanow, 2006). In my research I have taken on an interpretivist paradigm where I had the opportunity to view and hear the teachers' experiences of their understanding of their notion of quality. It also allowed me to view the world of teaching through the perceptions and experiences of each participant in the research. I analysed and used their experiences to construct and interpret my understanding from the gathered data and I have understood things through the lens of the research participants.

I have understood that in my study the interpretive paradigm was thus suitable as this gave me an insight into the notion of quality education. Myers (2009) argues that the principle of interpretive researchers is that access to reality (whether given or socially constructed) is through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings (online) whereas Cohen, *et al.* (2011) stipulates that the interpretive paradigm is characterised by a concern for

the individual and in this research study the areas of concern in the research design was the teacher. In contrast, interpretivist researchers understand “the world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion, 1994: p36). Herewith, I have focused my research on the understandings of the notions of quality.

3.4 Qualitative inquiry as a research approach for the study

Donald Ary (2009:423) claims that qualitative inquiry which begins from a different assumption, namely the subject matter of the social or human sciences differs fundamentally from the subject matter of the physical or natural sciences and therefore requires a different goal for inquiry and a different set of methods for investigation. The qualitative research is about observing and understanding the way of life in a school which is related to education that is experienced and promoted within. Taking on an interpretivist epistemology for this study, determines that in order to best understand the situation, this research is best known to be a naturalistic inquiry. Naturalistic inquiry is a phase of qualitative inquiry that is a generic term for an array of educational research approach (Creswell and Miller, 2010).

The research design for my study was of a qualitative approach that allowed me to explore and understand the notions of quality from a teacher’s perspective. This design allowed me to further understand, appreciate my selected participants and how they had perceived the notion of quality; listening to their views and observing them was like understanding them practising in their classrooms as a teacher promoting quality education. My study comprised of teachers within a specific school. The selection criteria for my research was very important. Many different methodologies can be selected, but for my study I chose the case study methodology as this methodology best suited for my study within a qualitative research design.

3.5 Research methodology employed in the study

A case study methodology was deemed most appropriate for this study. The case study was a primary school, that of Marvel Primary School (pseudonym for the selected school). The reasons for selecting a case study methodology for the study is argued for in this section. Case studies, according to Rule and John (2014), are an in-depth study of a unit, be it, amongst others, a person, an institution (like a school), a specific geographic site or a country. In this study, the case is a school, Marvel Primary school. The in-depth nature of exploration of the phenomenon under study, being quality education, is explored within the daily practices and views expressed in this school. Cohen, *et al* (2011) argues that the phenomenon under

exploration is done within a bounded system of operation and would therefore be constrained by its boundedness limiting generalisability of its findings. In this case study the phenomenon of quality education is explored within the context of Marvel Primary school bounded by the daily practices of the school and grounded in its policies, culture and common understandings. It is not expected to generalise the findings of this study in terms of extrapolation, rather the findings may be analytically generalised (Henning, 2004), meaning that if a school in a similar context of the case study is found, it may be possible to extrapolate the findings in this study to that school having a similar school context of the case study school.

Marvel Primary school is a public school, with a school ranking of quintile 4. It is 45 years old. The current principal is the sixth in the school. The school is situated in an urban area very close to the central business district of a large city (Durban). The school was formerly a school for the coloured population and now it is a non-racial school. Access to the school is easy and learners attending the school can use several modes of transport or report to school by foot. The school is located in a middle income area and there are several businesses in close proximity. The learners attending this school come for a range of family types, include nuclear and extended family situations, impoverished and elite home backgrounds, multi-racial and multi-cultural and are from different religious groupings. They come from areas far beyond the locale of the school, some from townships like Inanda which is approximately 30 km from the school. There are approximately 1300 learners and 41 teachers, all of whom are qualified to teach. The leadership of the school comprises the school principal, one deputy principal and four Heads of Department. The language of teaching and learning is English with the first additional language being isiZulu. The school has a fairly well developed infrastructure with four blocks of classrooms but the class sizes range from 40 to 60 learners per class. The space for teaching and learning is very restricted due to the class sizes. The school does not have any specific specialist rooms, like a library, which they intend to build and name as a media centre. The school has a large ground which facilitates the playing of different codes of sports. The school is governed by national, regional and school policies that influence the way it is run. The learner performance is considered average and is above norms and the school is therefore regarded as a good school by the community.

3.6 Selection of participants for the study

Having gained access to the school as a research site, I was guided by the principal of the school in terms of selection of the participants. This means that the normal sampling strategies

were not followed and could be regarded as a limitation to the study. The limitation is in relation to who was selected and why the participants were selected. The implications would be in terms of the nature of information that would be given by the participants selected by the principal. Five participants thus formed the informants of the study. Three teachers, the deputy principal and the principal of the school was the sample size and constituted the main sources of information. As this study was of a limited nature, the sample size was deemed appropriate for the scope of the study. The sample of respondents provided a teacher perspective and a school leadership perspective, thereby enabling a two way perspective on quality education within this school.

3.7 Methods of data collection

After having identified the participants of the study, the next step was to establish how to produce and analyse the data that would allow me to answer all the relevant questions for this study. In this research, I used semi-structured interviews where the questions were asked to respondents on an individual basis.

