THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM

by

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I declare that **THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE                              Date
(MS TN MAKELENI)
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late and beloved uncle Sibusiso Njilo and Mziwakhe Makeleni, who always imagined their niece graduating with a senior degree one day. This dissertation is also dedicated to my parents, Mazangwa Rachael and Dambile Eliot Makeleni, whose efforts nurtured me to such an extent that I am able to achieve higher goals in life. I also pay tribute to the Khumalo and Njilo families, whose prayers made me stronger and more dedicated in life. I will not forget my late aunt (Dabawo) Nomalungisa Makhumalo Matiwane, whose dream about my future has been achieved. Finally, this work is dedicated to my late grandmother, Fundeleni Ivy Makeleni, who taught me how to pray when days are dark.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore what knowledge and experiences teachers hold about curriculum implementation and how their knowledge and experiences influence teaching and learning practices. This study is qualitative in nature and adopted a case study research design to explore the Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences of curriculum implementation. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analyses were used for collecting data. The study utilised a constructivist theoretical framework on knowledge and experiences of curriculum implementation. Four Foundation Phase teachers from two different schools in the Eastern Cape Province were interviewed and observed. Document analysis was used to corroborate the data collected through observations and interviews. The findings indicated that teachers had different knowledge levels and understanding of curriculum content and components. Furthermore, this study revealed that teachers’ instructional planning was inadequate. It was indicated that teachers needed comprehensive training, relevant resources, monitoring and support, conducive teaching and learning environment, further orientation in teaching First Additional Language, multi-grade teaching skills, and parental cooperation in the education of children. The findings highlighted that, although teachers experienced challenges in curriculum implementation, there were some who showed willingness to implement curriculum changes and who acknowledged the benefits of NCS previous workshops. I recommend that in order to ensure that teachers implement curriculum changes according to the requirements; the Department of Education and curriculum designers must consider the context in which the curriculum has to be delivered. Amongst all other requirements for curriculum implementation, teachers have to be monitored and supported to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Key terms: Curriculum implementation; Foundation Phase; teacher knowledge; National Curriculum Statement; Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ACRONYMS</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. INTRODUCTION                                          1
1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY                               1
1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT                                      5
1.4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY                       6
1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY                              6
1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY                        7
1.6.1. Data collection methods                              7
1.6.2. Data analysis                                        8
1.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS                                  9
1.8. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION                                   9
1.9. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY                               11

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION                                          12
2.2. CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA              12
2.3. TEACHERS’ UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCES ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMMES 15
2.4. TEACHERS’ UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRINCIPLE OF             18
5.2.2. Knowledge and understanding of NCS principles 79
5.2.3. Instructional planning teachers experienced 79
5.2.4. Teaching and learning 80
5.2.4.1. Teaching and learning strategies 80
5.2.4.2. Language of instruction 80
5.2.4.3. Lack of resources 81
5.2.5. ASSESSMENT 81
5.2.6. GENERAL EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS 81
5.3. PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS 82
5.3.1. Training requirements 83
5.3.2. Principles of curriculum 83
5.3.3. Instructional planning 84
5.3.4. Teaching and learning 84
5.3.5. Assessment 84
5.3.6. General experiences of Foundation Phase teachers 85
5.4. CONCLUSION 85
5.5. HIGHLIGHTS OF FUTURE RESEARCH 86
5.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 86
REFERENCES 88
APPENDICES
Appendix 1: Permission letter to the district circuit manager 95
Appendix 2: Permission letter to the principals 96
Appendix 3: Permission letters to teacher 97
Appendix 4: Permission from the circuit office 98
Appendix 5: Permission letters 99
Appendix 6: Teacher interview schedule 100
Appendix 7: Classroom observation checklist 102
Appendix 8: Document analysis checklist 103
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Sampled participants</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Themes and categories explored</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Number of lesson plans per teacher, per subject</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Number of learners’ activities in term one</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Teacher records as per subject and per grade in term one</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAPS</td>
<td>Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBE</td>
<td>Department of Basic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAL</td>
<td>First Additional Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCS</td>
<td>National Curriculum Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL1A</td>
<td>Post level 1 at school A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL1B</td>
<td>Post level 1 at school B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2A</td>
<td>Post level 2 at school A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2B</td>
<td>Post level 2 at school B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, aims, significance and limitations, as well as a brief discussion of research design, ethical issues, concepts clarification and organisation. It presents a rationale for eliciting the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in implementing the curriculum in rural schools.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In recent years, Foundation Phase teachers in South Africa have been experiencing rapid curriculum changes, influenced by the rapid increase in global knowledge, technology, and skills. Currently, South Africa is reshaping its curriculum by making frequent changes in teaching and learning to meet the international standards of education. In 2002, the national Department of Education (DoE) introduced the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 and Grades 10-12 as the revised version of Curriculum 2005. In 2005, the Foundation Phase teachers began to implement the NCS, although they were still unsure of what was expected of them in terms of the curriculum changes due to lack of in-depth training and the uncertainty of planners and trainers themselves (Burger, 2010). On-going implementation challenges led to another curriculum review in 2009 and a single document known as the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 was introduced in 2011 (Department of Basic Education, 2011a). According to DBE (2011a), this document “builds on the previous curriculum but updates it and aims to provide clear specification of what is to be taught and learnt on a term by term basis.” This document represents a policy statement called Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for teaching and learning in South African schools. This study began when teachers were introduced to CAPS, which is NCS in principle.
Foundation Phase is the entry level of schooling and, as a result, all the new curriculum reforms begin here. These changes are supported by Erden (2010:1), who emphasizes that, “everything changes, nothing remains still.” According to Mbingo (2006), this implies that teachers have to adopt the changes and be aware that they are inevitable, as the social, political, and economic time perspective determine them. This study sought to understand how Foundation Phase teachers received and experienced these changes in their teaching contexts. According to Erden (2010:2), curriculum change involves goals and objectives, content of the curriculum and its design. This indicates that teaching and learning in the classroom is subject to change. The aim of this change is to improve the quality of education and Erden (2010:2) suggests a need for good implementers of the current innovations. In this study, I argue that teachers are the main implementers, responsible for transferring the theoretical information into a real classroom setting.

Professionally, I have noticed that the Foundation Phase teachers were experiencing challenges in their implementation process and that their experiences affected their teaching practices in classroom situations. Smith (2010:6) finds evidence for this in the lack of foundation in Numeracy and in Literacy internationally, nationally and provincially, thus the challenges experienced by Foundation Phase teachers in curriculum implementation are not unique to South Africa, and it is common to experience challenges when a country introduces a new curriculum (Moalosi & Molwane, 2010:29). According to Moalosi and Molwane (2010:27), for instance, in Botswana when “Creative and Performing Arts” (CAPA) was included in the primary curriculum, limited training and lack of subject content knowledge impeded teachers.

Empirical data collected through the Imbewu Project in 2005 in Eastern Cape schools revealed that schools in underdeveloped rural areas need much support to enable them to meet the expectations of the implementation of curriculum (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2005:6). Many have no libraries, shortage of classrooms, mud and rain on floors, poorly cared for resources, and no water taps, with most parents depending on social grants. According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011a:5), these conditions contravene the
principles underpinning the curriculum and the Constitution of South Africa, which emphasise equal and better education opportunities for all.

In 2007, the Quality Improvement Development Support and Upliftment (QUIDS UP) revealed falling standards in the Foundation Phase in Literacy and in Numeracy (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2007). The study indicated a lack of awareness of the requirements of the curriculum implementation and a clear system of evaluating and monitoring teaching and learning. It also highlighted that Foundation Phase teachers lacked curriculum content knowledge and skills to implement the expectations of curriculum implementation.

From my observations and informal conversations with colleagues, I have observed that Foundation Phase teachers in Lusikisiki district are experiencing challenges in implementing curriculum. At face value, my assumption is that Foundation Phase teachers in rural schools lack the necessary curriculum content knowledge, skills and assessment tools to implement the prescribed curriculum effectively. I argue that these challenges lead to serious difficulties in understanding the implementation of curriculum fundamental requirements for effective teaching and learning.

The rationale for undertaking this study arises from various perspectives. Firstly, as a Foundation Phase teacher in a rural school in Lusikisiki and cluster leader in curriculum implementation, I understand and interpret curriculum implementation according to my own beliefs, attitudes, and personal experiences. Often, my interpretation and implementation of curriculum contradicts policy expectations. Sang, Van Braak, Valcke and Tondeur (2009:364-365) argue that teachers’ beliefs affect instructional planning and teaching practices adversely. These scholars hold a view that better understanding of educational beliefs of teachers is important to influence and improve teaching practices and the potential success of curriculum implementation. Therefore, they suggest that teachers’ beliefs need to be evaluated continuously. In this study, beliefs refer to philosophy, principles of practices, personal epistemology, practical knowledge, and orientation (Sang et al., 2009:364). Teachers’ knowledge and understanding were thus explored in order to find out whether their beliefs were aligned with the requirements and expectations of curriculum implementation processes. Researchers indicate that personal beliefs and experiences cannot be observed directly and have to be
inferred from teachers’ statements (Sang et al., 2009:364-365). I therefore opted to interview and observe teachers to elicit their views, perceptions, knowledge, and understanding on curriculum implementation.

Secondly, I have observed poor learner performance in the Foundation Phase. I also discovered that the national and provincial Departments of Education, parents, Intermediate, and Senior Phase teachers questioned the academic foundation of learners in this phase. Stakeholders were raising concerns about learners who could not read or write, and those who could not do activities demanding higher order thinking at their level but who in any event progress to the next grades. Many scholars have voices similar concerns. For instance, Fleisch (2008:122) and Pinar (2010) assert that teachers in disadvantaged rural primary schools tend to have lower expectations of what learners can achieve. If this is the case, it suggests that the system of education is in crisis, because the Foundation Phase is its cornerstone.

From the aforementioned scholars’ arguments and concerns it is evident that the Foundation Phase teachers are teaching parallel to the aims and objectives of the implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum principle emphasises that outcomes should represent a high level of challenge for learners, and all are expected to accomplish them at high performance levels and be given credit for their achievements (Maphalala, 2006:31). According to Killen (2007:26), teachers have to expect all learners to achieve the significant learning outcomes to high standards. Teachers might have their own reasons to shift from this principle, but rather than exploring these, the study will explore teachers’ knowledge and understanding on the application of principles in teaching situations.

The third motivation for embarking on this study is the recent literature that revealed that, by 2009, 90% of teachers had not started implementing the new curriculum in South Africa (Sithole, 2009). As Jansen (2009:141) reported, the curriculum is very difficult to understand because they are not clear of what is expected from them. According to these scholars, the principals of primary schools concurred with teachers, and highlighted that as principals they found it difficult to support them because of the lack of knowledge. In my view, this implies that teachers are experiencing a curriculum content knowledge gap in their implementation processes. Erden (2010:3) argues that once teachers do not
“comprehend what the curriculum theoretical framework is all about, they will fail to implement the curriculum successfully.” In this study, I set out to explore the nature and the extent to which the Foundation Phase teachers’ knowledge and understanding meet the requirements of curriculum implementation.

The review of the literature relating to the challenges experienced by Foundation Phase teachers in rural schools, with respect to curriculum implementation in the Eastern Cape, have identified a gap in research. The literature also revealed that the researchers, despite the role they play in curricular development, did not examine the rural context related to implementation. The DoE and the curriculum designers have overlooked the context in which the curriculum is delivered. Furthermore, in most of the studies, underlying reasons for the challenges teachers experience in curriculum implementation were not investigated. This study is intended to explore those areas.

1.3. **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Ever since the South African curriculum was transformed in 1997, teachers have been experiencing rapid classroom changes and are continuing to struggle with these changes in the field of education. The NCS is an amendment of Curriculum 2005, but the current literature indicates that teachers are still experiencing challenges in classroom situations (Bantwini et al., 2011:17; Peat, 2009:2). According to Maphalala (2006:7), these changes have a profound effect on job satisfaction because they affect learner performance and the standard of education in the country. On-going implementation challenges resulted in another review of the curriculum in 2009. The National Curriculum Statement for Grade R-12 was introduced in 2012, but builds on the previous National Curriculum Statement for Grade R-9 and Grade 10-12, DBE (2011). The aim of this curriculum is to provide teachers with clear specification of what is to be taught and learnt in the classroom. The following research questions have been posed to investigate challenges teachers experience while implementing the new curriculum.
The main research question is:

What are the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers regarding the implementation of the curriculum?

Sub-questions are:

1.3.1 How do Foundation Phase Teachers experience the curriculum implementation programmes they received?

1.3.2 How do Foundation Phase teachers’ knowledge and experiences influence their teaching practices to meet the requirements of the curriculum Implementation?

1.3.3 What can be done to address the challenges facing the teachers in rural primary schools?

1.4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to investigate the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in implementing the curriculum in their classroom practices. In order to achieve this aim the following objectives serve as guidelines:

1.4.1 To examine the manner in which Foundation Phase teachers experience the curriculum implementation programmes they received.

1.4.2 To investigate the influence of Foundation Phase teachers’ knowledge and experiences in teaching practices to meet the requirements of curriculum Implementation.

1.4.3 To make recommendations on the findings from the study to address the challenges facing teachers in rural primary schools.

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Since the effective functioning of schools and the achievement of learners are significantly influenced by teachers’ effective implementation of curriculum, this study is significant to the DoE, curriculum specialists, and teachers. Firstly, the study revealed empirical evidence on the nature of Foundation Phase teachers’
understanding and experiences in implementing the curriculum in rural primary schools. The study also reported on the influence of Foundation Phase teachers’ understanding and experiences in implementing curriculum in their classrooms to teachers, curriculum specialists and to the DoE. Finally, the study offered recommendations for curriculum implementation in rural primary schools.

1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study investigated Foundation Phase teachers’ understanding and experiences about curriculum implementation in rural schools. In order to understand teachers’ experiences, interviews, observation, and document analysis were used to gather data and inductive content analysis was used to analyse data within the qualitative research design. White (2004:58) defines the qualitative approach as one that helps the researcher to discover the problem that exists within the phenomenon in depth and in detail. In this study, the aim was to provide an in-depth exploration of the way four Foundation Phase teachers implement, understand, and experience the curriculum. A qualitative case study design was employed. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:316) describe case study as a way of focusing on one phenomenon to understand it in depth, regardless of the number of persons or sites. The above definitions of case study approach suited the study as it aimed at exploring the experiences of a few Foundation Phase teachers in rural schools. Cohen, Manion, and Morison (2007:147) write that, “it is people who define the meaning of particular situation.” In this study, Foundation Phase teachers defined the meaning of implementing the National Curriculum Statement in their contexts.

1.6.1. Data collection methods

This study focused on two schools out of twenty-four primary schools at Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape Province. The rationale for choosing these schools will be discussed in detail on Chapter 3 of this study.

Maree (2007:145) defines sampling as a selection from a population or a group of people in that particular field in order to identify the people to be included. In this study, four Foundation Phase teachers were selected from different schools to
investigate their understanding and experiences in implementing curriculum in rural schools.

Various data collection methods were used:

- **Semi-structured interviews**: Delport, Fouche and Strydom (2007:292) define semi-structured interviews as organised conversations around areas of particular interest. Henning, Smith and Van Rensberg (2004:122) state that the purpose of an interview is to allow a researcher to enter into the other’s perspective. Individual interviews were guided by open-ended questions.

- **Structured observations**: This technique was used to corroborate data that emerged from the semi-structured individual interviews. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:347) define observation as the “researcher’s technique of directly observing and recording without interaction.” The researcher observed how curriculum is implemented through teaching and learning in the classroom. The checklist was used as observation instrument during the process of teaching.

- **Document analysis**: This method was used to verify the data collected from interviews and structured observations. Document analysis included teacher portfolio files (containing lesson plans, recording sheets, assessment task, and memoranda), sample of learner portfolio files, class workbooks and homework books, mark schedules and the report cards. These documents were used to analyse the nature of implementation strategies used in the classrooms.

### 1.6.2. Data analysis

The data was analysed inductively in this study. McMillan et al. (2006:364) define inductive analysis as primarily a process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among the categories. It is a systematic process of coding, categorising, and interpreting data in order to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest (McMillan et al., 2006: 64). Dibisa (2010:51) explains that, “inductive process is when a researcher starts with a large set of data representing many things and seeks to narrow them progressively into small and
important groups of key data.” In this study, the researcher collected a large set of data on teachers’ understanding and experiences in curriculum implementation. The data collected from interviews, structured observations, and from document analysis were analysed individually and grouped together by similar responses of teachers. Themes were given to such groups of responses and the emerging themes categorised and coded by means of abbreviations of key words (Cohen et al., 2007:174; Delport et al., 2007:338). The collected information was presented, interpreted and concluded.

1.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was conducted keeping ethical criteria in mind. The institutions were given letters requesting to use the sites. I informed participants fully about the research programme and provided letters of consent to the participants in which they were asked to give consent to any ethical issues that could have been relevant. I did not examine any documents, such as teacher profiles and learners’ work, without official permission from participants (Cohen et al., 2007:321). As a researcher, I knew that I had to remain accountable for the ethical quality of inquiry and was supposed to take great care to protect the status of participants. Confidentiality of participants was maintained by using pseudonyms, for example PL1C for post level one teacher from school C. The recorded interviews and observations of the research are kept safely for the confidentiality of the data and can be produced if necessary.

