

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 'NO-FEE' SCHOOL POLICY  
IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LIMPOPO**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I, Mapitsi Phineas Setoaba, declare that THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 'NO-FEE' SCHOOL POLICY IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LIMPOPO is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Phineas Setoaba', with a stylized flourish at the end.

SETOABA, MP

complete references.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents, Tlou Marcus Setoaba and Mmatlala Mmaphuti Setoaba, and to my late grandmother, Ntotole Monawa Makhura, who raised me and made me who I am today. I am sure they would have applauded this achievement without reservations.

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- Principals, Treasurers, and Chairpersons of School governing bodies of the schools studied, for responding unreservedly to the research questions.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABSA:	Amalgamated Banks of South Africa
ANC:	African National Congress
CEDAW:	Council for Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DA:	Democratic Alliance
DoE:	Department of Education
EMI:	Education Management Information
ELRC:	Education Labour Relations Council
ETP:	Education and Training Policy
GER:	Gross Enrolment Ratio
ID:	Independent Democrats
LDoE:	Limpopo Department of Education
LTSM:	Learner and Teacher Support Material
MEC:	Member of the Executive Council
NAPTOSA:	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NFSP:	No-fee school policy
PED:	Provincial Education Department
PTR:	Pupil–Teacher Ratio
RSA:	Republic of South Africa
SABC:	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADTU:	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SASA:	South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (as amended)
SFAP:	School Fee Abolition Policy
SGB:	School-Governing Body
UNESCO:	United Nations Education and Scientific Organisation
UNISA:	University of South Africa

## **SUMMARY**

South Africa began with the ‘no-fee’ school policy (NFSP) implementation on 01 January 2007. The policy abolished mandatory school fees in public ordinary schools to make basic education available to poor learners in the country.

However, critics argued that the NFSP implementation made poor schools poorer and needed researched. This prompted an exploration on “No-fee schools’ inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo”

The researcher randomly sampled ten ‘no-fee’ primary schools for the study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation. Interviewees were principals, treasurers and chairpersons of school governing bodies from the schools studied. The collected data were analysed through inductive techniques. The study discovered that the no-fee schools were unable to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo.

The study concluded with recommendations for empowering no-fee schools on addressing the needs of the poor in Limpopo and for topics on future research.

## **Key terms**

Implementation; “No-fee” school; “No-fee” school policy (NFSP); mandatory school fees, Primary school; Selected primary schools; Limpopo.

## **CHAPTER 1: STUDY INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The South African education system under the democratic government inherited the legacy of charging mandatory school fees at public ordinary schools from the apartheid education system. The legacy of apartheid, poor facilities, lack of human capacity and policies concerning school fees, constrained equal educational opportunity and adequacy (Fiske & Ladd 2006: 95). Critics charge that school fees jeopardise the right to education, particularly for the poorest families who did not afford to pay by promoting the exclusion of learners from basic education (Roithmayr 2003: 382). Tomasevski (2003: 79) asserts that school fees epitomise poverty-based exclusion from education.

The exclusion of poor learners discriminated against them and violated their constitutional right and universality to basic education. The African National Congress's reconstruction and development programme (UNISA 2006: 13, 17, 19), the 1955 Freedom Charter (ANC 2007: 3) and Section 9 (1) (a) of the South African constitution (RSA 1996: 14) express the universality of the right to basic education. These documents put international and national pressure on the South African government to introduce educational laws to transform their schooling system in favour of all the learners in the country.

The South African government responded to these pressures by amending the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA) to review the Norms and Standard School Funding for the inclusion of a School Fee Exemption Policy that became operational in 1998 to exempt poor parents from paying mandatory school fees. The School Fee Exemption Policy was introduced so that school fees could be formally waived for learners from poor families (Hall & Monson 2006: 45).

However, the fee exemption policy was ineffective to relieve poor parents from paying school fees due to the incapability of SGBs to manage and administer the School Fee

Exemption Policy (Hall & Monson 2006: 46). The policy did not therefore assist the South African government in providing basic education to learners from poor families.