In this research study, each of the teachers were interviewed through a semi-structured process where the leading questions were developed regarding the notion of quality. By doing the interviews, this served to bring credibility to the data for my study as the second process of gaining an insight into the phenomenon of the notion of quality. This semi-structured interview is a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important. The semi-structured interview was the most suitable choice for this study as, according to Bryman: 2004, “the researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in terms of how to reply.” Their strength therefore, lie in that they are flexible. Robson (2002) opines “that face to face interviews offer the possibility of modifying responses and investigating underlying responses. Here teachers were asked to share their experiences and opinions or any concerns regarding the notion of quality experienced. I found that the data of questions that was done was made possible to get more details and to clarify the purpose of the notion of quality.

3.8 Credibility and trustworthiness in the data collection process

Credibility and trustworthiness, being concepts related to empirical studies within an interpretivist epistemology, are needed to ensure that the data produced for the study is accepted within the scientific domain of conducting empirical research. These concepts are related to issues of validity and reliability constructs within a positivist framework. In this study I ensured that my data was authentic, as in any type of research that one does, one has to ensure that the quest for quality is pursued. As qualitative researchers consider that dependability, credibility, transferability and conformability as trustworthiness criteria, these constructs formed the basis for rigour in qualitative findings (Guba, 1981; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007).

My participants were involved in this research from the beginning and were actively involved in my research study. According to Veal (2011), Bryman (2012) and Loh (2013) trustworthiness consists of three different components – transferability: the applicability of the findings in other contexts; dependability: reliability of the findings at another time: and confirmability: objectivity of the researcher while carrying out his/her research. Blumenfield – Jones (1995, p.31) suggests that for the study to have trustworthiness, it must also achieve verisimilitude. The quality of verisimilitude is important because it allows others to have a vicarious experience of being in a similar situation and thereby being able to understand the decisions made and the emotions felt by the participants in the study. So, in this research the descriptions of teacher responses must be believable and in this respect the verbatim words of the participants as contained in the interview transcripts were used. By using the participants' words others in similar situations would be able to identify with these sentiments, expressions and emotions. As this study is of limited scope and is located within a case study design, confirmability, dependability and reliability are relied upon in the way the data was collected, represented and utilised within the data analysis chapter. Credibility is defined as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Macnee & McCabe, 2008). Of importance is the credibility of the study in terms of the phenomenon under exploration and this was achieved in the way the data was collected and represented within the data analysis chapter. The interviews were personally conducted and transcribed by myself, as the researcher. The transcripts were then given back to the participants to review its content and to verify that it records the representations of their views

and experiences. This process is called member check and is a usual process to ascertain credibility of the data within a research process.

3.9 Ethical issues within the research process

On conceptualising the study and developing the research proposal for acceptance and approval by my academic institution, issues of ethics formed a core component. In this respect, ethical clearance for the study was obtained through the university's processes that required rigor, supported with extensive documents including that of gate keeper's permissions, participants' informed consent and the permission of the Department of Basic Education for conducting research within its Provincial state schools. Before conducting the empirical aspect of the study I met with the principal of the identified school and had discussions with him on the nature, purpose and process of the research. Having obtained permission for the use of his school, I then approached the participant teachers and explained to them the nature, purpose, process and their rights as participants in this research process. Having obtained all the necessary permission for conducting the study, I embarked on the data collection process, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of information presented by the participants up until writing this dissertation. The data for this study will be kept in a safe locked-up cupboard in my supervisor's office and will be destroyed after a period of five years as per university policy.

3.10 Limitations of the study

In any field of research study, there are always some limitations and shortfalls. Researchers sometimes can expect to encounter challenges when generating or analysing data. After understanding the above, I have come to bear this in mind and have become more thoughtful in this study. The limitation was conducted at a suitable venue that was convenient for the participants. For this research study, the limitation selection of the participants were limited. I consulted each participant on an individual basis in accordance with their location and accessibility. In terms of what was comfortable for them, I asked them the questions on an individual basis and recorded them on audio. I asked the participants for their feedback, anything to make them feel at ease. I could not meet all the participants at once due to them teaching and their time constraints. Interviews were done on a daily basis until completed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected through the research design planned for the study. I have explained my piece of an interpretative paradigm as my epistemological positioning in this study. I have also highlighted in this research study the research design, selection of participants and instruments.

For the introduction of the data presentation and analysis, the information submitted in this study tells us how the data was processed and thematised leading to the findings of the study. In this chapter, the focus is on the presentation, interpretation and analysis of the data that was obtained through the data generation process of this study.

The introduction of Marvel Primary School as the research site was presented in the methodology chapter. Data was generated from five primary school teachers. The reporting of the findings that emerged from the teachers' experiences on the notions of quality were explored and are presented in this chapter within three themes. The chapter then extends to highlight the key findings of the study and concludes with a theoretical analysis of these key findings.

4.2 The analytical process followed in working with the data

The data was produced through the interviews with the five participants. The interviews were transcribed and the transcriptions then formed the basis of working with the data. The transcripts were read several times to gain familiarity with the information presented by the participants. Through this reading process I was able to establish that common themes were emerging. These common themes coincided with the literature that I had read and which informed my literature review chapter. I then named the common themes and gave each one a colour code. The next step in working with the data was to colour code the transcripts according to the colours given to each of the common themes. After coding, the data that was colour coded was brought together. I then engaged further to establish more refined groupings and these refined groupings then formed my sub-themes. Through this process I established and confirmed three themes and these themes formed the structure of presentation of and engagement with the data. The key findings that emerged from the engagement then formed the basis for a theoretical analysis using my theoretical framework and its key constructs.