1.8. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

This part of the study provides clarification on key concepts that were used in the study.

Curriculum: Curriculum is a broad concept, which includes all planned activities that take place in the school, such as dealing with learners’ experiences (Hunkins & Ornstein, 2009: 10).
**Curriculum transformation:** Fourie and Vermeulen (2007) define transformational curriculum as that which brings new changes to the education system.

**Principles of curriculum:** According to Oliver (2009:22), “principles are guidelines that promote the aims and objectives of the official curriculum which teachers have to note when planning learner activities.”

**Curriculum implementation:** Curriculum implementation is defined as the translation of plans into actions (Oliver, 2009:22), that is a way of delivering the learning experiences by the teacher in the classroom.

**Assessment:** Assessment is a tool necessary to make the decision that influence a learner’s progress and allows the teacher to evaluate his or her teaching methods in order to improve the performance and meet the diverse needs of learners in the classroom (DoE, 2008).

**National Curriculum Statement:** Burger (2009) defines NCS “as curriculum which aims to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled and compassionate with respect to the environment and the ability to participate in a society as a critical and active citizen.”

**CAPS:** Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement is a new curriculum built on the NCS to improve curriculum implementation. It comprises the “policy documents stipulating the aim, scope, content, and assessment for each subject listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12 (DBE, 2011b).

**Outcomes Based Education (OBE):** This is a theory of learning, which emphasises what learners should learn and the outcomes that need to be demonstrated at the end of the learning process. It is the underlying philosophy behind NCS (Fourie & Vemeulen, 2007:38). Msila (2008:196) states that OBE refers to the new system of education in South Africa after apartheid education, some of its later versions being Curriculum 2005, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), and the NCS.

**Foundation Phase:** This is an entry level to formal schooling, for learners who are in the first four years of schooling, namely Grades R (reception class), 1, 2, and 3.
**Constructivist learning theory**: This is a learning theory which encourages individuals to construct knowledge independently and transfer it across other fields of learning (Pinar, 2010).

**Curriculum model**: Nsamba (2009:8) defines curriculum model as a “structured framework which guides curriculum planning and implementation based on learning and teaching theories.”

### 1.9. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is arranged in five chapters:

**Chapter One** has provided an introduction and background to the study. It introduced the statement of the problem, aims and objectives, significance, limitations, research design and methodology, data analysis, ethical considerations and concept clarification.

**Chapter Two** presents the literature review and theoretical framework on the Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences in implementing the curriculum.

**Chapter Three** is concerned with the research design of the empirical study. It describes the planning and conducting of the semi-structured interviews, structured observations, and document analysis.

**Chapter Four** deals with data presentation, analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

**Chapter Five** includes discussions, conclusion, recommendations and limitations.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This section of the study is about reviewing the views presented by various scholars on the understanding and experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in implementing the National Curriculum. Recent investigation of curriculum implementation in rural primary schools in the Foundation Phase has revealed that teachers are experiencing numerous challenges between their teaching and the learner achievement in their implementation of the curriculum, internationally and nationally (Fleisch, 2008; Moalosi & Molwane, 2010:29). These challenges have emanated from lack of effective teaching and learning of Mathematics and Literacy in the Foundation Phase. Therefore, this chapter explores some international and South African perspectives that relate closely to teachers’ experiences in curriculum implementation in rural contexts. In order to understand the experiences of the Foundation Phase teachers, it is necessary to understand the historical background of the curriculum, thus assisting in understanding the present situation experienced by teachers. A brief overview of curriculum transformation in South Africa is provided in this chapter.

Foundation Phase teachers’ understanding and experiences of curriculum implementation around curriculum implementation programmes, understanding of the principles guiding the curriculum, instructional planning, teaching and learning and classroom assessment are explored. As indicated in Chapter One, the study examines the influence of teachers’ understanding and experiences in meeting the requirements of NCS implementation. The research is framed within a constructivist learning paradigm and models of curriculum such as the process, objective, and situational analysis models.

2.2. CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

After the democratic elections of 1994, the DoE established transformational Outcomes Based Education (OBE) to provide the needs of the 21st century. In
order to transform the curriculum, Curriculum 2005 policy was launched officially as an Outcomes-Based Curriculum, the aim being to establish a curriculum that would accommodate all the citizens of South Africa (Fourie & Vermeulen, 2007). Due to challenges in classroom implementation of C2005, the Chisholm Review Committee was established in 2000 to evaluate the process and the content of the curriculum. It recommended that the curriculum be strengthened by streamlining its design features, simplifying its language, aligning by strength and assessment, improving teacher orientation and training, and providing support (Smith, 2010:19). According to Maphalala (2006:6), teachers had higher expectation when the DoE introduced the NCS. Teachers hoped that they would have a clear description of the kind of learner they had to develop in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values at the end of each grade. The findings from various empirical studies indicated that those expectations had not been met, as acknowledged by poor learner performance standards, in particular in the Foundation Phase and through Grade 6 and 12 results (Fleisch, 2008:123; Smith, 2010:6).

According to Lombard, Meyer, Warnich, and Wolhuter (2010:75), the NCS Review Committee of 2009 and the Minister of Basic Education indicated that teachers were not competent to teach the curriculum because of challenges they experienced in the implementation process. They further highlighted that the minister had received many complaints and comments from teachers regarding the implementation of NCS (Lombard et al., 2010:176), and the NCS Task Team recommended the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in order to respond to the challenges.

In 2010, the Minister of Basic Education announced a budget allocated for 2010 and 2011 for workbooks to assist Foundation Phase teachers in organising learner activities. The aim was to respond to the recommendations made by the NCS Review Committee that the effective implementation of CAPS considers the role of textbooks and plan for their provision for all learners of every subject (DoE, 2009:50-52). The Minister further promised to increase the workbook budget in 2012 and 2013, stating that these books served as key components of the overall strategies to improve primary learner performance. The aim of the DBE was to strengthen the implementation of the national curriculum. In addition, the
President stated that for the 2010 programme the government would assist in improving learner performance in the foundation years. The aim was to ensure that, by 2014, 60% of learners would achieve the pass mark. In order to allow this target the President outlined the government strategy as follows: teachers and learners had to be in schools, in classrooms, on time; learning and teaching had to take place for seven hours a day; teachers had to be provided with detailed lesson plans; and learners had to be provided with user-friendly workbooks in all 11 official languages.

The revision of NCS resulted in a Draft Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12. The decisions of the Minister and the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) regarding the recommendations made by the NCS Review Task Team were implemented in 2010. On the 12 September 2011, National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12 was published in the Government Gazette no 34600 volume 555 as National Education policy.

Some of the decisions of the Minister and CEM to be implemented in 2010 were:

- Development of Curriculum and Assessment Policy documents per subject per phase
- Requirements for a single teacher file for planning, reduction of the number of projects required by learners, the teaching of English as a First Additional Language alongside mother tongue from Grade one
- Regular external systematic assessment of Mathematics and the two languages (Home Language and First Additional Language)
- The development of National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement per subject per phase
- Other new changes in the Foundation Phase involve instructional time for Grades R, 1, and 2 from 22, 5 to 23 hours. The CEM also approved the recommendation that the instructional time for Grade 3 should remain unchanged at 25 hours as in NCS Policy.

According to the DBE (2011a:4), CAPS is built on NCS and indicates that the subject content in Literacy and in Mathematics, assessment tools and methods and lesson plan components have not changed. During the implementation of
CAPS, each teacher in the Foundation Phase would be provided with the following documents as teaching guides:

- National Policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12
- National Protocol for Assessment Grade R-12
- Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Foundation Phase Grade R-3 for Home Language, First Additional, Mathematics and Life Skills

In this study, CAPS documents were analysed in relation to how teachers experienced and used them for effective teaching.

2.3. TEACHERS’ UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCES ABOUT CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMMES

The effective implementation of curriculum reforms demands fundamental change of teachers’ attitudes as essential role-players in promoting quality education, their teaching ideas and teaching behaviour. According to Mohd Meerah, Abdullah, Halim, Harun, Hassan, Ismail, and Rahman (2010:50), to ensure the effective implementation of curriculum, teachers need to be well trained, highly motivated, dedicated and professionally competent. In order to explore the nature of teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the curriculum, it was necessary for me to evaluate the training programmes they received for implementing the National Curriculum, which were in the form of workshops.

According to the principles underlying the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, as expressed in the Norms and Standards for Educators (2000), a teacher is required to be a specialist in a particular subject or phase, a specialist in teaching and in assessment, and a curriculum developer (DoE, 2006). From this viewpoint, I argue that to be a specialist depends on the quality of training a teacher received. Ngware, Abuya, Mutisya and Oketch (2010) note the success of planned in-service training in Malawi and Madagascar, arguing that good performance depends on carefully planned programmes. Similarly, Bennel (2011) highlights the positive outcomes of planned in-service training programmes, and in his research on emergency
programmes for primary school teachers acknowledges that teachers in Malawi and Madagascar received appropriate curriculum training. These teachers were provided with “self-directed kits and with regional resource centres equipped with computers and solar panels.” The findings of Bennel’s (2011) research highlight that teaching and learning had improved in Malawi and Madagascar, implying that well-planned curriculum guidance and support have a positive impact on teachers’ knowledge and experiences in teaching practices.

In contrast, research by Moalosi and Molwane (2010:33) into the challenges facing teachers in teaching design and technology in lower primary schools in Botswana has revealed that teachers received little training when the new curriculum was introduced. Teachers experienced lack of in-service training to empower them for curriculum implementation led them to teach only components of the curriculum with which they felt comfortable. This shows that teachers’ understanding and experiences has a significant influence on teaching practice.

The literature on South Africa reveals that teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the workshops for being inadequate and too basic to prepare them adequately for the classroom (Lombard et al., 2010:165; Maphalala, 2006:67; Matshidiso, 2007:109). Teachers in the above studies reported that workshops did not provide them with clear, widely communicated plans for implementing and supporting the National Curriculum. Teachers highlighted that the workshops they attended left them unsure about what the curriculum set out to do and achieve, resulting in poor learner performance in local and in international tests. Various scholars, (Fleisch, 2008; Maphalala, 2006; Nsamba, 2009) explored curriculum implementation in rural primary schools and acknowledged that teachers were experiencing challenges in implementing the curriculum. Their findings indicated that poorly planned workshops left teachers confused as to where, what and how to start teaching the curriculum. The research findings revealed that training teachers received was initial training and merely provided background information and guidelines on lesson preparation. Teachers in the above studies also revealed that trainers were not competent and some had no experience in Foundation Phase education.

Sithole (2009) noted a slow development in implementing the curriculum in rural Foundation Phase classrooms. The Task Team for the review of the
implementation of the NCS in 2009 found that teachers throughout the country at all phases were not competent to teach the curriculum because of inadequate knowledge and skills, and to lack of training (DoE, 2009:56). Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2009) concur that teachers found it challenging to master the curriculum and as such require further training to become knowledgeable. Smith (2010:6) shares the same sentiment and indicates that teachers are in most cases ill prepared and lack training to deliver the changes. In relation to the above discussions on teacher training programmes, teachers were not properly oriented with the context of the curriculum. It is therefore evident that teachers are experiencing various challenges resulting from the quality of training they received.

Recent South African literature has revealed a challenge to novice teachers in primary schools and their not having been guided when they started teaching (Moodley, 2009:79), notably a deficiency in adequate preparation to teach the curriculum and the appropriate methodology. The DoE (2009:59) and Jansen (2009) have also highlighted the challenges of staff rotation in the Foundation Phase in some schools, and indicates that some teachers were transferred to teaching lower grades without having been trained in curriculum.

In a study conducted on organising knowledge for the classroom (Jansen, 2009:100) it was revealed that Foundation Phase teachers lacked content knowledge to teach Mathematics and knew very little about phonics in Literacy. The findings of Jansen’s (2009) study revealed that teachers only had curriculum documents as their material, but did not know how to use them. In light of the above discussions, teachers experienced staff rotation as a challenge that affected curriculum development in the Foundation Phase. It is my intention therefore, to explore how Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences meet the curriculum implementation requirements through the interpretation and understanding of their experiences.

According to Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2011:17), without support from the school and the district officials, teachers are unable to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to benefit learners. An argument proceeding from this study is that the failure to take into consideration the different knowledge and skill levels of teachers contributes to critical curriculum implementation challenges. In his
study on problems faced by preschool teachers in curriculum implementation, Erden (2010:3) argues that teachers’ understanding of the curriculum is of great importance for effective implementation. The aforementioned scholars’ findings reveal a need to explore the nature of teachers’ knowledge and understanding to meet the requirements of National Curriculum implementation.

The research findings referred to above indicate a challenge of curriculum content orientation gap experienced by teachers. This results in slow implementation and failure to achieve the intended aims of the National Curriculum. The purpose of this study is to engage the curriculum developers to consider the importance of planned orientation before curriculum implementation begins.

2.4. TEACHERS’ UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRINCIPLES OF CURRICULUM

In order to implement the curriculum effectively, teachers need to know and understand the principles guiding it. Oliver (2009:22) defines principles as guidelines that promote aims and objectives of the official curriculum, which curriculum designers and teachers have to consider when planning learner activities.

2.4.1. Principles of curriculum in South African context

According to Lombard et al. (2010:5) and Mbingo (2006:15), the following are some of the guiding principles adopted by the DoE and that teachers have to consider when planning teaching and learning:

- Social justice, a healthy environment, human rights, and inclusivity
- A high level of skills and knowledge
- Clarity and accessibility
- Progression and integration
- Assessment

Lombard et al. (2010:272) maintain that schools are not clear on how the above-mentioned principles are manifested in learning outcomes and in assessment standards. They further argue that a significant proportion of these teachers
experienced a lack of adequate training and personal skills as well as inadequate departmental prescriptions as to the way in which these principles need to be assessed. They serve as indicators of the quality of the learners that teachers have to mould. In order to evaluate teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the principles guiding effectiveness of curriculum policy implementation, the curriculum models have to be discussed.

2.4.2. Models of curriculum development

Dibisa (2010:25-31) outlines the three well-known curriculum models that developers need to use during planning, namely process, objective, and situational. These have been adopted in Africa to guide curriculum experts when designing curriculum, defined by Dibisa as a framework to analyse it. Aguilar and Pablo (2010:15) concur that the curriculum model is a practical guide that clarifies the procedures to be adopted when implementing any curriculum. In the light of the definition of curriculum models, the three are relevant to this study because they guide teachers on achieving the intended goals of the prescribed curriculum. The three models are discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.4.2.1 The process model of curriculum

Lawrence Stenhouse’ process model of curriculum theory and practices was developed in 1975. According to Gultig, Hoadley and Jansen (2005:61) and Dibisa (2010:23), the model is more relevant in areas of the curriculum that centre on knowledge and understanding. It emphasises planning of curriculum based on the principles of procedure for the teachers, and perceives the professional goal of teachers as being to facilitate learners’ subject matter. Teachers need to use general transferable skills in activities for sharing knowledge and understanding with their learners. As Gultig et al. (2005:71) posit, the process model pursues understanding rather than grades, thus teachers need to expose learners to a variety of creative and positive approaches. In addition, Gultig et al. (2005:71) indicate that Stenhouse encourages the provision of guidelines to teachers in their implementation and accepts that teachers can make changes in their teaching practices according to their perceptions, depending on prevailing
circumstances. This model is in line with the implementation of curriculum because it allows teachers to design learner activities according to their contexts and learners’ needs. Sigthorsson (2008:49) is one of the advocates of the process model of curriculum, suggesting three elements that need to analyse what is expected in the classrooms. These are defined as follows.

**Teachers’ conceptions** are the experiences and ideas in their teaching, the nature of teaching and learning, the purpose of learning and the expected outcomes.

**Pedagogical content knowledge** is about how subject content knowledge is organised and carried out to accommodate the diverse interests and abilities of learners to improve classroom performance.

**Self-efficacy experiences** evaluate teachers’ understanding and experiences that influence learner performance. This also refers to collective judgment of teachers as to what extent the institution or the DoE can organise its support to have positive effects on learners.

### 2.4.2.2. Objective model of curriculum

Ralph Tyler (1949) played an important role in designing curriculum implementation guidelines for classroom implementation, as evident from his book “*Basic Principles of Curriculum*” (Gultig et al., 2005:49). According to Dibisa (2010:25), Tyler’s perception is that curriculum developments need to be treated logically and systematically. In other words, Tyler advocated a detailed and specific plan that coaches teachers through a process of teaching. Dibisa (2010:1) sees the main objective of Tyler’s model as being to bring about the intended changes because of teaching new experiences that will make meaning to the learner and the community. Tyler initiated four major stages that are important in the development of any curriculum, namely; objectives, instructional strategies and content, organising learning experiences, assessment and evaluation (Dibisa, 2010:140). Tyler’s model ascertains that the précised objectives guide teachers in designing the instructional methods. According to Gultig et al. (2005:48), Tyler’s model is important to teachers during the implementation of the new curriculum. Teachers have to follow the prescribed guidelines, in which the objectives indicate
what the learner needs to do at the end of the instructions and the content to which the learner’s action is applied (Maphalala, 2006:24).