Being sensitive to the ineffectiveness of failure School Fee Exemption Policy, the South African government then passed Education Laws Amendment Act No. 24 in 2005 to allow the Minister of Education to declare some schools no-fee schools, especially those serving poverty-stricken communities (Harrison 2006: 173). The no-fee schools might not charge mandatory school fees (Harrison 2006: 173; RSA 2006: 42) so that basic education is available and accessible to the poor learners. *In financial terms, abolition of school fees minimises the schooling costs and brings about easy access to primary schooling* (Nsapato 2005: 2).

On 01 December 2006, the national Minister of Education declared 12 856 public ordinary schools, with 5 001 874 learners, to be no-fee schools (RSA 2006a: 4; Macfarlane 2007: 1). The number included 2 557 schools, with 1 015 524 learners, in Limpopo. South Africa resumed with the national no-fee school policy (NFSP) implementation on 01 January 2007. Since then, the South African government had been declaring no-fee schools every December of each year (table 2.1).

However, the implementation of the NFSP in South Africa had been exposed to public criticism and debates. For example:

- the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC1: 17 February 2008) found a 50:50 split response from callers to the question: *“Are no-fee schools doomed to fail?”* and
- the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU), National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), Democratic Alliance (DA), Education Rights Project at Witwatersrand University and various school principals reiterated that there were large-scale challenges that no-fee schools experienced in South African provinces (Macfarlane 2007: 1 4).

The no-fee schools experienced challenges that related to the NFSP implementation such as incapable school governing bodies, late release of the no-fee school allocations, reduced parent involvement, and incongruous national and school financial years (2.5.1-2.5.4, 4.4.3.6, 4.4.4.5, 4.4.5.6).

## **1.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDY**

Miles and Huberman (1994: 18), Merriam (1998: 45) and Maxwell (2005: 33) describe a conceptual framework (interchangeable with “theoretical framework”) as a framework that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied: the key factors, constructs or variables—and the presumed relationships between them. Figure 1.1 gives a conceptual framework for this study.

The next paragraphs highlight the importance of and sources for a conceptual framework for the study.

### **1.2.1 Importance of conceptual framework**

In the study, the conceptual or theoretical framework guided the research process in terms of the identification of relevant concepts/constructs, definition of key variables, problem statement, study purpose, specific questions to be investigated, selection of a research design, choice of sample and sampling procedures, and data collection, analysis and interpretation techniques (Merriam 1998: 46; Maxwell 2005: 33-34).

### **1.2.2 Construction of conceptual framework**

The researcher constructed a graphical conceptual framework from experiential knowledge and existing theory and research.

### 1.2.2.1 **Experiential knowledge**

Maxwell (2005: 38) argues that separating one's research from other aspects of one's life cuts one off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks. Thus, the study found it necessary to incorporate the researcher's personal identity and experience in the conceptual framework.

The researcher grew up and attended primary and secondary schooling in poor and deep rural villages. In those villages, most people were unemployed and could not afford to pay mandatory school fees for their children. Thus in those villages, many children did not attend school or dropped out before completing their primary and secondary schooling. However, the researcher's grandmother used her old pension fund to pay the researcher's school fees. This assisted the researcher to complete primary and secondary schooling. After the completion of secondary education, the researcher received a free bursary to train for a two-year secondary teacher's diploma. Thereafter, the researcher worked as a schoolteacher and principal at a number of schools in Limpopo. The researcher studied privately for a postgraduate diploma in educational management.

When the South African government announced the introduction of NFSP implementation in 2007, the researcher remembered those days when mandatory school fees denied poor learners access to education. For the researcher, the announcement was a good initiative. However, the researcher was perplexed and curious when local media and public debates criticised the NFSP implementation. For example:

- NAPTOSA said, "*the no-fee allocations constitute a critical issue that needs to be researched*" (Macfarlane 2007: 4).
- Macfarlane (2007: 1) remarks that the government's no-fee school policy had *set alarm bells ringing at the country's poorest schools, with some of them finding that they were then poorer, and*

- The Member of Executive Council (MEC) for Education in Limpopo, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, said, *“While the no-fee school concept had been spoken about before, many people, amongst them political leaders, were still asking lot of questions. It was essential that we spoke about that issue again and again”* (LDoE 2007: 3).