4.3 Theme 1: Notions of Quality Education

4.3.1 The elusive notion of quality education

Quality education, as presented in the literature, is an elusive concept largely because of there being no consensus on what quality is and on what quality education is (Sayed & Ahmed, 2011). This consensus issue is a historical issue. Sayed (1997), for example, in the late nineties argues that the concept quality in education is elusive and "... is frequently used but never defined" (p.2) and goes on to discuss how its multiple meanings reflect "different ideological, social and political values" (p.2). By critiquing key approaches to education quality, Sayed (1977) highlights what he calls the value-bases of any framework for education quality, while Bunting (1993) declares that "Quality in education does have a bottom line and believes that a bottom line is defined by the goals and values which underpin the essentially human activity of education" (p.2).

The data from teachers in the case study schools supports this notion of being an elusive concept in that each of the teachers had a different opinion on what they mean by quality education in their school. The data reveals that quality education spans four dimensions of school education and includes a focus on infrastructure and facilities, process issues of rules and regulations, human resource issues of being a professional teacher and learner outcomes in terms of intended learning. Much of these focus areas relate to issues that they consider would promote quality education, but little on what quality education is. Of note is that, because there is no consensus on what quality education is, the supportive aspects for promoting quality education is what teachers speak about and what they need rather than having a clear conception of quality education is. The data produced for this study confirms this and speaks of the support aspects of quality rather than what quality education is. For example, only one teacher (Teacher B) speaks directly to quality education.

Teacher B says that quality education is "*...providing learners with skills to develop them holistically and to prepare them to be self-sufficient*"

This notion of quality education is forward looking with the focus on the outcome of learning. In this instance the development of useful skills to prepare learners to be self-sufficient. In this notion of quality education the utilitarian value of education is privileged.

The other participants speak of quality education in terms of the supportive element that promote quality education, but not what quality education is.

Teacher C focuses on the school infrastructure and facilities as being important in providing quality education.

Teacher C says: *“Quality education will be education that is where facilities are provided for the children. Teaching resources are provided as well as punctuality of teachers.”*

Teacher A has similar perspectives to that of the school principal, and says that: *“...teaching education in line with guidelines which have been set by Department of Education adhering to their policy. In this school adhering to policy by DOE in conjunction with school policy.”*

The school principal says that quality education is *“... adhering to guidelines as prescribed by the constitution and the Department of Education”*.

It is quite clear from these statements by the participants that the supportive elements to promote quality education is the focal point rather than the constitutive elements of a learning programme. What these statements also suggest is that the teachers have a sense of what quality education is, but are not able to articulate their notions concretely. This assertion is plausible as the participants were asked directly what their notion of quality education is and most were not able to provide a direct response to this question. Generic words used by the participants in attempting to describe their notion of quality education includes: *“proper training/skills”* (Teacher A), *“guidelines”* (Principal) and *“perform duties”* (Teacher D) which suggests that the participants do have a sense of what quality education is but are not able to express it in a way that reflects their ideas. Rather, they use terms and concepts that allude to quality education. This is, perhaps, why the concept “quality education” is elusive (Sayed and Ahmed, 2011).

A further insight into how teachers view quality education is its association to professionalism and training, suggesting that quality education is viewed possible by knowledge experts. For example Teacher A, Teacher B and Teacher D speak of teachers and their professionalism as key to quality education.

Teacher A says: *“There should be important proper training, practical intervention with the learners to understand teaching and their background, proper education skills need to be covered,”* while, Teacher B says that quality education is about:

“Teaching, learning and writing. Being self-responsible and self-motivated to excel. Self – discipline and respect.”

Teacher D: *“a willingness to report to school, to learn and achieve and to perform duties”*

This issue about who provides quality education tends to frame quality education provisioning and is linked to the resourcing of quality education. Having a qualified teaching staff and ongoing professional development are markers of quality education which has been endorsed by the Education for All world agenda that specifically speaks of quality education in terms of having a qualified teaching staff (Harris and Schubert, 2001). Teacher professionalism was seen by Jansen (2015) as an issue with the provision of quality education within South Africa referring to teacher punctuality, teacher preparedness for teaching and teacher apathy.

Drawing from the above data, it seems that there is a confluence of a range of factors and issues related to quality education and that the notion of quality education is complex and is nested in structures, processes, professionalism, content and outcomes. It is clearly evident that this confluence of factors and issues associated with quality education makes it difficult for teachers to clearly articulate what quality education is, rather they have a sense of what quality education is. Having this notion of quality education, the views that these participants have on quality education in the researched school are similar to their general understanding of quality education. These understandings include *adhering to rules and Departmental policies* (the school principal); *learner achievements and holistic development of the child* (Teacher B and Teacher C); *teacher professionalism and conducive teaching and learning environments* (school infrastructure) (Teacher D and Teacher E).

It, therefore, seems that teachers' notions of quality education are located within their everyday practices and experiences of schooling and are identified through the challenges that they face in these everyday experiences. The next sub-theme, therefore, explores how teachers have come to from their notions of quality education.