Similarly, Gultig et al. (2005:51) referred to Taba’s (1962) finding on another dimension to Tyler’s four major curriculum developments, albeit there are some additions and simplifications she made to clarify the role of curriculum in school contexts. In her book ‘Theory and Practice’, Taba (1962) modifies Tyler’s (1949) basic model to make it more representative of curriculum development in schools (Dibisa, 2010:28). Aguilar and Pablo (2010:17) indicate that Taba proposed that curriculum designers follow the seven sequential steps, namely: diagnosis of needs, formulation of objectives, selection of content, organisation of content, selection of learning experiences, organisation of learning experiences and determination of what to evaluate and ways and means of doing. According to Aguilar and Pablo (2010), Taba’s model emphasises that teachers, as key curriculum implementers, have to organise teaching for their learners, following the above-mentioned seven steps. In other words, teaching and learning is organised in a manner that the objectives of the curriculum can be achieved.

2.4.2.3. Situational model of curriculum

Dibisa (2010:17) defines situational analysis as a “detailed examination of the context in to which a curriculum is to be placed and the application of that analysis to the curriculum being developed.” According to Dibisa (2010:31), Skilbeck’s situational model of 1989 deals with the context in which curriculum process is to take place, and curriculum developers should consider the situational analysis as the first step for any curriculum implementation. English (2010:11) shares the sentiment and emphasises that the work situation, nature of teachers and learners, relevant expectations and evaluation need to be prioritised. In addition, Aguilar and Pablo (2010:14) agree that the quality of teachers, the changing nature of subject disciplines, potential contributions of teacher support systems, school ethos, and experienced challenges had to be prioritised. This will avoid repetition of the weaknesses of the experiences.
2.5. TEACHERS’ PLANNING FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

The national classroom curriculum planning refers to learning programmes, work-schedules, and lesson plans. According to Brown and Gordon (2009:26), planning is a guide to one’s daily activities commitment, and helps the teacher to choose goals which involve subject area, objectives to be achieved, skills to be developed, teaching approaches or methods, assessment, timeframes and the kind of learner that teachers have to develop.

In a study on the National Curriculum Review, teachers highlighted that planning requirements had become unevenly complicated, and appeared to make little contribution to improving teaching and learning (DoE, 2009:25). In her research into teachers’ experiences in teaching First Additional Language in rural primary schools, Nsamba (2009:35) found lack of proper planning for lessons, and that although teachers knew the stages of planning they found planning to be a difficult task. Since planning is usually the responsibility of the teacher, this research sought to explore how the Foundation Phase teachers’ understanding and experiences meet the requirements of curriculum planning to support learners in developing skills, knowledge, and values that can be demonstrated across other curricular fields.

Lombard et al. (2010:179) acknowledge that teachers’ planning displayed inadequate knowledge and skills of teaching the new curriculum. The findings of the study were that subject advisors were unable to provide teachers with thorough or high quality support. Furthermore, teachers preferred to teach in the way they used to, disregarding directives from the DoE and endless workshops and courses. I argue that teachers’ implementation experiences need to be identified to bridge the gap between teaching practices and their ideas. In identifying teachers’ experiences, this study explores how Foundation Phase teachers’ planning in rural primary schools influences teaching and learning. The next paragraph discusses the actual implementation of curriculum in classrooms.

2.6. TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES IN CURRICULUM PRACTICE

This part of the study reviews teachers’ classroom practices. Hunkins and Ornstein (2009:250) posit that teachers are integral to the thinking that drives
programme creation, and thus directly involved in curriculum implementation in the classroom. Sigthorsson (2008:52) goes further in stating that teachers’ experiences and ideas shape the nature of teaching and learning in the classroom environment. He establishes the knowledge and understanding of how teachers’ subject content knowledge is organised and carried out in a way that is adapted to the diverse needs and potentials of learners. Sigthorsson also claims that teachers’ own knowledge and understanding influence learners’ good performance. The next paragraph discusses teachers’ experiences both internationally and nationally.

2.6.1. Teaching and learning

Sargent (2010) has investigated whether there was evidence of a relationship between National Curriculum reform implementation and patterns of classroom social interaction in rural primary schools in Northwest China. Qualitative research methods were used to analyse data from classroom observation. Teacher in-depth interviews were conducted in 15 primary schools across Gansu. The findings indicated that teachers who used the new curriculum materials taught less, praised more, and emphasised the development of learners’ self-expression and thinking abilities (Sargent, 2010:26). In his view, knowledge could be acquired through practice. The above study is in line with the aims and objectives of the South African curriculum framework of an outcomes-based curriculum. Therefore, this study explores the extent to which Foundation Phase teachers’ knowledge and experiences in rural schools are able to provide direction and influence teaching to improve learner performance.

On the other hand, Mohd Meerah et al (2010:28) explored teachers’ experiences in teaching marginalised children in Malaysia and provide evidence that teachers in schools serving socially disadvantaged rural children reported lower levels of pupil motivation. They also reveal that teachers preferred to explain to their learners the concepts and phenomena from the textbooks rather than asking them to explore the issues on their own. Mohd Meerah et al. (2010:55) also report that teachers were unaware of the alternative approaches, and had no confidence in using inquiry-based teaching methods in their classroom practices. These
studies reveal that teachers preferred to use traditional teaching methods based on a teacher-centred approach. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the books that had been distributed to schools, feeling they had very little content and did not support them in encouraging learners to think and develop knowledge and skills. This implies that teachers were experiencing lack of training on subject content knowledge and further training on teaching methods.

International and national studies on South African achievement reveal wide attainment differences amongst primary school learners, Smith (2010:6). Smith argues that a great proportion of teachers in the education system has a poor foundation of knowledge and mastery of subject, and provides evidence that a knowledge deficit has emerged from the literature, with teachers scoring poorly on tests taken at the end of the Foundation Phase. Peat (2009:105) concurs that South African teachers in rural schools were struggling to use multiple teaching strategies that demand creativity in Arts and Culture, as they were not commonly exposed to them. He suggests that Foundation Phase teachers be exposed to and engaged in Arts and Culture workshops.

An under-estimation of learners’ abilities in the Foundation Phase is another challenge that had been reported in the literature as a cause of lack of solid foundation in the early years of schooling. Research found that Foundation Phase learners were not ready to pursue more challenging activities (Jansen, 2009:138), and teaching and learning in rural areas at an extremely low level of achievement (Fleisch, 2008:143). It indicates that the low achievement lies in the remote teaching methods used by rural primary teachers, which are not in line with the curriculum. Similarly, Nsamba (2009:74) argues that some teachers in primary schools have not changed their teaching practices to meet the requirements of the curriculum policy due to insufficient subject knowledge and teaching skills necessary to deliver the curriculum. This argument is based on lesson observations and document analysis, and the findings highlight that teachers’ classroom practices are still based on remote traditional methodology (Nsamba, 2009).

Bush et al. (2009) have pointed to ineffective teaching methods and weak subject knowledge as contributing to poor quality teaching and learning. According to the democratic curriculum of South Africa, poor quality of teaching and learning is
unacceptable (Harber & Mncube, 2010:236), but teachers are experiencing subject content knowledge gap and lack understanding of the principles of quality teaching and learning in the education system. Amongst recent literature that has acknowledged a lack of quality teaching and learning in Mathematics and in Language in the Foundation Phase, Eloff, Louw and Wium (2010:14) conducted a study on Speech Language Therapists Support to Foundation Phase teachers with Literacy and Numeracy in rural and urban township. Their study aimed at supporting Foundation Phase teachers to facilitate listening and language skills effectively, but the results indicated a need for pre-training procedures and support that is more effective.

Fleisch (2008:143) concurred with Eloff et al. (2010:15) that there is a lack of quality teaching and learning in rural primary schools. He noted that teachers in disadvantaged schools tend to have lower expectations of what learners can achieve and therefore tend to interpret the official curriculum to support their lower expectations. These claims are supported by Pinar (2010:92), who highlighted that South African learners from a disadvantaged background do not have access to the hierarchical level necessary to perform activities demanding higher order thinking, According to Pinar (2010:92), showing that Foundation Phase teachers are experiencing challenges to their teaching and learning practices. Van Deventer (2009:143) conducted a study on teaching Life Orientation (LO) in General Education and Training (GET) and argued that they were not qualified to teach all Learning Outcomes and that they needed In-Service Training programmes (INSET). The findings indicate a great need amongst teachers for knowledge, skills, and understanding to handle all pressures and to manage change in the classroom for effective curriculum implementation. According to a study conducted by the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2007:13) on ‘Quality Improvement Development Support and Uplift Programme (QUIDS UP)’ learners in lower grades (Grades1 to 3) performed poorly in Mathematics and in Literacy. Similarly, Fleisch (2008:29) acknowledges the low attainment levels in lower grades in rural schools.
2.6.2. Language in teaching and learning

The language of instruction is another challenge experienced by Foundation Phase teachers in teaching and learning. Hoon, Rahman and Sigh (2010:68), state that 60% of teachers in Malaysia were dissatisfied with the use of English as the medium of instruction. The interviewed teachers accepted that they were supportive of the implementation of teaching Mathematics and Literacy in English in rural primary schools. On the other hand, they revealed that they were still struggling with challenges such as weak linguistics at schools, learners’ inability to use English language and teachers’ lack of English language background. The language policy in South African public schools emphasises that Foundation Phase learners need to be taught in their home language (DBE, 2011a: 8). The policy states that Foundation Phase learners do better when they are taught in their home language. According to the DoE (2009:41), teachers in the Foundation Phase experience confusion in introducing English as the second language in the classroom situation.Nsamba (2009:27) argues that late introduction of English in the Foundation Phase affects learner performance negatively in the Intermediate Phase as English is used as a medium of instruction. Teachers also displayed confusion over when English was to be introduced and how additive bilingualism should be implemented in practice in Grade 1.

Ndamba’s (2008) study of mother tongue use in learning and language preference in Zimbabwe revealed that parents in countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia resist mother tongue education in favour of English (Ndamba, 2008:173-175) learning. The findings of the study show long term poor academic performance (Nel & Theron, 2008:205), resulting in more learners with barriers to learning in their classrooms.

The above discussions reveal a gap between classroom teaching practices and language policy, therefore, based on my knowledge and understanding of the language of instruction as being driven by teaching and learning, it needs to be addressed properly at the Foundation Phase to avoid confusion amongst teachers and learners. The purpose of this study is thus to explore teachers’ experiences and their influence in implementing curriculum in the classroom situation.
2.6.3. Resources

Rammapudi (2010:121) defines the concept ‘resources’ as teaching materials used in planning a lesson that will bring the subject content alive. He stated that resources make teaching and learning an exciting undertaking and provide opportunities for hands-on activities and interaction with real objects. According to Brown and Gordon (2009), children learn better in classrooms that are well resourced, with age-appropriate materials. A study by Glewwe, Kremer and Moulin (2007:11-45) questioned dependence on textbooks as the main resource, arguing that their introduction failed to increase overall learner performance. They argued that learners who were academically strong tended to improve their performance levels with the use of textbooks, but those who were weak showed no substantial gain. Similarly, Lake and Slavin (2008) and Glewwe et al. (2007:17-19) argued that the introduction of textbooks does not have a positive impact on learner outcomes. Their findings showed that most disadvantaged South African schools do not have enough sets of textbooks or workbooks, suggesting the textbook programme does not work well if teachers are not well oriented on how to use it.

In contrast, Abadzi (2006) defended the use of textbooks and claimed that their effectiveness depends on pedagogically sound, culturally appropriate and durable textbooks. Countries such as Ghana, Philippines, Brazil, and Guinea had shown improvement in learner performance due to sufficient supply of textbooks, with textbook teaching, and learning resources working well and saving instructional time. However, Abadzi (2006) emphasised that teachers need training in the use of textbooks, and learners take them home. A similar view on textbook resources was shaped by Smith (2010:18), who acknowledged that each learner should have his or her own individual study package (stationary) and textbooks in order to be able to work on his or her own, and according to ability and pace. It is thus evident that the textbook programme has an influence in improving teaching practices if proper orientation is provided.

Research by Jansen (2009:111) and Msila (2008:197) indicates that a curriculum demands more resources, such as textbooks, stationery, wall charts, photocopiers, and audio-visual equipment, whilst for Hoon et al. (2010) most teachers in rural schools lack teaching facilities such as libraries, laboratories,
and online resources. In South African rural schools, teachers reported that the least available resources were textbooks, which were of dubious quality and lacked content alignment with the prescribed curriculum (DoE, 2009:51). In terms of resources, this present study explores the nature of support teachers’ experiences in their implementation process.

Recently, the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa initiated a programme of workbooks from Grades 1 to 6. As indicated above, this was meant to assist teachers to improve learner performance in Numeracy and Literacy in their classrooms. From personal observation, I have noticed that teachers have limited resources at schools, and do not know how to use them because of lack of training. This study explores teachers’ understanding and experiences in the use of resources in their teaching practices.

2.7. TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCE OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN THE CLASSROOM

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) defined assessment as a tool for monitoring children’s academic progress towards a programme-desired goal. According to Johnson and Green (2010:14), assessment entails the variety of methods that are used to determine what the learners know and are able to do before and after the instructions. This implies that the purpose of assessment is to evaluate learner performance and to indicate the support the learner may need for progression. The importance of assessment leads this study to explore teachers’ understanding and experiences in implementing the assessment policy in the classroom.

Since the adoption and implementation of the new curriculum in South Africa, teachers have been experiencing challenges with classroom assessment. Lombard et al. (2010:176) found that the assessment policy was not developed during the introduction of NCS for the General Education and Training Band (GET) to support the implementation of curriculum. Teachers became progressively more confused when working with several aspects of assessment, such as progression requirements, performance descriptors and formal and informal tasks for determining learner performance.
A study conducted by Nsamba (2009:76) revealed that teachers did not follow the assessment guidelines for English First Additional Language and, therefore, the action affected learner performance in primary schools. The learners’ tasks were not properly designed, learning outcomes were not stated, and the assessment methods were not indicated. This contravenes the principle that assessment should be carefully designed in accordance with the content of the subject, indicating the skills and knowledge to be achieved (DBE, 2011b:3). Van Deventer (2009:137) found that, Foundation Phase teachers did not know how to develop the assessment tools and learner portfolios, whilst Lombard et al. (2010:68) and Johnson and Green (2010:291) discovered difficulties encountered by teachers in scoring the performance activities using rubrics as feedback for learners and parents. Research findings from the above studies suggest that teachers require practical guidelines to help them grade confidently and fairly.

Kanjee (2009) evaluated the effectiveness of an ‘Assessment Reserve Bank’ (ARB) for supporting South African teachers in rural primary schools on classroom assessment. An ARB is a teacher booklet that contains sets of literacy and numeracy tasks for use in assessing learner performance against national assessment standards. The ARB was piloted in 450 rural schools across four provinces of South Africa, with data collected by means of classroom observations and semi-structured interviews conducted in a sample of piloted schools and teacher surveys. The findings of the evaluation indicated that providing teachers with assessment resources could improve their classroom practices. Most teachers in the study reported that they found the use of ARBs very useful for conducting classroom assessment, which indicates that teachers have the potential to improve their assessment practices. It is interesting, therefore, to explore the Foundation Phase teachers’ understanding and experiences on implementing the assessment policy.

Kanjee, Claassen, Makgamatha and Molefe (2010) conducted a similar study on teacher assessment practices in South African schools, exploratory in nature and involving the use of classroom observations and interviews. Teachers were interviewed about their assessment practices, beliefs about assessment, current assessment policies, teaching and learning, classroom management, available resources and further training needs. It found that teachers’ knowledge and
awareness of assessment practices were limited. These scholars indicated that effective use of assessment by teachers had a significant impact on improving teaching and learning practices, however, they suggested that teachers require adequate support and the relevant workshops to enhance their classroom practices. The empirical study conducted by Kanjee et al. (2010) showed that there was a gap between teaching practices and the assessment policy application, created by lack of orientation programmes.

This study seeks to explore the extent to which Foundation Phase teachers’ knowledge and experiences meet the curriculum implementation requirements.

2.8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study will focus on the experiences of the Foundation Phase teachers in implementing the curriculum in classroom contexts. In order to understand teachers’ experiences I studied various learning theories, employing constructivist learning theory as the most relevant, and one that has been accepted by many scholars as a theory of curriculum to bring changes to classroom practices (Pinar, 2010:159). According to McDonald and Van Deer Horst (2008:119), “knowledge for change is not fixed and given, but it is shaped, constructed, and reconstructed in different social contexts.” Teachers are thus curriculum designers and mediators in that they have an opportunity to use the prescribed curriculum guidelines and their creativity to construct the learner activities to improve learner performance.

Hunkins et al. (2009:129) believe that the application of constructivist theory in teaching and learning is relevant as it encourages teachers and learners to raise their learning experiences to a more advanced level. This is a key educational concept of the 21st century as it relates to the way knowledge has been created for an individual to learn. Sang et al. (2010:365) argue that its application to curriculum helps teachers concentrate on harmonious development of learner.