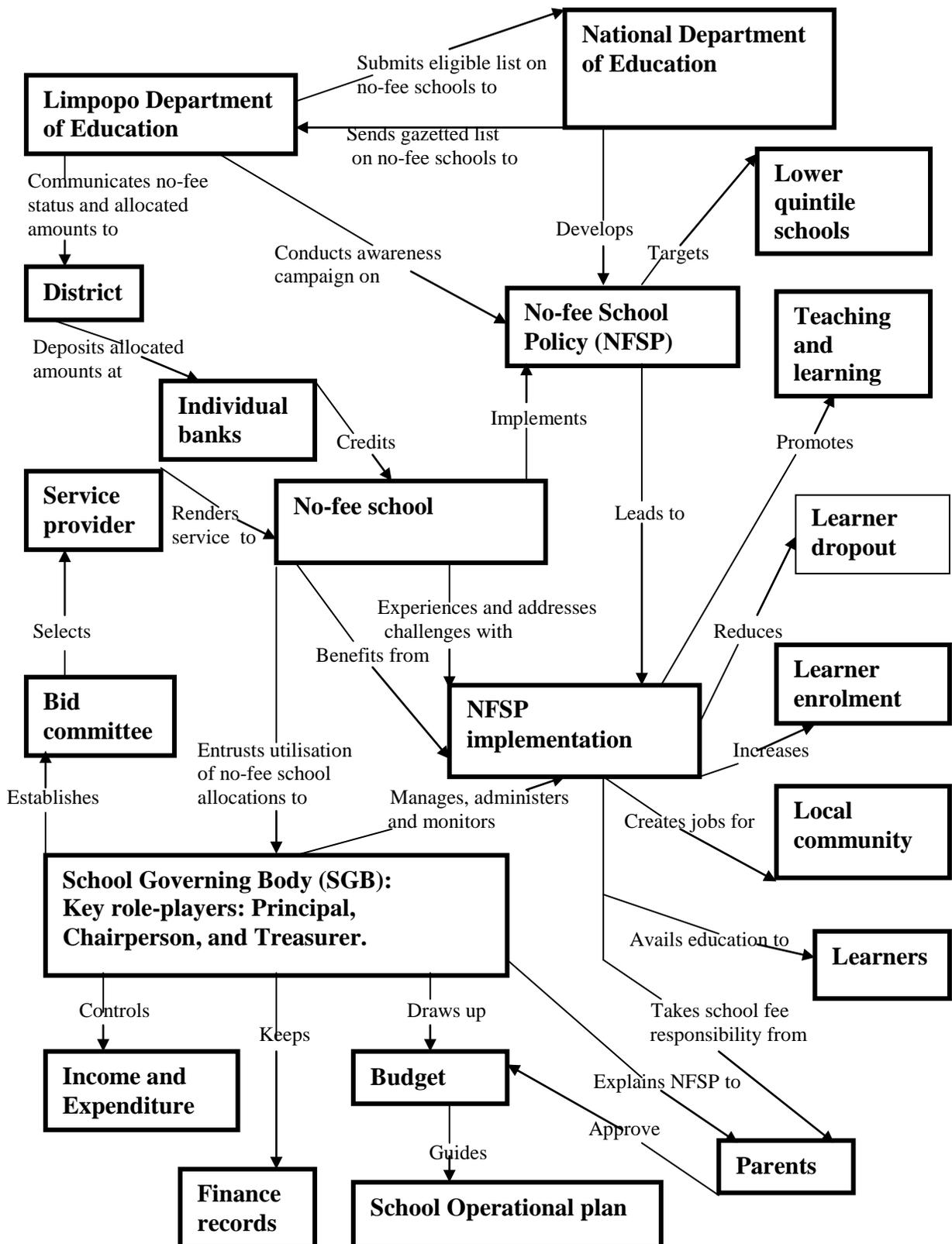
These statements aroused curiosity about the NFSP implementation in the researcher’s mind.