4.3.2 How have teachers come to their understanding of quality education?

These teachers have come to the understanding of quality education, by identifying the needs of the school and learners. Morgan (2016) argues that "*It's important to recognise that the term "quality" is socially constructed. That is, what we mean by the quality of education depends on how we, as a society, define what we value as excellence in education.*" School is regarded as a social space and that this social space is defined by what happens in that space and by the people who work or are engaged in that social space. Fredriksson (2004) also considers this social space and views quality in term of how the space creates a sense of security for its intended purpose, meaning that the school as a social space for quality education should be safe and where they can learn in a stimulating environment. The social construction of quality is

validated by the teachers and the principal in the way they refer to quality. For example, Teacher D speaks of *embracing the school mission and vision* when referring to quality education, the principal uses words like “*our*” and “*we*” suggesting collectively within a social context.

The responses from the participants of the study suggest that teachers develop their sense of quality education within a social context that they are exposed to and which they experience in their daily lives as teachers in a defined social space. This view of how teachers have come to know what quality education is links very much to the relativity of the concept quality education (Morgan, 2016) within varying social spaces that come to view quality education in terms of its contextual values which may vary across different societies. In this case study, school and the participants’ meaning of quality education have been developed and understood by the material realities of that school context and which is guided by its vision and mission statement as articulated by one teacher participant:

Teacher D says: “*Embracing of the school mission and vision,*” with reference to how he has come to his notion of quality education. The embracing notion is the socialisation process of coming to know what quality education is in this case study school. The socialisation process of coming to know what quality education is, is reinforced by the Principal of the school who says:

“Educating our children so that holistically, we have a well-rounded individual leaving our school who is ready to face the challenges of our new democracy.”

suggesting that quality education is broader than what happens in schools and includes a national aspiration of contributing to a national agenda of democracy by developing learners who would be able to live within a democratic society. The socialisation aspect of what quality education is, is beyond just teaching a set of subjects to learners. There is a bigger goal of producing citizens for a social order.

Closer to school, Teacher B speaks of “*family*” “*atmosphere*” and “*learn from each other*” which reinforces the notion of socialisation that is contextual and localised in nature (*atmosphere*). Teacher D speaks of having “*a good culture of teaching and learning*” and Teacher E speaks of “*in this school involves the dedication of ...*”. These utterances of the teachers reinforce the notion that teachers are socialised into what quality education is and that this socialisation is contextual in nature, bounded by its daily practices and intentions.

Having engaged with the concept of quality education and how teachers come to understand what quality education is in the case study school, the next theme focuses on how quality education is driven within this school.

4.4 Theme 2: Medium through which quality education is promoted

Drawing from the words of the Principal that quality education is “*adhering to policy guidelines*”, this theme engages with three aspects of adhering to guidelines. The adherence is related to curriculum, policy and school management and leadership.

4.4.1 Curriculum as a conduit for quality education

Aoki (1999) speaks of curriculum in terms of curriculum as planned and curriculum as lived. Taking this notion of curriculum which has largely been seen as the formal, non-formal and hidden curriculum (le Grange, 2017), the participants of this study view both the formal and non-formal curriculum as conduits for quality education. Some speak of the content of the curriculum and others speak of access to the curriculum.

Teacher C indicates that the “*curriculum addresses the needs of the learners and offer basic skills*”; and Teacher D speaks of the curriculum as being, “*very content heavy and rigid*” and Teacher B says that “*volume of task not practical,*”. Suggesting that quality lies in the formal curriculum that is to be taught. In expressing this view, the challenges associated with teaching the formal curriculum are also alluded to and these challenges relate to the access to the formal curriculum by learners. For example: Teacher E say, “*the school curriculum caters for the isiZulu speaking learners*”, suggesting that the curriculum is flexible to accommodate learners of different linguistic groups, noting that the schools have approximately 90% isiZulu speaking learners. Access to the formal curriculum, or challenges therewith are dependent upon linguistic competence of the learners, despite the school being an English medium school. First Additional Language accessibility to the curriculum by learners of isiZulu Home Language can either be seen as an access challenge (barrier to quality education) or an opportunity for conceptual learning through curriculum policies that allows for teaching and learning in a first additional language mode (enhancing quality education). This conundrum of accessibility to the formal curriculum based on language competence adds to the complexity and relativity of quality education.

The curriculum challenge also signals an evaluation of the content in relation to the learners. For example, Teacher B considers who the learners are in relation to what is expected of the formal curriculum and says *“the volume of the tasks are not practical ... difficult for learners whose home language is not English.”* The Principal of the school recognises the challenge of literacy amongst its learners which he *“tried to tackle”* in promoting quality education in his school.

The non-formal aspect of the curriculum has also been alluded to as providing quality education as Teacher C views curriculum as, *“addresses the needs of the learners,”* and the Principal reflecting on *“the holistic development of the learner through a well-rounded individual learning”* as being quality education for his school.

The data presented on curriculum and its links to quality education suggest that both the formal and non-formal aspects of the curriculum are what drives quality education. However, the lived experiences of teachers and the Principal suggest that, in the researched school, there are challenges in providing quality education through the curriculum. The challenges are contextual in nature in that the medium of instruction and the curriculum coverage relative to the learner population are the major constraints in keeping to the formal curriculum, as planned.

While there are challenges with offering the formal curriculum to the learners in the researched school, some teachers are of the view that the formal school curriculum is insufficient to offer quality education.