Sargent (2010:23), in a study of progressive classrooms, revealed that teachers encouraged learners to participate in activities by expressing their own ideas and opinions in order to be viewed as co-constructors of knowledge. He also highlighted positive changes in learner performance since the implementation of
the new curriculum in China. In his classroom observations, constructivist teachers were able to encourage learners to construct objects using waste materials collected in the environment. Teachers’ well-structured lesson plans showed multi-directional and varied interactions.

The constructivist theory is in line with the principles of South African curriculum that focus on outcomes-based learning and a high level of knowledge and skills. According to Lombard et al. (2010:5) and Mbingo (2006:15), the application of constructivist theory on teaching and learning can help all learners to succeed, even those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Mbingo (2006:25) further suggested the provision of monitoring and support teachers should receive from the School Management Team (SMT) and from the DoE to adhere to the principles. Sang et al. (2010:373) recommend that teachers in basic education system adopt a constructivist belief and be provided with training before implementing the new curriculum. This study evaluated teachers’ knowledge and experiences based on the support and the training they received to meet the curriculum implementation requirements.

My intention in discussing the constructivist theory is to emphasise that curriculum knowledge and understanding is important in shaping teachers’ experiences in the classroom. Therefore, understanding teachers, their motives, and their motivation is crucial to meet the requirements of curriculum implementation. I was guided by this theory in exploring teachers’ understanding and experiences of curriculum implementation in the classroom.

2.9. CONCLUSION

The literature acknowledges that Foundation Phase teachers are experiencing multiple challenges in implementing the curriculum. Among the challenges identified is an orientation gap in curriculum content knowledge based on teaching and learning, planning and assessment. There is lack of recognition of the contexts in which the curriculum is implemented. The constructivist theory and the models of curriculum indicate that teachers need guidance in constructing knowledge for effective curriculum implementation. The empirical studies reviewed provided an understanding of teachers’ experiences in implementing the
new curriculum. In conclusion, the reviewed literature has assisted the researcher in grasping the discourse that is going on around teachers’ experiences in the implementation of the curriculum.

The next chapter describes the research study and methodology used to gather and analyse data for it.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the design and methodology of the study. It investigates the knowledge and experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in curriculum implementation, and explains the qualitative research design adopted. The case study design is explained, followed by methods of data analysis and trustworthiness of the research project. Finally, the chapter concludes with the ethical consideration of the research.

3.2. THE RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is located broadly within a qualitative research design, which according to Maree (2007:54) focuses on people, how and why they interact, and their motives and relationships. In this study, the qualitative approach sought to explore the Foundation Phase (FP) teachers’ understanding and experiences of implementing the curriculum. Furthermore, it focused on how these teachers’ experiences influence the implementation process. As a curriculum 7cluster leader in the field of curriculum implementation, I chose to interact with teachers in order to gain access to their contexts, and explored their circumstances in curriculum implementation.

Qualitative research is used to find deeper meaning of social actions based on how these realities are interpreted, understood, and appreciated by individuals (Maree, 2007). In this study, Foundation Phase (FP) teachers in rural schools expressed their experiences of curriculum implementation in their teaching contexts. This study revealed how their experiences influenced teaching and learning in the classroom. The constructivist perspective influenced the choice of a qualitative research approach, underpinned by the view that it focuses on people (Maree, 2007). The following factors motivated me to adopt the qualitative approach in this study; Firstly, since I did not intend to generalise the extent to which FP teachers understood and experienced curriculum implementation in
rural schools and so, the qualitative method sought to examine whether this phenomenon with a selected number of individuals was appropriate. Secondly, I intended to gain insight into the extent of teachers’ knowledge and understanding, and whether they met the requirements of curriculum implementation. Thirdly, the choice of qualitative approach allowed teachers to express openly their experiences, views, and beliefs about curriculum implementation within their contexts (Maree, 2007). A qualitative research design fitted the purpose of this study because I was able to generate information from experienced participants on curriculum implementation in natural settings.

The research also adopted a qualitative case study design. Maree (2007:75) indicated that case studies open the possibilities of giving a voice to the powerless and voiceless people. In my view as a Foundation Phase teacher, teachers in rural schools are falling under this category as they receive top-down instructions and suggestions for implementation. Dibisa (2010) agrees that curriculum designers and the DoE expect teachers to implement the curriculum without much consideration of the context. In addition, the adoption of a case study was based on several factors. Firstly, it focuses on a single event within its natural setting (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2007), namely the experience of FP teachers in implementing the National Curriculum. The interest was to provide contextual detail of the extent of teachers’ understanding and experiences on curriculum implementation in selected rural schools. Secondly, this design allowed me to use various data collection techniques. This flexibility was consistent with the multiple perspective of reality that underpins the constructivist orientation of this study (Cohen et al., 2007). Constructivists point out that there is no objective reality but rather there are multiple realities constructed by human beings who experience a phenomenon of interest (Krauss, 2005). This motivated me to study teachers in their natural settings using various data collection methods. Thirdly, qualitative research design is appropriate when the researcher wishes to answer a descriptive question or an explanatory question. Qualitative research design is also an appropriate choice of research method because it allows the researcher to understand an issue and make recommendations (Gay et al., 2009). Finally, I was motivated by a view that a case study facilitates the presentation of data in forms that are accessible to the public, thus contributing to
the freedom of knowledge and understanding (Cohen et al., 2007). This supports the purpose of this study as indicated in Chapter 1, namely to generate awareness among the curriculum designers, subject advisors and other stakeholders, about the drawbacks and problems encountered in the process of curriculum implementation in primary schools.

The use of qualitative case study in this research enabled me to report on the extent to which teachers’ knowledge and experiences met the requirements of curriculum implementation. In addition, it allowed me to think inductively as to whether the current national policy has been implemented and the challenges experienced by teachers. I was aware of the limitations and the weaknesses of the case study in empirical research noted by Brown and Gordon (2009) and Cohen et al. (2007), including a lack of generalisation of results and susceptibility of the research process to search bias. Furthermore, Maree (2007) noted a lack of systematic procedures that may lead to generalisation of a large amount of data, resulting in lengthy reports. It was my role to ensure that the weaknesses of the case study were observed.

3.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used various data collection procedures to generate information-rich empirical research. This section discusses the site selection, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical procedures of the study.

3.3.1. Site selection

This study focused on two of 24 public primary schools of Lusikisiki Central Circuit in the Eastern Cape. The circuit was made up of 29 schools, of which three were private primary schools and two were senior secondary schools (FET). The selection was based on common characteristics and the geographical area in which they were located. The researcher used codes for the selected schools in order to conceal their identity. Geographically, both schools were in rural areas, in one circuit and in one cluster. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:319) indicate that the criteria for site selection are guided by the research problem and purpose.
The research problem in this case was to investigate the extent to which FP teachers’ understanding and experiences met the requirement of curriculum implementation after they had been trained in this circuit. The purpose of choosing schools of the same cluster was to make it easier for the researcher to move from one school to another during the process of data collection. Furthermore, these schools were experiencing similar challenges. Resources such as libraries, laboratories, and Internet access were not available. There were still muddy classrooms and leaking roofs, which made it difficult to paste charts and pictures on walls. Most educated and enlightened parents send their children to private schools. In describing the environment in which these schools operate, I needed to understand the context in which teachers implemented the curriculum. The literature studied revealed that researchers paid little attention to the context in which the curriculum was to be delivered and more on the implementation process (Dibisa, 2010).

3.3.2. Sampling

The focus of the study was to investigate teachers’ understanding and experiences on implementing curriculum in sampled schools. Purposeful sampling was used in this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:319) state that when one wishes to understand something about a case without desiring to generalise, purposeful sampling is appropriate. In addition, participants were selected because they were likely to be knowledgeable about the phenomenon the researcher was investigating, (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:319). In this study I intended to obtain information about the implementation of curriculum in the Foundation Phase in order to understand what the stakeholders shared about the falling teaching and learning standards in Mathematics and in Literacy in the phase (Fleisch, 2008:122; Pinar, 2010). In addition, the knowledgeable participants were teachers in National Curriculum training workshops and had experience in curriculum implementation in the Foundation Phase. They were the four FP teachers from the two selected schools within Lusikisiki Central Circuit, two from each school. The purpose of choosing these teachers was to receive responses based on their knowledge and experiences in implementing National
Curriculum in their respective contexts. Table 3.1 gives information about the details of the sampled participants.

**Table 3.1:** Sampled participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of teacher</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Number of years in teaching</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Name of the school</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Time of the observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PL1A</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11:00 am -12 noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL1B</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10:30 –11:30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2A</td>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11:00 am-12 noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2B</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9:00 -10:00 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data was collected by means of three data collection methods, described as follows;

**3.3.3. Data collection methods**

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:47) methods are a range of approaches used in educational research to gather data, to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, and for explanation and prediction. For the purpose of this study, different data collection techniques were utilised to gather rich data and for triangulation, that is establishing the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint (Cohen et al., 2007:141; Flick, 2007:43). I used three data collection methods:

1. **Semi-structured interviews:** Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) and Creswell (2009) explain that the purpose of interviewing as being to find out what is on someone’s mind by accessing the perspective of the interviewee. Interviews permit researchers to obtain important data that they cannot acquire from observation and documents alone. Similarly, Delport, Fouche and Strydom (2007:292) define semi-structured interviews as organised conversations around areas of particular interest, which in this study was to
investigate how Foundation Phase teachers understand and experience curriculum implementation in their contexts by accessing their personal perspectives.

Interviews were guided by open-ended questions with the aid of an interview schedule, which contained a list of related issues on teachers’ experiences of curriculum implementation and the questions that were to be asked. The questions were based on teachers’ application of the curriculum principles in their teaching practices, workshops and training programmes, experiences of planning, teaching and learning in the classroom, and assessment practices. Flick (2007) motivated the decision to use open-ended items by stating that they are flexible, allow an interviewer to probe in order to clear up any misunderstandings, and to test the limit of a respondent’s knowledge and experiences.

Interviews were scheduled for 45 minutes in each session, with four teacher participants interviewed in their respective schools. Their principals showed great co-operation by organising phase leaders to assist me with everything I required. I conducted interviews during the afternoons, after Foundation Phase teaching hours, from 1.30 to 2.30. We used the teachers’ classrooms for interviews, as the two schools did not have extra offices and only staffrooms were available. The participants’ responses were recorded by means of handwritten notes, a method suggested by Creswell (2009:183), Leedy and Ormond (2010), and McMillan and Schumacher (2006:356). Interview questions were arranged from Groups A to F on the interview schedule. Group A questions were set to investigate teachers’ understanding and experiences of curriculum principles for implementation. Group B questions were designed to explore the training programmes that FP teachers experienced. Group C questions were based on understanding the instructional planning teachers used, and whether it met the requirements of curriculum implementation. Group D questions sought to investigate teachers’ experiences in curriculum practices, focusing on language of instruction, resources, and the knowledge and skills imparted to learners based on curriculum requirements. Questions in Group E explored assessment, whether it was in line with the requirements of curriculum implementation. General questions were catered for in Group F, giving participants an opportunity to express their experiences in areas that were not part of the investigations, but were the factors
that challenged them in implementing curriculum (see Appendix 6). They were intended to elicit answers to the research questions and to verify or refute the literature.

2. **Structured observations:** The observation schedule in Appendix 7 was used as an observation tool, as recommended by Leedy and Ormond (2010:147). These authors indicate that observation method is flexible to allow a researcher to shift focus from behaviour to another, as new and potentially significant behaviour and events avail themselves. This implies that the researcher can take advantage of unforeseen data sources as they come to the fore. These authors also highlight that written notes are often an unreliable tool to capture the richness of what the researcher is observing, in entities that are more central to the research question may be overlooked (Leedy et al., 2010). They argue that all recording tools have advantages and disadvantages, and these require a researcher who is skilful in that particular tool. In this study, I preferred to use written notes, bearing in mind the weaknesses highlighted by Leedy et al. (2010).

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:347) define observation as “the researcher’ technique of directly observing, and recording without interaction”, whilst for Cohen et al. (2007:396) the data obtained through observations is ‘live’ because it is primary.¹ In this study, I observed how teaching and learning took place in classroom situations, with the of generating data on the extent of teachers’ knowledge and understanding acquired during National Curriculum workshops based on lesson planning and delivery as part of curriculum implementation component.

At school A, classroom observations were conducted between 11 a.m. and noon. The principal had informed me that it was the policy of the school to accommodate additional programmes from that time. I arranged with the head of department (HoD) to start classroom observations between the stipulated times, with the understanding that by this time learners would be more relaxed and still active. I did the same with the second participant, who was teaching Grade 3 in

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¹ Although ‘data’ is the Latin plural of datum it is generally treated as an uncountable ‘mass’ noun and so takes a singular verb (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 2011, Eds. Stevenson & Waite).
the same school. At school B, the school principal allowed me to use the time with which FP teachers were comfortable. The first classroom observation in that school was between 9 and 10 a.m., the next, for the second participant, between 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. Teachers were observed on separate dates.

3. **Document analysis**: This was employed to verify data collected from interviews and structured observations (see checklist in Appendix 8). According to Henning et al. (2004), all documents related to research questions are valuable sources of information, regardless of how old or new, and whether in printed, hand-written or electronic format. In this study, the documents that were analysed included teacher portfolio files with components such as timetables, content phase overview, term planning, lesson plans, assessment plans, assessment tasks and memoranda, assessment recording sheets, copy of mark schedules and report card samples. Learners’ portfolio files, homework books, and classwork books were also analysed. Those documents were used to explore teachers’ knowledge and experiences in planning, teaching, and learning, assessing, recording, and reporting according to the requirements of the National Curriculum. Furthermore, document analysis was used to reveal the influence of teachers’ understanding and experiences in implementing the curriculum to improve learner performance.

Creswell (2009:180) stated that document analysis is advantageous because data can be accessed at a time of convenience to the researcher. I preferred to review documents after Foundation Phase teaching hours, between 1 and 3 p.m., focusing on one school per day. When I arrived at schools, teachers in the circuit were busy with preparations for music competitions. At school A I reviewed four out of 40 learners’ portfolio files, homework and classwork books in Grade 2 and five out of 47 in Grade 3. At school B, I analysed five out of 49 learners’ portfolio files, homework and classwork books in Grade 1 and six out of 52 in grade three. The following day I returned to the teachers to request clarity on some of the issues that were not clear in learners’ work and in the teachers’ file. In dealing with document analysis, I kept in my mind that materials might not be authentic or accurate and might be incomplete (Creswell, 2009:180). The findings from document analysis will be discussed in Chapter 4.
All the three data collection methods were used with an aim of maintaining reliability and validity through the process of triangulation. Cohen et al. (2007) argue that the use of triangulation gives a broader understanding and scope of data to explain the study fully. They further argue that the use of one method may lead to bias and distort the real information about the phenomenon under study (Cohen et al., 2007). These were the factors that motivated me to use various methods to obtain reliable data about teachers’ experiences on curriculum implementation, in particular in rural schools.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

Gay et al. (2009) write that data analysis in qualitative research involves summarising data in a dependable and accurate manner, and leads to the presentation of study findings in a manner that is undeniable. In addition, Rammapudi (2010:147) defines it as a technique to examine categories or recombine the evidence to address the research question. Furthermore, data analysis involves collecting open-ended data, based on asking questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by participants (Creswell, 2009:184). Inductive data analysis was employed, defined by Creswell (2009:175) as a strategy used by the researcher to build patterns, categories, and themes by organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. In this study, semi-structured interviews, structured observations, and document analysis supplied the data to be analysed through an inductive process. The aim was to make an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data collected from the participants on curriculum implementation. In order to analyse it effectively, I took the sequential steps that were recommended as relevant in a qualitative case study by Creswell (2009:138). Those were: organization of details about the case, categorization of data, interpretation of single instances, identification of patterns, synthesis, and generalisation.

3.4.1. Interview analysis

In this study, the four participants were interviewed under the five predetermined categories formulated from the research question (McMillan & Schumacher,
Those categories were principles of curriculum, training, experience, instructional planning, teaching and learning, and assessment. The transcription of each interviewee was given its code for reasons of anonymity. The code was recorded on the interview schedule. I had four interviews with different codes, namely: PL1A, PL2A, PL1B, and PL2B. According to Cohen et al. (2007), coding is the process of trying to find patterns and meaning in data collected through interviews. A similar definition of code is “a descriptive name for the subject or topic” (McMillan et al., 2006: 368). Through the process of coding, similarities, and differences from participants, responses were identified and new categories developed. Direct quotations taken from the participants’ responses were used to illustrate and enrich the narrative. Once the transcription was finished and the codes were awarded to different units of meaning, the related codes were grouped into categories to form themes. The collected data was used to guide me on deciding what name should be given to certain categories.

3.4.2. Observation analysis

The notes on classroom observation were analysed using line-by-line coding as suggested by McMillan et al. (2006:369), providing an opportunity to ask questions about the areas that were not understandable during the process itself. The schedule was used as a tool for identifying areas to be observed. Since observations deal with various components of curriculum implementation, conceptual and discourse analysis was used to analyse classroom observation. Conceptual analysis is a research tool that involves the existence and frequency of concepts in text (Nsamba, 2009:4), a term that describes various tools such as books, discussions, speeches, conversations, and language communication (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009:13).

In this study, the frequency of code-switched words and sentences were coded to analyse teaching and learning and assessment practices at Schools A and B during classroom observation. On the other hand, Hancock et al. (2009:13) state that discourse analysis focuses on text and talk as social practices. These authors elaborate that text is any written documents such as policy documents. In this study, discourse analysis reviewed the influence of medium of instruction on the teaching and learning situation at Foundation Phase in Schools A and B. The discourse analysis in the study explored patterns in the words that were used, the
way that they were utilized, and the appropriate language level in teaching and learning. These two forms of analysis will be discussed further when reporting the findings of this study in Chapter 4.

3.4.3. Document data analysis

Finally, documents were analysed and a checklist used as a tool. Documents that were analysed included teacher files (portfolios), learner files, class work and homework books, schedules and report cards. The teacher file had various components that included timetable, phase overview, term planning, lesson plans, formal assessment tasks and memos, recording sheets, intervention programmes, samples of mark schedules, report cards, and results analysis (summary of quarterly assessment results). The aim was to verify the outcomes of what had been taught according to my experience as a researcher. In document analysis, I explored whether FP teachers used those documents accordingly to achieve the requirements of the current curriculum. Data from these documents was reviewed according to focus areas and verified what the literature review had revealed. The information from documents analysis merged with some of the data gathered from the interviews and structured observations, which with that from document analysis was examined and described in words. The data findings will be presented in the next chapter.

3.5. TRUSTWORTHINESS

The trustworthiness was considered as the strong point of this study, as control of the researcher’s bias and ability to generalise the findings. Ali and Yusof (2011:30) describe trustworthiness as “a criterion to test the quality of research design.” Similarly, for Gao (2012) it indicates whether the study was conducted in a rigorous, systematic, and ethical manner, such that the results can be trusted. Gao (2012) adds that the trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be measured using several methods of data collection strategies. In this study, triangulation was accomplished with semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to obtain trustworthiness. Observations and document analysis gave me a true picture of what actually was implemented in the
classroom. Data was also collected in an ethical manner in that the hand-written data was returned to the participants to read in order to verify whether what had been written was accurate. Some additions and amendments were made after some discussion and clarification between the researcher and the participants. Finally, the quotes from the participants from interview sessions helped the interpretation of the data be valid and reliable.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

During the research, ethical criteria were adhered to. Firstly I wrote a letter to the circuit manager and principals of the sampled schools requesting permission to conduct my research study in premises under their jurisdiction. All responded by written letter. Letters to the participants were attached to those of the principals detailing the content and procedures of the study, the aim being to give them a chance to share the content of the study with other teachers in the institution and therefore make a decision. Teachers responded by signing consent forms as proof that they agreed to participate in the study. According to Flick (2007:69), informed consent means, “no one should be involved in research as participant without knowing about the research and without having a chance of refusing to take part.” Therefore, teachers participated on a voluntary basis and they were assured of their rights to withdraw at any point of the study. In order to maintain confidentiality, I used pseudonyms instead of real names of the participants and the institutions. The participants were identified by the following codes: PL1A (post level one teacher at school A), PL2A (post level two teacher at school A), PL1B and PL2B. The institutions were identified as School A and School B, as words or abbreviations for coding (Delport et al., 2007). Confidentiality of both teachers and institutions and the relationship with the researcher was maintained until the researcher left the field.

3.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the research approaches considered when embarking on this research study and the reasons they were used. The procedures adopted for data collection were explained. The research design and methodology used in
this study were relevant for the purpose of the research because the data collected addressed the research questions of the study. The data collected fulfilled my intention to gain understanding and explore experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in their implementation of curriculum. I was able to maintain trustworthiness and ethical considerations throughout the process of data collection. The handwritten data was kept safely under the control of the researcher until the end of the study.

In the next chapter, the data generated and the emerging issues in this study will be analysed. All the findings will be presented and interpreted in a descriptive form, detailing what has been generated during data collection processes.
CHAPTER 4
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explained in detail the design and methodology approach used in the study. This chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data collected by means of interviews, structured observations and documents analysis. The analysis was in the form of discussions and interpretations of teachers’ responses related to curriculum implementation. The aim of this chapter is to report on the empirical enquiry by providing answers to the main research question of this study, which is, “What are the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers regarding the implementation of the Curriculum?”

The following paragraphs provide a brief orientation of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) as an amendment of the National Curriculum Statement, since the study began at the time of its implementation.

4.2. THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT

This study began at the time when teachers in the Foundation Phase were implementing CAPS. According to the DBE (2011b), CAPS is built on NCS, as an amendment to drive the basic education of the democratic South Africa. The DBE indicated that as from 2012 the two National Curriculum Statements, For Grades R-9 and Grades 10-12, were to be combined in a single document known as the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12. The National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-12 represents a policy statement for learning and teaching in South African schools. The DBE (2011b) clearly indicated that the National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-12 would be “built on the previous curriculum but also updated it and aimed to provide clear specification of what was to be taught and learnt on a term by term basis.” The National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12 consists of the following policies:

- Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS); each phase is provided with one document having all the approved subjects of the phase and the subjects arranged according to grades. Subjects are listed in
chapter seven annexure B of the national policy, named “Programme And Promotion Requirements”

- National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12
- National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12

4.3. THE PROFILE OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS

The participants in this study were four Foundation Phase teachers from two primary schools in one of the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. There were two teachers from each school. All the participants had undergone NCS training since 2005 and CAPS training in 2011. The research was conducted in March 2012. Teachers’ identities were withheld throughout the study for the purpose of confidentiality and anonymity, using pseudonyms. Schools were identified as School A and School B. PL1A teacher taught in Grade 2, and PL2A taught in Grade 3 in school A. PL1B taught in Grade 1 and PL2B taught in Grade 3 in School B.

The following sections and paragraphs present, analyse and interpret the findings from teachers’ interview responses, lesson observations, and documents analysis based on the implementation of the new curriculum.

4.4. THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The aim of conducting this study was to obtain teachers’ experiences regarding the implementation of the curriculum in their respective Foundation Phase classrooms. The data is presented, analysed and interpreted according to the five broad themes that have been highlighted to focus on Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences in implementing curriculum. Table 4.1 presents the themes with categories that were explored through the research questions.
Table 4.1 Themes and categories explored

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1. The training program teachers experienced</td>
<td>(a) Quality of training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Monitoring and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2. Teachers’ understanding and practice of curriculum principles</td>
<td>Managing curriculum principles in teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3. Instructional planning for curriculum implementation</td>
<td>(a) Managing curriculum policy documents for planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Requirements for curriculum planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.4. Teachers’ experiences in curriculum practice</td>
<td>4.4.4.1. Teaching and learning strategies for curriculum implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.4.4.2. Language of instruction at Foundation Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.4.4.3. Resources for curriculum implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.5. Teachers’ understanding and practice of assessment</td>
<td>4.4.5.1. Teachers’ understanding of assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.4.5.2. Evaluating the planning of assessment for curriculum implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.4.5.3. Assessment strategies and tools for curriculum implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5. General experience of teachers on curriculum implementation</td>
<td>(a) Pupil- teacher ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Classroom infrastructure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first theme relates to the implementation programmes in which teachers were involved whilst the second theme relates to teachers’ understanding of the principles of curriculum implementation in a South African context. The third
theme relates to teachers’ planning experience and the fourth theme relates to teachers’ experiences in curriculum practice. The last theme relates to teachers’ experiences of assessment practices in the classroom. The research findings were discussed and interpreted under each theme and were presented in sub-sections that are aligned to the relevant theme that emerged from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis.

The following paragraphs present, analyse and interpret the collected data related to the training programmes in which teachers were involved.

4.4.1. The training program teachers experienced

This section examines teachers’ responses with regard to the training they received for curriculum implementation in the Foundation Phase. The interview findings revealed that in order to implement the current curriculum teachers need to have adequate training. All the participants expressed the view that the training they received was inadequate for them to implement the curriculum effectively. In their responses, they indicated that the training they received was just providing a basic knowledge and understanding of the amendment to the curriculum. They also highlighted that the facilitators trained them under time pressure. PL2B shared her experience:

“I thought that facilitators’ knowledge and understanding on training teachers had been influenced by the fact that CAPS is built on NCS. Therefore, they took for granted that they should not go deep into training teachers because they already know more about NCS content. It was just to orientate teachers with the new additions and omissions.”

PL2A elaborated:

“If I did not attend several workshops as a cluster leader at provincial, regional, and district level, I could have struggled because the time for training was too short for the number of modules we were to implement in teaching practices.”

Regarding the quality of training teachers received, the above responses showed that Foundation Phase teachers were dissatisfied with the time for training they received for curriculum implementation. Responses also indicated that teachers
were dissatisfied with the number of modules introduced to guide curriculum implementation after that short training period. The modules involved an introduction of English First Additional Language (FAL), IsiXhosa home language, Mathematics, Life-skills, planning and assessment.

I also wished to understand the extent to which the training had empowered teachers. The research findings revealed that they had different curriculum training experiences. The two participants expressed the view that the training they acquired had not provided them with much professional knowledge and understanding of curriculum implementation. This revealed that those two teachers in this study had limited knowledge and understanding of NCS implementation before the CAPS training, whilst the other two teachers benefited from NCS previous trainings. PL1A shared her experience:

“Really, I did not acquire much professional development from the CAPS training. I would be pleased if the curriculum officials can organize quarterly support meetings for further empowerment.”

However, PL2A was comfortable with the knowledge and experience she had acquired from CAPS workshops and responded as follows:

“CAPS training advanced me more because of the knowledge and understanding I received from NCS previous workshops.”

Almost all the participants requested other additional training sessions that would empower them further with curriculum knowledge and understanding. On the other hand, PL1B teacher indicated that the CAPS were advanced training since she did not grasp much in the previous curriculum trainings. PL1B indicated that she needed other training sessions because there was too much work to grasp within a short time. PL2B indicated that the training she received had little negative influence on her implementation because of policy documents that were clear and straightforward. From the above findings, I conclude that three out of four teacher participants in this study were dissatisfied with the knowledge and experiences they acquired from curriculum trainings.

During interview sessions, the issue of inadequate monitoring and support emerged. Respondents indicated that if they received monitoring and support in
their implementation process they would not experience the gap of training. PL1B shared her experience:

“I never experienced any monitoring and support neither by my HoD or district subject advisors. My HoD stamped and signed my lesson plans, but never commented. I need monitoring and support in a form of professional development in order to gain confidence on what I am implementing in classroom.”

All the respondents shared similar experiences with PL1B about a lack of monitoring and support in their classroom contexts.

The research findings indicated that all teachers in this study were willing to receive comments from their HoDs on what they practiced in classrooms. In this regard, they showed that they knew and understood that monitoring and support were vital for effective implementation of curriculum. The responses showed that, in practice, HoDs were not consistent with their supervision of teachers’ compliance with curriculum implementation in their schools. It also came up during the interviews that even district subject advisors did not support teachers at school level. Document analysis also confirmed that there was a lack of monitoring because PL1B had only four lesson plans stamped and signed by the HoD, and the other three teacher participants had no lesson plans signed by their HoDs. HoDs did not sign learners’ classwork books and formal assessment tasks. It was confirmed from the classroom observations that teachers taught in whatever way they preferred, as PL1B taught without a lesson plan.

The next paragraphs will present and analyse teachers’ responses on their knowledge and understanding of principles on curriculum implementation in South African context.

4.4.2. Teachers’ understanding and practice of curriculum principles

This section presents and interprets data based on teachers’ knowledge and understanding of curriculum principles and its application in teaching practices.

In this regard, teachers were asked about their knowledge and understanding of curriculum principles. The response from participants showed an understanding
of what curriculum principles are in relation to curriculum implementation. PL1A stated that:

“Principles are the guiding rules of how to implement the prescribed curriculum in order to maintain the standard of education by keeping in mind the aims and objectives of South African constitution and South African School’s Act.”

PL2A expressed a similar understanding that:

“South African curriculum principles are based on guiding teachers to provide an education that is comparable in quality with other countries abroad.”

PL1B and PL2B showed a lack of confidence when asked to explain the meaning of curriculum principles. PL1B indicated that:

“Mm… I know that principles are the components of curriculum implementation.”

Similarly, PL2B shared her view:

“Yes… I think curriculum principles are the guiding procedures teachers have to follow when planning to teach learners.”

The responses showed that teachers’ credible knowledge and understanding of curriculum principles varied. The responses from interviewed teachers indicated that two out of four teachers were not clear about the content of curriculum principles in teaching and learning situations. The above responses showed that the other two out of four interviewed teachers fully understood that the focus of curriculum principles is on guiding curriculum implementation process. It is also evident from the teachers’ responses that curriculum principles lead to the achievement of the aims and objectives of the South African Constitution and the South African Schools Act. The responses revealed that the quality of education is determined by the principles followed by the implementers; in this case the teachers in the Foundation Phase. The research findings clearly indicate that they understood that curriculum principles should inform teaching and learning. With regard to their understanding of curriculum principles, participants collectively identified a few examples of curriculum principles in their implementation of curriculum. PL1A highlighted that;
“Inclusivity, high level of knowledge and skills; safety and security of learners should be considered, and assessment should be done as it indicates the outcomes of teaching and learning.”

Interview responses indicated that these were the most important principles participants had to consider in their implementation process.

Regarding the purpose of curriculum principles in teaching and learning, the majority of participants showed that teachers understood that curriculum implementation is guided by the purposes of curriculum principles. PL1A responded: “Curriculum principles assist the teacher to reflect on her teaching whether it is in accordance with the expected standard of South African curriculum or not. The purpose of curriculum principles is to secure children’s democratic rights in teaching and learning situations by ensuring that all learners have access to learning.”

In addition, PL2A teacher claimed:

“Education without guiding principles is education whose future cannot be predicted. You know what… a successful teacher who plans according to curriculum principles can produce learners who are knowledgeable, skilful, active and critical thinkers who progress to the next grades without doubt.”

The findings above indicate that the focus of the principles in curriculum implementation is to secure the constitution of the country through quality teaching and learning. In addition, the participants illustrated a common understanding and awareness that in the light of understanding the purpose of curriculum principles teachers could produce a good quality of learners.

I also wanted to understand how Foundation Phase teachers apply the curriculum principles and how their knowledge and understanding influence teaching and learning. In this regard, PL1A and PL2A shared the same view that principles are involved in planning learner activities. This view was supported by PL1A who acknowledged that:

“Principles are applied throughout lesson presentation by monitoring and supporting, looking at the welfare of learners, assessing learner performance and reporting learner progress.”
Lesson observation confirmed that PL1A and PL2A had an extensive knowledge and understanding of curriculum principles. In their lesson presentations, all learners’ abilities were accommodated through various activities.

During the interviews, a challenge of how to infuse curriculum principles emerged. PL1B highlighted that:

“I do not know how to infuse principles in planning but I teach according to the curriculum. I am familiar with only one curriculum principle, which is inclusivity, as it is one of the visible components of a lesson plan.”

PL2B acknowledged a lack of understanding of how to infuse the curriculum principles and argued that:

“The training I received never emphasised the importance of the principles of curriculum and therefore I assumed that they were less important in teaching and learning.”

It appeared that PL1B and PL2B did not know the importance of curriculum principles as a component of curriculum implementation. Lesson observation confirmed this view, with PL1B not planning the outcomes she wanted to achieve in her lesson as she taught without a lesson plan. However, not all teachers knew and understood the purpose of curriculum principles, and how to infuse them in teaching and learning. It was evident from the collected data that some teachers lacked the competence to apply curriculum principles in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, which is the main objective of curriculum implementation requirement.

The next section encapsulates how teachers experience instructional planning as a requirement of curriculum implementation.

4.4.3. Instructional planning for curriculum implementation

It is important to investigate whether teachers’ knowledge and understanding of planning conform to curriculum and planning requirements. In response to the question: “How does your planning meet the curriculum implementation requirements?” All the four participants expressed a view that teachers had the
responsibility to design lesson plans according to phase overview and content term planning. PL1A teacher responded:

“I stick to the policy documents and plan according to what is indicated there. For example, I draft lesson plans from the prescribed content and skills selected for the term and for the grade. In this curriculum, the curriculum designers already did other planning levels such as phase overview, and content term planning.”

The other three interviewed participant teachers had similar knowledge and understanding, with PL1A saying that teachers had to design only lesson plans. Although teachers knew that the planning workload had been minimised, the document analysis confirmed that none of the four teachers’ planning met the requirements of curriculum planning. The research findings indicated that their planned lessons were in accordance with the phase overview and term planning as prescribed in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement guideline.

Table 4.2 (below) confirms that the planned lessons were below the expected number as stipulated according to the curriculum planning requirements. The specified number of lesson plans in Mathematics showed that teachers did not meet the planning requirements of curriculum implementation.