Teacher A says: *“The current school curriculum, in my opinion, does cater for quality education in some respects,”* suggesting that more is needed of the formal curriculum to offer quality education. This view is also echoed by Teacher C:

Teacher C says: *“It addresses the needs of the learners and offers basic skills to a certain extent.”*

From these statements by teachers it seems that they have an innate understanding of quality education and that their evaluation of the formal curriculum is that it is lacking in some aspects which they innately believe is important and needed for the learners. Teacher D concurs with the others but attributes the concern to the highly prescriptive CAPS curriculum (Singh, 2015).

Teacher D says, *“Our curriculum is very content heavy and rigid.”* and further states that: *the curriculum is not of a quality education standard.*

In this case the teacher's experience of teaching the curriculum (curriculum as lived) allows this teacher to make such evaluations about the formal curriculum and quality of school education, suggesting that there is more to quality education than is prescribed by the formal curriculum. These utterances by the teachers suggest that their notion of quality education rests beyond the implementation of the formal curriculum policy. One can then deduce that, based on the experiences of the teachers, quality education does not reside solely on what is taught through the formal curriculum, and that other attributes of school education, mainly located within the non-formal, informal and hidden curriculum (le Grange, 2017) constitutes quality school education. This deduction also points to a notion of tacit knowledge that teachers have acquired through their experiences as professional teachers and which they find extremely difficult to articulate or describe clearly, thereby contributing to the elusive notion of quality education (Sayed and Ahmed, 2011). This difficulty of teachers to express their tacit knowledge is evident in the way they describe their challenges in offering quality education at their school. In the next theme I explore the challenges that teachers face in offering quality education and through this exploration, begin to identify the other elements that the school considers as quality education.

4.4.2 Policy environment through which quality education is promoted

School leadership, teachers, education stakeholders and communities play an important role in the well-being of the school and all have a notion of quality that they would like to see unfold within their schools. Leadership has been deemed to be key to change and the school principal plays a vital role in the school (Meistry, 2017). External school stakeholders drive the accountability arm in school education, which they deem influences the level of quality and care provided to the children. While the principal has internal control of what happens within the school, the external education stakeholders have a say as to what they believe is quality education and exercise this belief through the accountability regimes that the principal has to fulfil. In this instance, notions of quality education within school is not entirely determined by those that lead and teach in the respective schools.

Teacher D says: "*Policies are in place to ensure quality education happens.*"

Teacher E says: "*We are workshopped by the unions, Department workshops are given when the need arises. HOD's check on the learner's work and teacher files. IQMS is done regularly.*"

These two utterances by the teachers of the school support the notion of external influences on quality education within schools. Policies, for example, have become a measure of adherence

to frameworks that direct what should happen in schools. Teacher D expresses this adequately by stating that these policies are in place to *ensure* that quality education *happens*, alluding to the accountability regimes that directs school education. Teacher E alludes to several bodies, including teacher unions that do get involved in school development to offer quality education. The implications of accountability to external stakeholders and working within a policy environment are related to the school experiences of attempting to offer quality education. This accountability process influences provisioning of quality education in that the notion of quality education as envisioned by the school staff (teachers and principal) may be constrained by such external influences and therefore contribute to the teachers' notion of quality education and the way they promote quality education within their school.

Some of the policies that contribute to quality education in the researched school include benchmarking of learner performance beyond just assessment marks. For example, Teacher E says: "*Learners participate in external exams and activities with other schools and learners. Also participate in speech contests, spellathon quizzes and the Maths and Science olympiad.*"

Teacher professionalism is also associated with a policy environment that demands responsibility by the teachers. For example, Teacher D says: "*Educators attend school punctually. There is a good sense of discipline.*"

The importance of maintenance of a responsive school policy environment is alluded to by Teacher C, who says: "*Policies are continually being updated to address learner needs as well as teacher needs.*"

The principal of the school sums up the need for a responsive policy environment to offer quality education by saying: "*Quality education can only be achieved if strict rules are drawn up, put into place and adhered to.*"

From the above engagement it seems that policies do have a role to play in the provisioning of quality education within schools. The school leadership creates this policy environment to regulate good practices in teachers and learners. Regulatory frameworks, therefore, do allude to notions of quality education through consistency and agreements amongst role players in the school.

4.4.3 Teaching beyond the formal curriculum as factors influencing quality education

The interactions within the classroom are also considered as contributing to quality education. In this respect the participants of the study refer to various factors within the classroom that they view as promoting quality education. These include the way teachers facilitate teaching and learning, learner commitment, incentives and motivation to learn and flexibility of the approach to teaching and learning. Drawing from the data, the teachers in the researched school views quality education to include the nature and quality of interactions with learners beyond presenting and assessing the formal curriculum.

Teacher B says that: “*being democratic and transparent adds to the quality of education that learners in the school receive.*”

In this respect broader attitudes and values are considered as quality education as these qualities are seen as beneficial soft skills (Billet, 2011) that need to be promoted within the school education system. Quality education for Teacher B also includes the learning that a learner needs in order to operate in society, workplaces and other social settings.

Teacher E alludes to *self-discipline, respect, being responsible and self-motivation* as qualities that she promotes within her class and views these aspects of quality education. The focus on the learner taking responsibility for their learning, growth and development is also futuristic in nature, meaning that the taught curriculum is not the only factor in quality education. The teachers in the researched school has some notion of what would benefit the learner beyond just the learning of the school subjects and consider these learnings that will benefit the learner in the future as being part of quality education.