When asked about their planning requirements, PL1A responded:

“Yhoo… at the beginning of January I was teaching eighty two learners in grade two alone and that stressed me in such that I was unable to plan accordingly. By mid-February, another teacher joined me, and then I had to teach forty learners. I had to work under pressure to cover the syllabus for the term. It was then that I preferred not to focus on lesson planning, but to teach according to Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement guidelines.”
Table 4.2: Number of lesson plans per teacher, per subject, per term and per grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>HL-isiXhosa</th>
<th>FAL-English</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of lesson Plans</td>
<td>Number of lesson Plans</td>
<td>Number of lesson plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL1A-grade two</td>
<td>Done 12</td>
<td>Expected Not specified</td>
<td>Done 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2A-grade three</td>
<td>Done 10</td>
<td>Expected Not specified</td>
<td>Done 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL1B-grade one</td>
<td>Done 8</td>
<td>Expected Not specified</td>
<td>Done 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2B-grade three</td>
<td>Done 4</td>
<td>Expected Not specified</td>
<td>Done 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that in some schools, School Management Teams did not practise curriculum management. On the other hand, PL2B argued that:

“Really...I see no need for lesson plans because the activities, resources, and assessment tasks for the term are indicated in CAPS documents.”

The collected data confirmed that the HoDs and district officials did not use classroom visits to enhance the implementation of the curriculum.

The interview data also revealed the manner in which participants managed planning for effective curriculum implementation. Teachers appreciated that CAPS documents are user friendly for instructional planning. PL2B shared her view as follows:
“What I notice is that CAPS documents are clearer, and understandable in terms of planning. I just read policy documents and plan for my classroom activities.”

This implied that the three interviewed teachers experienced less challenges on curriculum planning. In contrast, PL2A responded:

“I experience a challenge of planning Mathematics in home language as I am used to planning in English, but I try to adjust as is required by policy.”

The documents teachers referred to include Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for each subject (for the four Foundation Phase subjects: IsiXhosa Home language, English First Additional Language, Mathematics, and Life-Skills), Protocol and Promotion Requirements, and National Protocol for Assessment. Document analysis confirmed that all teachers had these documents for planning and learners’ activities were planned from them. Lesson observations and document analysis provided evidence that teachers did not plan lessons on a daily basis.

The next considerable aspect discussed during the research was that of teachers’ experiences in curriculum practice.

### 4.4.4. Teachers’ experiences in curriculum practice

Teachers’ experiences in the classroom involved teaching and learning strategies, language of instruction, and the use of relevant resources. The following three categories discuss teachers’ responses with regard to curriculum practices in the classroom.

#### 4.4.4.1. Teaching and learning strategies for curriculum implementation

This section is intended to present teachers’ responses on teaching and learning strategies as the first component of curriculum implementation requirement. It also examines whether these strategies used were in accordance with curriculum implementation. All the four participants collectively indicated that they used the current teaching and learning strategies suggested in policy documents for curriculum implementation. The interviewed Foundation Phase teachers unanimously showed credible knowledge and understanding that they had to use
various teaching methods and learning strategies to support learners with different learning abilities in classrooms. PL1A elaborated:

“I use various teaching strategies such as whole class approach, individual, peer, and group, but this depends on the type of lesson I want to teach. What I do…if the majority of learners did not do well in a lesson, I change to another strategy and use various activities, because it reflects that the strategy I used was not suitable for them or for other individual learners.”

With the same view, PL1B shared her concern:

“We can use various learning activities to support learners, and if parents can support learners in their homework, learner performance can improve in the Foundation Phase.”

The above responses postulated that teachers understood that the new curriculum encourages teachers to use learner-centred teaching strategies that nurture learners’ abilities within the classroom climate. Document analysis also revealed that learners’ classwork books and homework books displayed various learning activities. Checklists in teachers’ portfolio files also confirmed that various activities were carried out. The four participants expressed the view that their learners could transfer knowledge from one field of curriculum to another. Lesson observations and document analysis also showed that learners were able to use high knowledge and skills across other curricular fields of study. PL1B highlighted that:

“Yes… I can assure you that my learners can transfer knowledge they gained from the home language to Mathematics and vice versa, for example, tsh [phonics] ezitshebelezayo [describing geometric shapes that can slide].”

PL2B and PL1A had a similar view and PL1A elaborated that:

“My learners can read different home language texts, interpret storybooks and they can write their own stories.”

In response to the question:

“How do you identify learners’ strengths and weaknesses?”

PL1A responded:
“Learners’ strengths and weaknesses were identified through learner activities and performances. Those who showed higher level of performance were categorised under learners with strengths and those who were below average were categorised under learners with weaknesses.”

PL2A further explained that: “learners who score below fifty percent are identified as learners with weaknesses. Those who score above fifty percent are identified as learners with strengths.”

According to PL1B:

“Learners whose performance does not meet the promotion requirements as stipulated in the Assessment Program and Promotion Requirements policy document after many attempts has been made to support them, will be identified as learners with weaknesses.”

Similarly, teachers shared an understanding that weaknesses and strengths occurred to learners in the sense that one learner may be weak in one area and be strong in another area of performance. It was revealed that teachers had to try various activities to identify learners’ strengths and weaknesses. The above findings indicated that the participants demonstrated a common understanding and awareness that in the light of learner’s differences in abilities, teachers have to try to support them with various activities before identifying strengths and weaknesses. The participants collectively indicated that they plan various activities that would improve learner performance with the aim of checking the kind of support that would be needed. This statement was confirmed by PL1B:

“Sometimes when designing class activities, I set two assessment tasks for two groups so that all learners would be able to understand the content we are dealing with. This helped learners to achieve good performance at the end of the year when they have to write common tasks.”

PL2B elaborated:

“Learners feel comfortable in the classroom when you cater for their abilities to learn through activities that would make them to obtain higher scores.”

Lesson observations confirmed that teachers were aware that teaching should be learner-centred. Observation schedules indicated that data collected from
participants confirmed that teachers at Foundation Phase knew and understood the content of the curriculum, which is based on building knowledge and skills of the learner regardless of abilities. All participants concurred that the new curriculum brought many changes in teaching and learning. PL2A highlighted that: “The curriculum policy turns the classroom into a training situation because activities are designed to engage all learners to develop knowledge and skills that would be part of their lives.”

PL2B took the view further by illustrating that:

“The learning strategies of collecting evidence on learner's birthdays in the classroom help the learner to know and understand the importance of family birthdays at home.”

PL1A confirmed that:

“Learners at school learn things that they can act out at home, some of which appear on television. Learners become ambitious and feel proud of their schooling.”

This response highlighted that the curriculum is meaningful to learners’ social life. In other words, the curriculum links the school with the home environment.

Reflecting on the above responses, the patterns of teachers reveal the picture of the value of the curriculum and indicate that the curriculum is relevant for schools. Document analysis supported the interview findings that teachers’ knowledge and experiences influenced their implementation of the curriculum. The document analysis confirmed that teachers indeed began to experience a shift with the implementation of curriculum in classroom practices. PL1A and PL2A were in one school, and their learner activities in homework, classwork, and formal assessment tasks indicated that the current curriculum had been designed to uplift the standard of education in the Foundation Phase. PL2A indicated that:

“The standard of teaching and learning is uplifted, for example, if you look at grade one syllabus, learners in isiXhosa home language have to be able to write words with four letter sounds [which is called onone in Xhosa home language] at the end of the year.
Document analysis also confirmed that in Grade 2 there were groups of learners who were performing Mathematics tasks of the second term whilst they were in the first term and the parents’ signatures in their homework books indicated that they also assisted them.

During classroom observation, PL1A was teaching First Additional Language in Grade 2. She did not use code switching in the lesson and the children were enjoying it, apparently used to speaking English. Although one learner tried to mix English with isiXhosa, PL1A asked other learners to correct him, for example, “Granny is cooking ukutya,” they corrected, “Granny is cooking food.” This implied that PL1A maintained the standard of teaching First Additional Language as the curriculum policy document required. The classwork and homework books in all grades showed various learning activities from different learning outcomes (components) in all subjects, and this suggested a better standard of teaching and learning. PL1A also commented that:

“This new curriculum makes a difference in teaching and learning in that learners are partners in academic processes. They are information searchers. Learners are the authors and book screeners.”

By book screening at Foundation Phase, PL1A explained: “Learners could see and correct the mistakes in spelling and punctuation when reading a text”

These findings revealed that the standard of teaching and learning could be improved in schools.

4.4.4.2. Language of instruction at Foundation Phase

The home language as medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase is the second component of teaching and learning for the requirements of curriculum implementation. I wanted to understand the language of teaching and learning teachers used in the phase and how they interpreted it. The research findings indicated that teachers implemented the new teaching and learning strategies in accordance with the language for Foundation Phase teaching and learning. The language of teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase in both schools under study was isiXhosa. All teachers expressed the view that learners perform well when they learn in their mother language. On the other hand, Foundation Phase
teachers also reported that they experienced challenges in using home language as medium of instruction in their schools. PL1A commented:

“Since teaching Mathematics in home language is new to me, I often find it difficult to translate some Mathematical concepts into isiXhosa, for example, 2D and 3D objects.”

In sharing a similar view, suggested that:

“There must be a Mathematical home language dictionary so that we can teach those concepts with confidence.”

On the other hand, PL2B suggested:

“It would be better if Mathematics could be taught in English in Grade Three in preparation for Grade Four. I prefer to defy the policy by code switching when teaching Mathematics in Grade Three so that learners do not feel lost when they progress to Grade Four.”

This implied that PL2B had partially implemented the language policy in her classroom. Seemingly, teaching Grade 3 Mathematics in home language and offering home language as medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase threatened Foundation Phase teachers, as if teachers in the Intermediate Phase would discredit their standard of teaching.

During interviews, PL1B raised a different issue about the enrolment challenge they experienced in their school at Foundation Phase, and indicated:

“Teaching more subjects in mother tongue put Foundation Phase under a high risk of dropping enrolment. Parents take their children to private schools in town as they believe that children really learn much at school when they do more subjects in English.”

According to classroom observations and document analysis, all teachers were teaching more than 40 learners in classrooms. The number of learners in classrooms was above the teacher to pupil ratio as it is supposed to be one to 35. In this regard, PL2A indicated that in previous years, each grade had three classes but in these years, each grade in the Foundation Phase had only one.

I also wanted to understand how the language of instruction influenced teaching and learning. PL1A indicated:
“Some parents are able to support their children in their homework as they understand the language and their learners’ work books are written in home language and this improves learner performance.”

This suggested that home language motivates some parents to take part in the education of their children. PL2A indicated:

“In my Grade Three classroom, there are learners who are able to do some Mathematics activities that are for the third term while we are still in the first term because they understand the instructions, especially when they work in groups.”

Teachers’ responses showed that the language of instruction motivated learners to work very hard to achieve their academic goals, as they understood the instructions in learners’ books. The other two participants had similar views to those of their colleagues, as PL1B highlighted:

“Home language makes teaching easier because a teacher does not struggle much to interpret Mathematical concepts. Sometimes learners come up with these concepts when they come to school because they are not empty vessels. For example, ‘dibanisa’ [add something] or ‘phungula / thabatha’ [subtract something].”

The teacher added that learners grasp Mathematical concepts with ease in the mother language and that helps to improve their performance. At the same time, learners know some of these concepts from home.

Lesson observations and document analysis revealed that all participants were implementing language policy in the Foundation Phase. The research findings indicated that Mathematics in Grade 3 in both schools in the study was taught in home language. The document analysis also revealed that all Foundation Phase Mathematics and Life-skills classwork and homework books were written in home language. Learners obtained high marks as they were learning in their mother tongue.

Seemingly, Foundation Phase teachers were satisfied with learner performance through home language as a medium of instruction. The research findings indicated that they experienced a challenge of translating mathematical concepts into home language as they thought that learners would not acquire an appropriate mathematical literacy vocabulary when they progressed to Grade
Four. Teachers’ responses indicate that their language experiences did not rescind the implementation of language policy during curriculum implementation.

4.4.4.3. Resources for curriculum implementation

The relevance of resources was the third component of teaching and learning explored in this study.

- Evaluating the relevance of resources for curriculum implementation

Regarding the identification of relevant resources, Foundation Phase teachers collectively expressed the view that the new curriculum needed standardised resources as learners were living in a world of information. Teachers raised concerns that their teaching was based on traditional textbooks that they had to choose, and on some teaching and learning material such as charts and counters relevant to their teaching and learning needs. In this regard, PL2B teacher indicated:

“Although I can identify resources according to the outcomes I want to achieve, sometimes I teach without resources, especially when I cannot find the relevant resources to use.”

This implied that teachers knew and understood that the relevance of resources is determined by the outcomes of the lesson. PL1A expressed a similar view and stated:

“Resources are determined by the activities learners have to do to achieve the outcomes targeted.” In addition, PL1B stated that:

“Resources should strictly adhere to the requirements of the lesson taught otherwise it would not serve the purpose.”

This response showed that teachers understood that resources are planned with a lesson.
Evaluating the suitability of resources for curriculum implementation

I also asked: “To what extent teacher’s resources meet the requirements of curriculum implementation.” Lesson observations and document analysis provided evidence that all the four participants collectively expressed the view that the resources they used were inadequate. PL1A expressed her experience as follows:

“Wow… it is difficult to implement new teaching and learning strategies when you teach in schools that do not have access to computers or televisions whereby learners have to see things in real life situation. The lack of technological resources makes teaching and learning difficult, particularly in disadvantaged schools.”

PL2A confirmed the above view:

“This curriculum is technological based and therefore advanced resources such as ordinary school television and even access to internet are needed although I cannot use them. In my classroom, learners are used to textbooks and charts only. I can assure you that some of the resources I use for teaching and learning do not match the standard of this curriculum.”

Similarly, PL1B expressed her frustration that:

“Textbooks alone cannot assist a teacher to improve quality of teaching and learning as school and departmental officials believe, especially where parents are not working, at the same time they are not cooperating in the education of their children. My children are lagging behind in the expected standard I wish them to be.”

According to the above response, the absence of technologically literacy implies that learners would have no access to other sources of information to broaden their scope of knowledge and skills. The responses highlighted in the previous paragraph imply that teachers experienced challenges in acquiring relevant resources to meet curriculum needs. Teachers highlighted a lack of support from the parents in acquiring resources that would assist them to support learners in enhancing knowledge and understanding of subject content. According to respondents, lack of resources forces them not to teach according to their higher expectations.
Challenges with the management of resources

Teachers were asked how they managed challenges related to resources. Interviewed participants reported that in planning a lesson, they had to think about the textbooks, wall charts, pictures, and counters as the readily available resources in their schools. In addition, they said that they sometimes had to improvise resources that they thought were relevant to teach that lesson. This was confirmed by PL2A, who laughed in a low tone and responded:

“Hee… hee… it is difficult sometimes to teach other lessons in rural areas where most parents are not working and the shops where waste materials are collected are far away. If you want to teach lessons demanding special resources you have to buy or work very hard organising resources by yourself even if learners can organise them through the assistance of their parents.”

PL1A and PL1B had similar experiences with their colleagues as PL2B added:

“Sometimes you buy your classroom stationery such as stapler, soft chalks and drawing pins to do your work in order to have acceptable standard of work.”

The findings indicated that although teachers showed dissatisfaction with the quality of resources they received they were innovative and able to improvise. The research findings also indicated that teachers had responsibility and opportunity to choose textbooks for effective curriculum implementation. Seemingly, the participants saw the need to reconsider the alignment of the resources with the curriculum and their availability for effective implementation.

The next paragraphs present and analyse one of the challenging components of curriculum, which is assessment, as practiced by teachers in this study.

4.4.5. Teachers’ understanding and practice of assessment

This study aimed to examine whether teachers knowledge and understanding of assessment met the requirements of curriculum implementation. This section will present teachers’ responses on assessment practices. The questions were based on generating information on teachers’ understanding of the concept assessment, how it is planned, the assessment strategies used, and how they used them, as well as the relevance of those assessment strategies in implementing curriculum.
4.4.5.1. Teachers’ understanding of assessment

With regard to the question: “What do you understand about the concept assessment when implementing curriculum,” PL1A highlighted:

“Assessment is meant to gain knowledge and understanding about learner performance in order to determine progression.”

Similarly, PL2A indicated that:

“Assessment is the strategy designed to monitor and support learners’ progress during the curriculum implementation process.”

PL2B responded:

“Assessment is a technique to identify learners’ strengths and weaknesses with the purpose of giving support to learners towards progression.”

PL1B had similar understanding with her colleagues and stated:

“It is a strategy that is used to reflect the outcomes of what has been taught and acquired for progression.”

The above responses indicate that teachers knew and understood that the focus of assessment is about learners’ performance and progression. They were aware that assessment should be learner-focussed. Interview data revealed that learner performance needed to be monitored and supported, learners’ strengths and weaknesses had to be identified, and outcomes of teaching and learning should indicate progression. In summary, the teachers knew and understood that assessment in curriculum implementation should inform teaching and learning.

4.4.5.2. Evaluating planning of assessment for curriculum implementation

When I asked about how teachers planned for assessment, they responded with similar knowledge and understanding that assessment was being planned along with teaching and learning. In support of this view, PL2A said that:

“Assessment is planned immediately when you begin planning your lesson.”

PL2B had a similar view that:
“Assessment is planned before you start teaching the lesson as you assess to achieve certain goals and it is continuous.”

The participants indicated that assessment is planned beforehand because what they assess is what they teach. PL1B concurred that:

“Teaching is guided by assessment… you review the subject content then you think about the assessment and thereafter you teach looking at the form of assessment you have to adopt to achieve the outcomes of teaching and learning.”

The interview data also revealed that teachers acknowledged that assessment guides teaching and learning and is continuous. The respondents indicated that in their planning for assessment they decide in advance on what to assess and how to assess it before teaching and learning commence. Teachers’ responses showed that they knew and understood that assessment needs to be integrated on a daily basis in teaching and learning.

4.4.5.3. Assessment strategies and tools for curriculum implementation

In this regard, teachers were requested to respond to the question: “Which assessment strategies and tools do you use to collect evidence of learners performance?” The interview data revealed that Foundation Phase teachers knew and understood that they had to use various assessment strategies in their teaching practices. PL2B explained:

“In my class I use various strategies, which include teacher, peers, group, and individual assessment.” In addition, PL1B indicated that:

“I use various forms of assessment such as observations and performance-based activities.”

PL1B explained further that observation-based activities mean that the teacher observes learners in order to record their understanding and progress, while performance-based assessment activities allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes through creativity and demonstration. In collaborating this, PL2B responded:

“Formal tasks are informed by informal tasks in the sense that learners have to do more various informal tasks in preparation for formal tasks.”
PL1A responded:

“I use forms of assessment tasks, which include oral activities such as reading, role-play, interviews, handwriting, creative writing, debates, projects, and recitals.”

In addition, PL2A mentioned that tests, projects, research, creative writing and assignments were used, but depended on the subject content to be assessed. To corroborate the findings from teachers’ responses, Table 4.3 (below) illustrates the numbers of activities per subject and per grade, and these numbers present various assessment forms. What I observed during document analysis was that formal assessment tasks were above the expected number, as Table 4.3 indicates. Formal assessment tasks were at the level of classwork activities. In other words, they did not cover various knowledge and skills set from various subjects components as Assessment policy guidelines prescribes.

Table 4.3: Number of learners’ activities in term one per grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>English-FAL</th>
<th>Home language- Xhosa</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homework &amp; classwork</td>
<td>Formal Tasks</td>
<td>Homework &amp; classwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to PL2B:

“Learners do not perform well when you set a task that covers most of the subject components.” This view implied that teachers were resistant to change because the DBE had initiated this form of formal assessment tasks, with the aim of improving the national curriculum evaluation system so that learners practise answering questions that differ in higher order thinking at an early age. According
to interview data, teachers knew that there were informal and formal tasks and all were meant to assess learner performance for progression.

On the question: “How do you use the assessment strategies and tools?” participants collectively agreed that assessment strategies and tools were used for different purposes. PL2A responded:

“Assessment tools such as rubrics, checklists, and memorandum, workbooks, classwork, and homework books bring evidence of what has been assessed for analysing learner performance.”

PL1B illustrated this with various examples:

“Oral and written classwork are continuous activities used to assess learners’ knowledge and understanding of the content and skills taught. The teacher monitors and supports learner progress in that particular subject content through various activities. These classwork and homework exercise are informally assessed as they prepare for formal assessment, which is credited for progression. Furthermore, classwork books and checklists are used to record learner performance which indicates learners’ strengths and weaknesses.”

PL2A shared similar knowledge and understanding:

“Tests are managed as formal tasks for progression purpose as they are informed by class work and home work.”

In addition, PL2A stated that:

“I use checklists for recording learner performance such as oral activities, project work, group work, tests, creative writing and other activities that are stipulated in the policy for determining learner performance.”

Interview data revealed that all the participants knew and understood that learners should be assessed throughout the lesson using various assessment strategies and tools. Document analysis confirmed that some parents monitored and supported learners as they signed their children’s homework books. The data obtained from classroom observations confirmed that all the Foundation Phase teachers in the study had intensive knowledge and understanding of various assessment strategies in teaching practices. Observation checklist indicated that PL1A, in her Grade Two lesson, was able to assess a picture story using various
assessment strategies, such as question and answer in oral form, construction of sentences, reading sentences on chalkboard, and creative writing, whereby learners were able to draw their own picture stories accompanied by sentences. In addition, document analysis and observation schedule revealed that classwork books and rubrics were used as assessment tools. Evidence from the observed lessons indicated that, in PL2A’s Grade Three Mathematics lessons, learners were analysing geometric patterns from the learners’ book and explained geometric shapes that were used to design them. Learners worked in groups making their own geometric patterns using waste material such as bottle tops and matchsticks, completed geometric patterns in their individual exercise books, and were given homework to make models using geometric shapes.

The above discussion clearly indicates that the assessment strategies employed by teachers were in accordance with national curriculum assessment principles stated in the “National Protocol for Assessment” which emphasises the use of various assessment strategies in teaching and learning (DoE, 2011b:3). I noted that teachers understood the use of various assessment strategies that are needed to support learners to improve performance. PL1B supported the idea of using various assessment strategies:

“Learners differ in their abilities; therefore it is important to cater for all learners for them to enjoy learning.”

Also asked about the relevance of the assessment strategies and tools they used, teachers commented about the use of rating scale system for reporting learner performance to parents and to the DoE. In order to support the above statement, PL1A commented:

“I attended various workshops… but little attention was paid on how rating scale is accurately administered for recording and reporting as if it is not much important. These rating scales are complicated for parents to read the report cards… they are familiar to marks and percentages. The rating code system is also time consuming when you have a class with big number as you have to compile marks and convert them into percentage to get the rating scale. During CAPS workshop, assessment was not touched at all. I still need further orientation on the rating scale.”
In addition, PL2 B said:

“The use of descriptors makes doubt as to whether I am in line with what is expected according to the principles of assessment implementation. I just… estimate that if the child got a mark between certain numbers… I give him or her that particular descriptor. Facilitators indicated that you rate learners performance according to the speed and the sequential steps the learner has followed to answer the question. This rating system does not impress me at all…as a result I prefer to rate learners’ academic work according to the correct responses the learner provided regardless of time spent to answer the question.”

The collected data revealed that participants had varied level of understanding the application of the rating scale on rating the level of learner performance. Interview data indicated that the PL2A teacher had exceptional experience on using descriptors, as she indicated: “I prefer to peruse documents… and do what I can justify when my senior asks. For example if the formal task is thirty marks… the learner obtained twenty marks …I say twenty divided by thirty … multiply by one hundred… and get the percentage that will indicate the actual level of learner performance…eighty top a hundred percentage is level seven… I take it from there.”

Document analysis also indicated that each school under study had its own recording tool.

Although PL1B and PL2B had a challenge on rating learner performance, document analysis indicated that their recording sheets and report cards reported learner performance by means of rating scale system calculated in percentages. Looking at the above responses, it appears that teachers’ knowledge and understanding in using the rating scale as a rubric for reporting learners’ progress differed. The confusion among teachers was attributed to the DoE’s statement that (2011b:3):

“Classroom assessment should provide an indication of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner by ensuring that adequate evidence of achievement is collected using various forms of assessment.”

Teachers’ responses revealed that two out of four teachers in the study were still battling to use rating scale effectively for reporting learner performance. This
implied that the accuracy of their reporting was not a guarantee of providing reliable learners' progress reports.

The next paragraphs present and analyse the general challenges experienced by teachers in their classrooms.

4.5. GENERAL EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS ON CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

This paragraph catered for challenges experienced by teachers in curriculum implementation. In this regard, teachers were asked: “What are major challenges that you experience in curriculum implementation in your context?” In response to this, PL2A at school A reported old classroom structures which were small, not ventilated, old furniture and poor wall structures for pasting charts. Similarly, PLB at school B reported that their classrooms were full of potholes, roofs were leaking, and they did not have cupboards to keep their stationery and learner portfolio files. These teachers indicated that the above challenges had negative influences on teaching and learning. PL1A stated that:

“Learners are unable to write legible because of overcrowded classroom. During rainy days, I group learners at the corners of the classroom.”

PL1B elaborated: “Foundation Phase learners learn by reading words and pictures on the wall and that promotes incidental learning.” The above findings acknowledged that teachers were expected to deliver the curriculum without a proper consideration of their contexts. The standards of classrooms in these schools contradict the principle of curriculum implementation, which indicates that learners should be taught in a safe and secure environment. However, teachers indicated that the working environments hinder effective teaching and learning.

The following table represents the research findings on how FP teachers implemented the Curriculum after training on CAPS in 2011.
Table 4.4: Teacher records as per subject and per grade in term 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Number of learners in grade</th>
<th>Number of learners per rating code</th>
<th>Performance above 50%</th>
<th>Performance below 50%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL1 A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Xhosa-HL</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8 5 2 3 8 11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English-FAL</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9 3 6 4 9 6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8 15 3 2 8 1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2 A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Xhosa-HL</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10 1 7 8 12</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English-FAL</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4 9 6 2 3 3 10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15 9 7 2 3 3 8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL1 B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Xhosa-HL</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12 8 4 2 3 6 14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English-FAL</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9 8 11 6 2 2 11</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7 11 6 9 12</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL2 B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Xhosa-HL</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14 9 3 7 4 14 1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English-FAL</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9 9 4 7 10 3 10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14 7 5 7 3 4 12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 confirmed that most learners achieved above 50% in different learning areas. IsiXhosa home language scored below 50%. In response to the data from Table 4.4, PL1A said that at the begin of the year Grade 2 learners often struggled to grasp proper isiXhosa home language as they mixed isiZulu and isiXhosa, and high language competency begins in this grade. Teachers raised concerns about learners who were previously promoted to the next grades because of the number of years they spent in the Foundation Phase. These were learners who did not qualify for progression according to academic performance. Therefore, numbers of learners below 50% increased. PL2B mentioned that:

“In Grade Three, out of fifty two learners, among the twenty who failed, ten were those that were automatically promoted.”
Table 4.4 (above) clearly illustrated that although teachers experienced some challenges, their knowledge and understanding of curriculum purpose inspired them to work hard towards improving learner performance. According to the data presented in Table 4.4, teachers were striving to maintain the principle of quality teaching and learning as these were the results of the first term.

4.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the data collected from interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis. These data collection techniques aimed to illustrate the knowledge and understanding that Foundation Phase teachers had in implementing curriculum in their schools. The techniques used to present, analyse, and interpret data were in line with the methodology indicated in Chapter Three. The research findings indicate that teachers’ knowledge and understanding vary in terms of the manner in which they implement the curriculum.

The data collected in this chapter informs the next chapter, which focuses on the discussion of the research findings, draws conclusions, makes recommendations and present some limitations of the study.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research findings as presented in the previous chapters, draws the conclusions from the findings generated, highlights some aspects of further research, make some recommendations, and highlights some limitations of the study.

5.2. DISCUSSIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in implementing the curriculum in their classroom practices. The study examined the nature and the extent of Foundation Phase teachers’ knowledge and understanding in implementing curriculum in their respective schools. The study also explored how teachers’ knowledge and understanding influenced the implementation of the curriculum.

The first theme that emerged related to the nature of training teachers received. The empirical research confirmed that participants received basic training. The research indicated that participants requested further empowerment for effective implementation.

The second theme that emerged focused on the principles of curriculum implementation. The findings confirmed that although participants understood the need for curriculum principles in teaching and learning, some did not focus on them when planning lessons. The research indicated that participants were not fully informed about the importance of the South African curriculum principles. In this regard, I posit that participants’ ignorance on curriculum principles did not enable them to grasp the content of the South African curriculum.

The third theme related to instructional planning that teachers practiced. In their responses, participants indicated that they plan according to their own ways but looking at the policy documents as guidelines. I argue that participants need
supervision in the form of monitoring and support in order to ensure that what they do is in line with the requirements of curriculum implementation or not. Participants said that they needed HoDs and district curriculum specialists to support them in classrooms.

The fourth theme addressed the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in teaching and learning. In this regard, participants reported that they used various teaching strategies as curriculum implementation required. The research findings indicated that learners are able to use various learning strategies, as a result they cope well in CAPS lessons. On the issue of home language, participants acknowledged that they were dissatisfied with home language as medium of instruction in the phase. The findings also indicated dropping of enrolment in the Foundation Phase because home language was used as medium of instruction. I also noticed that participants faced a challenge in lack of relevant resources to enhance curriculum implementation. They needed library and modern technological equipment in order to meet the curriculum implementation requirements. In their responses, they said that they did not teach in the standard they wished because of the lack of relevant resources.

The fifth theme related to assessment. Teachers had different knowledge and understanding of how to use rating scale for reporting learner performance. There were general questions in interview schedules that were constructed to discover the areas that were not part of the study, but were experienced as challenges in curriculum implementation. In this regard, teachers highlighted the problem of physical structures that were not conducive to teaching and learning. The research findings indicated that PL2B and PL1B lacked some knowledge of accurately recording learner performance using the national rating system.

The following paragraphs summarise the key research findings according to these five broad themes.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

The main research question: What are the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers regarding the implementation of the curriculum?
Sub-questions:

- How do Foundation Phase Teachers experience the curriculum implementation programmes they received?
- How do Foundation Phase teachers’ knowledge and experience influence their teaching practices to meet the requirements of the curriculum implementation?
- What can be done to address the challenges facing the teachers in rural primary schools?

5.2.1. Training teachers received

The results of this study confirmed the research findings from other scholars, indicating that participants received little training when a curriculum was introduced (Moalosi & Molwane, 2010: 33). Participants mentioned that the time for training was too short and that there were many modules that had to be completed. Data revealed that although participants had a challenge of the quality of training, some were resistant to change. For instance, Foundation Phase teachers in Schools A and B were trained in one centre, but school B lagged behind in all aspects of curriculum implementation. The lack of monitoring and support by HoDs and subject advisors, as teachers reported, constrained the challenge of training further for implementing the new curriculum. Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2011) argue that without support from the school or district officials; teachers are unable to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to benefit learners. As Erden (2010) argued, once teachers fail to acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of curriculum then the implementation will not be successful.

The results show that all the participants were dissatisfied with the quality of training they received. The findings further suggests that neither school had staff development programmes in which teachers could receive the kind of professional empowerment based on curriculum implementation to bridge the training gap that teachers experienced. Overall, participants clearly indicated that they were less empowered with training for CAPS implementation.
5.2.2. Knowledge and understanding of curriculum Principles

Research has established that the majority of teachers in South African schools are not clear on how curriculum principles are applied (Harber & Mncube, 2010). This study revealed evidence that two out of four participants were unfamiliar with most of curriculum principles in practice and experienced a challenge of infusing curriculum principles in planning. According to Harber and Mncube (2010), all the principles are equally important when teachers plan their lessons as they promote equal and quality educational opportunities for all learners in South Africa. Lesson observations and document analysis revealed that two out of four teachers did not comply with curriculum principles, as they were unable to carry out assessment forms to the prescribed standard of National Protocol for Assessment Grade R-12 to enhance higher order knowledge and skills. This study also revealed that not all participants had intensive knowledge and understanding of the purpose of curriculum principles for curriculum implementation. None of the four participants had a record of programmes for supporting learners with barriers to learning in their portfolio files. Seemingly, they did not have intensive knowledge and understanding of the purpose of curriculum principles in teaching and learning practices.

5.2.3. Instructional planning teachers experienced

The research findings indicated that inadequate knowledge and understanding of curriculum principles also affected the value of instructional planning. The data collected from document analysis revealed that none of the four participants had proper planning for the lessons. During interviews, participants indicated that they planned lessons but document analysis revealed that their planning was below the requirements of curriculum implementation (see Table 4.2, in Chapter 4). During classroom observations in School B, one participant taught without a lesson plan and the other one did not allow the researcher to make a copy of a lesson plan. This implied that participants had no confidence in what they were planning to teach. It appeared that participants were unwilling to adapt their curriculum implementation strategies, even when they knew the planning requirements expected of them.
5.2.4. Teaching and learning

Findings related to teaching and learning was as follows;

5.2.4.1. Teaching and learning strategies

Participants used various teaching and learning strategies during classroom observations. They had different learning tasks in their learners’ classwork books, but the quality of work was below the standard of national curriculum. The curriculum encourages activities that promote higher order thinking, for example, interpretation of picture stories, answering various types of questions, including comprehension questions, and reading and writing. Activities based on creative writing were very few and in some grades were not presented at all.

5.2.4.2. Language of instruction

The study found that all the four participants followed the language policy, as they taught isiXhosa, Mathematics and Life-Skills in home language. The research findings confirmed that learners’ performance had improved through using home language as medium of instruction. These results supported the view of Eloff, Wium, and Louw (2010) that learners achieve better when taught in their mother language. On the other hand, the research findings showed that participants were not comfortable teaching Mathematics in home language, especially to Grade Three, as they wanted to prepare learners for Grade four, where instruction was in English. Secondly, the study revealed that the school enrolment dropped in public schools because of the use of home language as a medium of instruction. Participants believed that most parents moved their children to private schools where the medium of instruction is English. These results confirmed the findings from the study by Ndamba (2008) and Neil and Theron (2008), addressing the challenge of English language in primary schools. The study also revealed that participants in the Foundation Phase formally taught English First Additional Language as curriculum language policy stipulates. During classroom observations, I noticed that learners actively participated in First Additional Language (FAL). Learners appeared to be interested in English at Foundation Phase but participants were underestimating learners’ abilities as they indicated after classroom observation that they used code switching because their learners
were not exposed to English at home. The study revealed that not all participants were competent to teach FAL effectively. This implied that teachers’ knowledge and understanding of teaching it was still a challenge in the Foundation Phase.