Teacher B refers to being *open-minded* and to *motivate learners* as a way to *create a passion for school*. In this respect, she encourages learners to explore their thoughts, using the way she engages with her learners as an example, to promote such explorations amongst learners. Creating a passion amongst the learners for school education contributes to the motivation that she believes learners need and which she believes contribute to quality education.

Taking the above into consideration, developing insights, skills and interest in knowing more is what contributes to quality education. This means that quality education is beyond teaching a planned curriculum and measuring the outcomes of learning in the form of learner performances.

4.4.4 Other activities that promote quality school education

Beyond the formal aspects of curriculum and policies that direct teaching and learning, there are other aspects that teachers and school leaders view as promoting quality education. These include issues of discipline, supervision of teachers and adherence to rules and regulations. These aspects that contribute to quality education resides with the teachers and that of the school management.

The Principal of the school says that *quality education can only be achieved if strict rules are drawn up, are put in place and adhered to*, suggesting that for a conducive managerial environment to ensure quality education, three elements are needed with respect to how the organisation works effectively. These three elements include developing rules for engagement, putting them in place and adhering to them. If any one of the three is not done, then the effectiveness of the organisation would be lost. In this respect, quality education resides in the way the organisation is run effectively.

Teacher C speaks of the *resources available within the school to function optimally*, which reinforces what the principal of the school said about the organisation running effectively. In this respect, the running of the organisation is not limited to rules and regulations, but includes the availability of resources to effect appropriate teaching and learning. Teacher D alludes to the need for such teaching and learning resources and indicates that he *integrates my lesson using multimedia resources*, as a way of promoting quality education.

Monitoring of teachers is another contextual issue that is needed to offer quality education. In this respect the principal says that *teachers are supervised* and that *there are regular meetings between the school management team and teachers to deal with any school issues relating to quality offerings*. The process of offering quality education is just as important as what kinds of educational experience is provided. This process aspect of quality education must, therefore, be seen as the opposite side of the same coin, that of quality education. Meaning that in order to offer quality education, both the substance of and the means to provide such education is needed and should be considered as inseparable.

4.5 Theme 3: Challenges faced in promoting quality education in school.

Within this theme I explore the issues teachers see as challenges in offering quality education at the researched school. Through exploring these challenges, notions of quality education conceptualised and offered in the school becomes evident. The challenges are separated into

two sub-themes. The first being those experienced within the school and the second being those experienced beyond the school that teachers believe compromise quality education.

4.5.1 Challenges faced by teachers within the school

Taking the cue from the above theme, quality education therefore, resides in the substance and the process of educational experience. In this respect, this sub-theme explores the challenges that teachers face within the school that compromised quality education. The data suggests that there are in-class issues and school issues that compromise quality education. The in-class issues include large class sizes, language barriers, learner discipline and limited or lack of adequate teaching and learning resources.

Teacher B says: *Class sizes of, for example, 48 learners compromises monitoring and interactions with learners on their learning.*

Teacher C says: *“Limited / lack of resources*

Teacher D says: *“Class sizes and Lack of resources affect her teaching”*

Teacher E says: *“The language barrier, the general knowledge that the child is not exposed to and the large class numbers.”*

Class size, lack of adequate teaching and learning resources and the language of teaching and learning as barriers to quality education have been noted in the literature, especially as it relates to learner attainment (Spaull, 2013; Bloch, 2009) and, therefore, it is not unexpected that these teachers view these school realities as issues that compromises the provisioning of quality education. Learner discipline issues have also been noted in the literature, that disruptive elements impact on classroom engagement. Pramonney (2018) in her study on school ethos and its influence in learner performances showed that teaching and learning time in class is reduced substantially due to learner disciplinary issues. Providing quality education is also compromised by the learners who disrupt teaching and learning time, the outcome of which is that teachers cannot complete planned teaching and learning activities.

The learner disruptions, lack of adequate teaching and learning resources and large classes means that the planned curriculum is compromised by what happens in the classrooms. The teachers are not able to teach the planned curriculum, nor are the learners able to keep up with the expected learnings.

The in-school challenges in providing quality education relate to teachers' attitude to teaching, teacher professionalism and school resources.

The principal (Teacher A) speaks of *programmes having to be sustainable*, speaking within the context of the low literacy levels that the learners in the school have. While the school recognises the poor literacy levels of its learners, the interventions to address this literacy issue are not sustainable. He indicated that he *tried to tackle the literacy issue*, suggesting that his efforts were in vain. No reasons were provided by the principal. The implication of the low literacy level of its learners suggests that the intended teaching and learning is compromised, which ultimately affects the quality of education being provided. If learners are not able to comprehend the learning materials as intended due to the lower levels of literacy, they would struggle to cope with the expected teaching and learning. Low levels of literacy have also been flagged in the literature as impacting on the quality of education and on learner attainment (Spaull, 2013).

The post provisioning norms (PPN) have also been flagged as an issue in that these norms determine the number of teachers that are allocated to the school. Teacher B says that *the Department of Education determines the PPN i.r.o. employing of teachers* and laments that her *class size has 48 learners*. The large class size has been reported by teachers as impacting on quality teaching and learning. This large class size is the result of the Department of Education's determination of the number of teachers that can be employed in a school, based on its PPN. As noted in the earlier section, the large class size is outside of the school's control, but nevertheless influences what happens within the school.