5.2.4.3. Lack of resources

The DoE (2009:51) indicated that the lack of relevant resources hinders effective curriculum implementation. In this study, participants expressed that they needed modern resources such as computers, libraries, and access to the Internet to enhance quality of teaching and learning. The research findings highlighted that although participants had more textbooks in their classrooms not all of them were in alignment with the curriculum. Teachers reported that their principals do not involve them when Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) is purchased. This study confirmed the Review Committee report that in South African rural schools textbooks were the least available resources (DoE, 2009:51). A critical finding from Peat's (2009) study indicated that teachers could not modernise teaching and learning in classrooms as they were still relying on textbooks as their main resource. The findings reveal that teachers focused on teaching theory because of inadequate resources.

5.2.5. Assessment

This study revealed that teachers still have a gap in understanding how to design formal assessment tasks according to national assessment guidelines. According to curriculum implementation requirements, classwork and homework activities should inform formal assessment tasks from all the subject components (outcomes) taught. The research findings highlight that participants in this study had compiled small formal tasks of five to 10 marks in one subject component and were few. Table 4.3 in Chapter 4 shows the total number of learner activities that were done per grade in term one. The findings support those of Fleisch (2008:143) that teachers in disadvantaged rural primary schools tend to have lower expectations of what learners can achieve. Although participants had tried to cover the syllabi, the formal assessment tasks were not at the standard aligned with the requirements of National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12, the
Provision of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements and National Protocol for Assessment. This study revealed that out of four participants, only one participant maintained the assessment standard requirements. The requirement of this curriculum is that content knowledge be assessed through a wide variety of questions compiled from all the subject components (learning outcomes). This implied that the majority of participants were unwilling to change as they indicated that learners do not perform well in tests of more than 10 to 15 marks. The participants’ views concur with the research that Foundation Phase learners lack the readiness to pursue more challenging activities (Jansen, 2009:138). The other evidence of further orientation was an absence of learner portfolio files and evidence of supporting learners with barriers to learning.

5.2.6. General experience of Foundation Phase teachers

Evidence gleaned from this study revealed that among all the challenges experienced by Foundation Phase teachers, un-conducive infrastructure was highlighted as a factor that hindered the effective implementation of the curriculum. I observed that the classroom walls were unfavourable for pasting wall charts, shortage of furniture was evident, and learners were seated in groups of three on one bench of two. There was also shortage of cupboards to keep records of work. Table 4.4 in Chapter 4 revealed that teachers’ experiences had influenced teaching and learning in that the academic results showed a greater number of learners falling below 50%. In this study, all the participants were teaching more than 40 learners in class. This overcrowding aspect was not compatible with the learner-teacher ratio as stipulated in the policy that teachers should be responsible for a minimum of 35 and maximum of 40 learners in a class. From my observation, even the teacher to pupil ratio contributed to the failure rate, as teachers could attend to learners individually, even though they did not comment about that.

5.3. PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of my study show that not all teachers had in-depth knowledge and understanding of curriculum implementation, therefore the following are
recommended to help teachers to improve their effectiveness in implementing the national curriculum in the Foundation Phase.

5.3.1. Training requirements

The findings of my study show that teachers need to be awarded a wide opportunity for training in order to acquire knowledge and skills for curriculum implementation, therefore I recommend that facilitators must take the minimum number of teachers for training in order to ensure that they grasp the knowledge and skills of the curriculum. The trainers need to identify the needs of teachers beforehand so that they schedule the number of modules and time that would fit the targeted group of teachers. After training, it is imperative that the district curriculum coordinators make a follow up in schools to ensure that curriculum is implemented effectively. Schools need to be encouraged to organise official staff curriculum development programmes to support each other, with experts also invited. This programme would assist all teachers to implement the curriculum according to the required standards prescribed. It is recommended that parents be oriented with curriculum innovations in a form of workshop to be empowered with knowledge and skills to enable them to monitor and support learners’ academic programmes at home.

5.3.2. Principles of curriculum

The findings of my study show that the majority of teachers in South African schools are not clear on how curriculum principles are applied, therefore I recommend that curriculum principles must remain a priority whenever curriculum workshops are organised. The aims and objectives of the workshops are to instil the knowledge and understanding of the content of the prescribed curriculum to teachers. I recommend that teachers revisit the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 1996, which indicates that the curriculum is based on life-long learning for all South Africans. This implies that teachers have a responsibility to expose learners to different higher order knowledge and skills.
5.3.3. Instructional planning

The findings of my study show that none of the four participants had proper planning for the lessons therefore I recommend that planning is the responsibility of the teachers, who have to plan accordingly in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses for support. In the same vein, teachers need to be in a position to identify learners’ strengths and weaknesses accurately. Team planning is necessary, as teachers learn from each other on how to tackle a particular lesson. HoDs and district subject advisors should support teachers in implementing instructional planning through classroom visits and moderation on a regular basis.

5.3.4. Teaching and learning

The findings of my study show that the quality of work in the Foundation Phase was below the standard of national curriculum, therefore I recommend that teachers need to ensure that a variety of teaching and learning strategies are adopted in accordance with assessment strategies to avoid contradiction that may confuse learners during the assessment process. The use of a variety of resources in lessons to bring reality to the subject content and to cater for different learning abilities is also recommended. The DBE and the schools have to support teachers with modern resources that are aligned with the curriculum in practice so that theory is related to practice. Principals should involve subject teachers when purchasing LTSM. Teachers need to be provided with multi-grade teaching strategies and skills in order to be able to support those learners who were promoted because of years in the Foundation Phase. It is also advisable that Mathematics be taught in English in Grade 3 in preparation for the Intermediate Phase.

5.3.5. Assessment

The findings of my study show that teachers still have a gap in understanding how to design formal assessment tasks according to national assessment guidelines, therefore I recommend that teachers be oriented on assessment in order to rate learner performance accurately to avoid generalisation of learner performance. There must be uniformity of recording tools that would be simple and manageable
for all teachers, for example, for oral reading, handwriting, presentations, and assessing group work.

5.3.6. General experience of Foundation Phase teachers

The findings of my study show that teachers’ experiences had influenced teaching and learning in that the academic results showed a greater number of learners falling below 50%, therefore I recommend that classroom infrastructure, and teacher pupil ratio and furniture should be attended by the Department of Education in order to support teachers to improve learner performance. The Foundation Phase classroom needs to be wall print rich with reading material. Teacher-pupil ratio needs to be revisited in order to give teachers an opportunity to apply individual attention to those learners is needy. Furniture needs to be provided according to the number of learners for individual and cooperative learning.

5.4. CONCLUSION

This study showed that the new curriculum has made tremendous efforts to change the behaviour of some Foundation Phase teachers to meet the demands of the 21st Century in a teaching and learning environment. Document analysis, lesson observations, and interviews confirmed that most participants used various teaching and learning strategies as evidence of change. During the investigation of teachers’ experiences on curriculum implementation, factors emerged that impede curriculum implementation.

This study highlighted the basic training teachers received, inadequate monitoring and supervision, lack of parental support lack of knowledge and the context in which the curriculum was delivered. The context includes provision of relevant resources, suitable infrastructure, and teacher pupil ratio. According to the research findings, the basic training affected teachers’ knowledge and understanding of curriculum principles, instructional planning, teaching and learning, and assessment practices in that some teachers were unable to meet the requirements of curriculum implementation. On the other hand, there were teachers who acknowledged that although they experienced some challenges in
curriculum implementation, they acquired knowledge and understanding of how to implement the curriculum. The study confirmed that teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the basic requirements of curriculum implementation are not on the same level.

The challenges highlighted above seemed likely to bring about curriculum implementation to an ultimate low level of success in some Foundation Phase classrooms. I conclude that some participants saw the implementation of curriculum for meaningful educational change as it provides learners with meaningful knowledge and skills for life. I recommend that curriculum designers consider the context in which the curriculum is to be implemented before the initial stage of curriculum implementation begins. Secondly, the implementers of curriculum need to be evaluated by exploring their views through district ‘Teacher Curriculum Development Forums’ to ensure that they are ready to implement the curriculum changes. This will help to close the gap that may hinder the implementation process as teachers will present their curriculum needs.

5.5. HIGHLIGHT OF FUTURE RESEARCH

With regard to the findings of this study, I recommend further study in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of curriculum in the Foundation Phase in rural schools. It would be helpful to extend the study to include the experiences of other teachers in various circuits of the district and even to other districts of the Eastern Cape Department of Education. The study would then generalise the level of curriculum implementation in the district and even in the province at large.

5.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were limitations, which applied to this research. Firstly, data was collected from Foundation Phase teachers in two rural primary schools, which are public schools. The sample was selected from Lusikisiki district in the Eastern Cape Province and as such, the results were not generalised to all the Foundation Phase teachers over the Eastern Cape and Lusikisiki district. Secondly, the study
was limited to the teachers’ reported data obtained through interviews, observation and document analysis.
REFERENCES


Appendix 1

The Circuit Manager
Department of Education
P/B X1010
Lusikisiki
4820

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT FOUNDATION PHASE.

I am MED student at the University of South Africa, involved in research in the Eastern Cape primary schools. My investigation is entitled “THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM.” The aim of this research is to find out how Foundation Phase teachers understand and experience curriculum implementation for the improvement of teaching and learning. I therefore request access to some of the schools under your jurisdiction in order to carry out an investigation regarding the above research title.

Two teachers from each of the two schools to be selected for this study will be expected to participate in an interview. The research also entails classroom observations and I also need to look at documents of teachers and learners with regard to classroom practices. Data collected will only be used for the purpose of the study. I intend to spend one month in your schools.

Before conducting my research, written consent will be obtained from the principals and all the other participants at the schools. The schools and the participants will be ensured of confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity during all stages of the research. I give you my undertaking that I will follow research ethics in handling all data collected.

I hope that you will consider my request favourably and grant me written consent to conduct my study at these schools.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration

Yours faithfully

Supervisor’s details
T.N.Makeleni (Miss)            M.J Sethusha (Dr)
University of South Africa
Contact no: 0124292258
Appendix 2

The Principal
Department of Education
Lusikisiki
Eastern Cape
Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT FOUNDATION PHASE.

I am a teacher in the Foundation Phase. As part of my professional development, I am presently enrolled for a Master in Education Degree at the University of South Africa. I am engaged in research in primary schools in the Eastern Cape. My investigation is entitled “THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM.” The aim of this research is to find out how Foundation Phase teachers understand and experience classroom implementation for the improvement of teaching and learning. I am therefore requesting permission to conduct investigations regarding the above research title at your school.

One teacher will be expected to participate in an interview. The research also entails classroom observations and I also need to look at documents of teachers and learners with regard to classroom practices. Data collected will only be used for the purpose of the study. I intend to spend three weeks in your school.

Before conducting my research, written consent would be obtained from the principals and all the other participants at the school. The school and the participants will be ensured of confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity during all stages of the research. I give you my undertaking that I will follow research ethics in handling all data collected.

I hope that you will consider my request favourably and grant me written consent to conduct my study at your school.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration

Yours faithfully

Supervisor’s details

TN Makeleni (Miss) M.J Sethusha (Dr)

Contact No: 0124292258
Appendix 3

Dear Educator

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at investigating “THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM.” The aim of this study is to explore teachers’ knowledge and understanding of curriculum implementation in classroom situation for the improvement of teaching and learning. Your input and feedback are therefore crucial to the study.

Your participation in this research will be through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Data collection will take for a period of three weeks. Your participation is voluntary. You will not be asked to reveal any information that will allow your identity to be established, unless you are willing to be contacted for individual follow up interviews. Should you declare yourself willing to participate in an individual interview, confidentiality will be guaranteed and you may withdraw at any stage should you wish not to continue with the interviews.

If you are willing to participate in the research, please sign this letter as declaration of your consent, that is, you participate in this study willingly, and that you understand that you may withdraw at any time. Any information obtained from the conversations will solely be used for the purpose of this research.

I hope that you will favourably consider my request and grant me permission to harness your participation for various aspects of the study.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Yours faithfully

T.N Makeleni (Miss)            M.J.Sethusha (Dr)

Contact No: 0124292258
MEMORANDUM

To: Principal Concerned

Subject: Permission to conduct research

AIM:

✓ To authorize Miss N. Makeleni to conduct a research in your school.
✓ To let the management of the school make arrangement with Miss N. Makeleni for conducting of a research in a manner that will not disturb teaching and learning.

BACKGROUND:

✓ It is incumbent for each teacher to upgrade himself/herself in order to sharpen his/her skills.
✓ This is in line with the development of the organization (Department of Education).
✓ In this endeavor, the incumbent may use the resources of the organization as he/she is the member.
✓ Researches at the end come up with recommendations that sometimes help the Department in the formulation and modification of its curriculum and policies.

REQUEST

✓ You are kindly requested to allow Miss N. Makeleni an opportunity to conduct her research in a school that is under your supervision.
✓ You are further requested to meet her requirements for the conducting of such research.

Counting on your maximum cooperation,

Regards

Circuit Manager
Appendix 5

CONSENT LETTER FOR THE TEACHER

I hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research study and therefore, I consent to participate in the research entitled “THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM” as outlined in the consent letter.

Name (Print):______________________________
Signature_______________________
Date___________________

Researcher: Makeleni TN (Miss)
Supervisor: M.J Sethusha (Dr)
Appendix 6

TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Teacher_____________________  School: ___________________
Grade: ___        Date of interview: _______________________

A. PRINCIPLES OF NCS IMPLEMENTATION

1. What is your understanding of the curriculum principles?
2. What is the purpose of these principles in teaching and learning situation?
3. Can you highlight some few principles that you often consider in your planning?
4. How do you use these principles in your teaching practices?
5. How does your knowledge and understanding of the curriculum principles influence your teaching?

B. TRAINING PROGRAMS TEACHERS RECEIVED

1. What kind of curriculum training have you received?
2. To what extent has the training empowered you?

C. INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

1. How does your planning meet curriculum implementation requirements?
2. How do you handle the challenges you experience in instructional planning?

D. TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES IN CURRICULUM PRACTICES

1. Language use
   - What is the language of teaching and learning in your phase and how do you view it?
   - How does this language influence teaching and learning?

2. Resources
   - How do you identify the relevance of resources to ensure that they facilitate teaching and learning?
   - To what extent do your resources meet the requirements of curriculum implementation?
   - How do you manage challenges relating to resources?
3. Teaching and learning

- Which challenges do you encounter in curriculum implementation?
- How do you identify learners’ strengths and weaknesses in your lesson?
- How do you address these?
- How does the current curriculum policy shape teaching and learning?
- What are the inconsistencies between the curriculum policy and your practices?

E. ASSESSMENT

1. What do you understand about the concept “assessment” when implementing curriculum?
2. How do you plan for assessment?
3. Which assessment strategies and tools do you use to collect evidence of learners’ learning?
4. How do you use these strategies and tools?
5. How relevant are the assessment strategies and tools that you use to the curriculum?

F. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the major challenges you experience in curriculum implementation in your context?
2. How do you view CAPS as an amendment of NCS?
3. How can you improve teaching and learning in your context?
Appendix 7

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phenomenon observed</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher needs to consider principles of curriculum in planning classroom activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher needs to show components of the lesson plan and teach in line with them</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher needs to use home language as medium of instruction in Mathematics and in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life-skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods should be in line with the prescribed curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson needs to be learner centered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources need to be relevant to the topic and bring concrete evidence to learners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher should show skills or expertise on teaching the subject content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment strategies should be in line with assessment principles of National</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment tools should report the actual learner performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various forms of assessment should be done</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for supporting learners with special needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation skills have to indicate teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>content of curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## DOCUMENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Focus areas</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher portfolio file</td>
<td>Indicates the planning, teaching and learning, and assessment implemented in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time table</td>
<td>Does it meet the curriculum policy requirements? Timeallocated for content areas per subjects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase and grade overview of the content</td>
<td>Do teachers have these in their files and do they stick to them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term planning per subject per grade</td>
<td>Has the teacher planned according to the requirements of the curriculum?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson plans</td>
<td>Do these correlate with term planning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment program</td>
<td>Does it reflect the requirements of assessment principles that involve types of assessment, tools, and methods?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record sheets/ tools</td>
<td>Are descriptors used in recording?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention programs</td>
<td>Are there any programs for learners having learning difficulties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class work and homework books</td>
<td>Do all tasks demonstrate content, concepts, and skills?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner portfolio files</td>
<td>Is the learner portfolio informed by the teacher portfolio file? Number of formal tasks marked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark schedule</td>
<td>Is it aligned with recording sheets?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report card</td>
<td>Is it aligned with mark schedule?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>