The school factors that compromise quality education are, therefore, complex involving teachers, learners, school leadership and the Department of Basic Education. This means that the provisioning of quality education is a complex issue and involves many stakeholders. In the next sub-theme I explore factors outside of the school that present itself as challenges to quality education and which further extend the stakeholders responsible for providing quality education.

4.5.2 Factors outside of the school that compromises quality education

In this section I explore the factors that teachers believe compromise quality education and which resides outside of the school. These factors include lack of parental interest and support to their learners, no reinforcement or motivation from home and inadequate support from the Department of Education. With respect to the curriculum, teachers feel that it is too packed,

rigid and very heavy in content. The factors outside of the school that compromise quality education resides in the homes of learners and in the Department of Basic Education, suggesting that the school is sandwiched between the regulator of education and the receiver of education. Teacher D says, “*Our curriculum is very content heavy and rigid.*”

Teacher E says that she *helps learners with extra lessons in the mornings and during breaks*, suggesting that the curriculum is packed and teachers require extra time to get through the curriculum.

The school curriculum is a national curriculum that must be offered in terms of the national curriculum policy. This means that despite the diversity of schools and the diversity of the learners, the school is expected to implement the policy as prescribed. The teachers in the researched school indicate that they needed extra time to teach their learners, suggesting that they do not have sufficient time in the normal class to teach according to the curriculum policy. The reason for not having sufficient time in class to teach the prescribed curriculum is manifold and includes learner disruptions, as alluded to in the discipline of learners, lack of adequate teaching and learning resources, the curriculum policy planners expect to be in place and other factors. Teaching to the planned curriculum is expected to be disrupted because of confluences of the many issues that are beyond the teachers’ and school’s control. The prescribed school curriculum, therefore, also compromises quality education, which, in a way is a conundrum. The national Department of Basic Education has developed a national curriculum policy to ensure quality education, but being prescriptive about its implementation, despite the varying and challenging teaching contexts, not teaching the planned curriculum compromises quality education in relation to learner attainment, hence the conundrum.

4.5.3 Parental involvement in school education

Parental involvement in school education has been raised in the literature as an issue that impacts on quality education (Menheere and Hooge, 2010). The teachers in the research school also recognise the importance of parental involvement in learning and the absence of this involvement compromises quality education. Teacher B says, “*Lack of the parental input and interest (monitoring) and no reinforcing at home of what is learnt in school impact on the learners learning.*” Teacher C also recognises that the *lack of parental involvement impacts on the learning process of the learner.*

This recognition of the influence of parental involvement in learning by learners suggests that quality education also involves the parents or guardians in several ways. These include the

monitoring roles that parents can play in supervising learners' homework, motivating learners to learn, exposing learners to learning opportunities outside of school and being interested in what happens in school (Richard Daniel Page, UWC, 2016). All of these roles that the parents could play would, therefore, contribute to quality education and their role is seen as substantial, hence the recognition of parental involvement as being essential in the learners' education.

4.6. Key findings of the study

Drawing from the themes within which the data was presented, analysed and discussed, the following emerged as the key findings for the study.

The first key finding was that teachers notions of quality education is consistent with the literature in that they were not able to clearly articulate what quality education means for them. They were able to allude to what quality education is and this could be attributed to them having a tacit understanding of quality education, but difficult to express.

The second key finding is that teachers focus on the supportive elements that they deem is needed for quality education rather than the substance of what quality education is. This key finding arises out of the first key finding if teachers have a tacit knowledge of what quality education is, they are more able to articulate what is needed in order to offer quality education. Their tacit knowledge of quality education is promoted by the supportive elements that promote quality education and are based on their teaching experiences.

The third key finding of the study is quality education is guided by the extent to which the formal curriculum is offered to learners and the policy environment that supports the curriculum offerings. This means that quality education is seen as adhering to policy prescripts. Quality education is seen as the extent to which the formal curriculum requirements are met and which are demonstrated through learner attainment of learning, usually in the form of learner performances.

The fourth key finding is that quality education is also dependent upon out of school influences, both from the home environment as well as from the regulating authority, which in this context are the Provincial and National Department of Basic Education. Quality education involves several stakeholders, both within and outside of school and therefore, the provisioning of quality education is relative to the influences of the stakeholders of school education.

In explaining the key findings I draw on Aoki's (1999) notion of curriculum as experienced and Pinar's (Pinar, 2010) notion of complicated conversations in understanding the complexity

of quality education. Using Pinar's notion of complicated conversation, it is not inconceivable to realise the complexity of offering quality education within school education. The various stakeholders in school education have their own perspective of what quality education is and these perspectives may converge as well as diverge. For example, in the discussion on factors outside the school that influence quality education, I alluded to the conundrum that school faces in terms of offering quality education. I also attempted to explain this conundrum. This explanation is an example of the complicated conversations that need to be held in order to offer quality education. One can also see the complexity in having these complicated conversations in that each has its own starting point in the conversation and these starting points may be vastly different. Coming to some consensus from vastly divergent starting points may prove to be extremely difficult to attain. However, such conversations are needed across the stakeholders with a view to getting some sort of consensus on what quality education is and how it can be achieved.

Aoki's (1999) notion of curriculum as experienced is useful to understand teachers' perspectives on quality education as these perspectives are deeply located in their teaching experiences. Their understanding of what is needed for quality education and how quality education can be achieved is based on their teaching practices and their engagements with learners over an extended period of time. These experiences have cemented their views on what quality education is and as such their views vary or differ from teacher to teacher. This varying conception of quality education and what they consider as being quality education is largely located in their teacher biographies developed across their experiences of teaching which reinforces the notion of curriculum as experienced as opposed to teaching according to the curriculum as planned. This view is supported by the teachers' accounts of what constitutes quality education and what they believe compromises quality education as indicated within themes presented above.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data within a thematic approach to data analysis. Within each of the three themes developed from the data, several findings were revealed. These findings were extended to form key findings of the study. The key findings were further discussed and explained using appropriate constructs from the theoretical frameworks of Aoki and Pinar. The next chapter concludes the dissertation by reviewing what was intended in conducting this study and what was achieved.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

From the onset of this study I discussed my investigation of teachers' experiences on notions of quality. At the same time, I explored and tried to understand the notion of quality education and how it can be perceived. In this final chapter, I conclude this dissertation with a reflective review of this study after carefully considering the insights that I obtained throughout this study. I offer major conclusions that I have drawn from the study and present recommendations in the light of these conclusions.

In trying to understand the notions of quality, my study addressed four key research questions, the first being: *What are the teachers' and school leadership's notions of quality education within primary schools?*

The second research question addressed in the study was: *What are the teachers and school Leadership's perspective on quality primary education?*

The third question being: *How do teachers and school leadership promote quality education in their schools?*

And finally I addressed: *How do teachers and school leadership identify challenges in promoting quality primary school education within their schools?*

In this study, understanding the teachers' experiences of quality education provided me with valuable insights into and an analysis of what teachers are exposed to. A brief summary of the major conclusions that can be drawn from this study are:

5.2 Responses to the research questions posed by this study

This section provides a narrative response to the research question that guided this study. The narrative responses are drawn from the data, the engagement with the data and the theoretical analysis, as guided by the theoretical framework used in the study.

5.2.1 What are the teachers' and school leadership's notions of quality education within primary schools?

The data provided in the case study is consistent with the literature on the diverse notion of quality education in that it has a different take on what they mean by quality education in their school. Each participant discussed the nature and notions of quality and how they experienced it in their respective classrooms. There is a confluence of a range of factors and issues relating to the concept quality education and that the notion of quality is complex and is nested in structures, processes, professionalism, content and outcomes.

5.2.2 What are the teachers' and school leadership's perspective on quality primary education?

The teachers' and school leadership perspective on quality education plays an important role in the well-being of the school and all have a notion of quality that they would like to see unfold within their schools. The range of perspectives by the teachers and leadership of the school suggests that the notion of quality education is a complex concept and resides in past experiences, current contextual realities and future aspirations.

5.2.3 How do teachers and school leadership promote quality education in their schools?

The teachers and school leadership promote quality education in terms of how they experience challenges in the school situation and in terms of the motivation, teaching methodologies and personal care and interest in the learners. A well-rounded approach to providing quality education is adopted by teachers and school leadership.

5.2.4 How teachers and school leadership identify challenges in promoting quality primary school education within their schools?

Class size, lack of adequate teaching and learning resources and the language of teaching and learning are seen as barriers to quality education. There seem to be the greatest challenges that teachers and school leadership see as compromising their efforts at providing quality education. Learner discipline issues such as learner disruptions, lack of adequate teaching and learning resources and large classes means that the planned curriculum is compromised by what happens in the classrooms. I would also add that the school challenges in providing quality education include teachers' attitudes to teaching, teacher professionalism and school resources.

5.3 Recommendations drawn from this study

The significance of this study has far reaching consequences. Recommendations are made to key individuals and departments based on the outcomes of this research. For the teachers this study is significant as it brings to their attention their notion of quality education and how their notions of quality influence their teaching practices and their engagement with learners and school authorities. It is recommended that teachers make a concerted effort. The significance of this study has far reaching consequences. Recommendations are made to key individuals and departments based on the outcomes of this research. For the teachers this study is significant as it brings to their attention their notion of quality education and how their notions of quality influence their teaching practices and their engagement with learners and school authorities. It is recommended that teachers make a concerted effort in distilling their notion of quality education and review their notion of quality education against the vast literature on quality education, both within the South African context as well as globally. In doing this they will be better informed about their teaching practices in providing quality education from a basis of scholarship.

For the school leadership, this study is significant in that it provided a situated perspective on quality education provisioning in their school. This situated perspective will allow the school leadership to put in place structures and processes that will promote and sustain quality education provisioning in their schools. It is recommended that school leaders establish the challenges that teachers face in providing quality education with a view to supporting them in overcoming these challenges to facilitate quality education provisioning. The study also has significance to the Department of Basic Education in that the situation analysis within schools will provide them with a nuanced notion of quality education provisioning so that they can respond to the contextual realities that schools face in providing quality education. In this respect it is recommended that the Department of Basic Education engage schools and teachers in understanding their notions of quality education and the challenges that they face in quality education provisioning with a view to supporting school in providing quality education.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the dissertation by providing a narrative response to the research questions that guided the study. Drawing from the narrative responses, this chapter identified significant persons and organisations that would benefit from the study and recommendations emerging from the analysis of the data produced through the case study methodology.

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