#### **1.2.2.2 Existing theory and research**

The study also constructed the conceptual framework from the existing theory and research. Maxwell (2005: 42) states that theory means a set of concepts and the proposed relationships among these, a structure that represents or models something about the world. For example, the linking words, “manages”, “administers” and “monitors”, relates the concepts “no-fee school” and “no-fee school amount” in, “no-fee school manages and administers no-fee school amounts”.

Maxwell (2005: 41) remarks that prior theory and research embraces published works and other people’s theories and empirical research. This study adopted this approach to existing theory and research and constructed the conceptual framework not only from the existing literature but also from other people’s theories and empirical research on no-fee school implementation. This approach helped the researcher to find that other people’s theories, existing literature and empirical research (chapter 2) dealt with NFSP implementation in some sub-Saharan countries and only generic issues on NFSP in South Africa and Limpopo. This revealed a lack of and urgent need for an empirical study on NFSP implementation in Limpopo.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for a study on implementation of the no-fee school policy (Maxwell 2005: 34; Miles & Huberman 1994: 18-21)



### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The intention of the no-fee school policy, in financial terms, is to minimise the schooling costs and to bring about easy access to primary schooling (Nsapato 2005: 2). However, the South African no-fee school policy caused problems at South Africa's poorest schools (primary, secondary and combined) with some of them finding that they were then poorer (Macfarlane 2007: 1). This remark shocked the researcher. It grossly contradicted the intention of the no-fee school policy of providing basic quality education and alleviating poverty in poor communities.

The abovementioned remark and the determinants of the conceptual framework for the study discussed in section 1.2 triggered in the mind of the researcher the following generic problem: No-fee schools' inability to address the needs of the poor in South Africa.

After careful consideration of the conceptual framework for the study, the above generic problem was reformulated to a more specific research problem (Merriam 1998: 58; McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 52). The specific research problem for this study was **“No-fee schools' inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo”**.

An empirical study on this problem will add valuable information to the existing knowledge base on NFSP implementation (1.2.2). The next paragraph deals with the purpose of the study linked to the specific research problem for this study.

### **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose (intent or objective) of this case study was to explore no-fee schools' inability to address the needs of the poor in the Limpopo province.

To realise this purpose, the researcher interviewed principals, treasurers and chairpersons of SGBs and collected documentation at ten purposefully selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo.

The researcher narrowed the focus of this specific purpose by creating research questions to be answered through data collection during the study (Creswell 2003: 88, 105).

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Research questions are questions that data collection attempts to answer during the study (Creswell 2003: 88). In this study, the research questions were:

- How did the communities of the selected primary schools in Limpopo become aware that their schools were no-fee?
- How do the communities of the selected primary schools in Limpopo and their communities benefit from the NFSP implementation?
- What do the selected primary schools in Limpopo require to implement the NFSP?
- What capacity do the selected primary schools in Limpopo have to manage and administer the NFSP implementation?
- What challenges do the selected primary schools in Limpopo face with the NFSP implementation?
- How do the selected primary schools in Limpopo address the challenges they face with the NFSP implementation? and
- How can the selected primary schools in Limpopo improve the NFSP implementation?

## **1.6 STUDY OBJECTIVES**

The purpose (intent or objective) of this case study was to explore no-fee schools' inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo (1.4).

The objectives that corresponded to the research questions were to:

- determine how the communities of the selected primary schools in Limpopo became aware that their schools were no-fee,
- establish the benefits that the selected primary schools in Limpopo and their communities gain from the NFSP implementation
- determine the requirements of selected primary schools in Limpopo for implementing the NFSP,
- determine the capacity that selected primary schools in Limpopo have to manage and administer the NFSP implementation,
- determine the challenges that selected primary schools in the Limpopo face with the NFSP implementation,
- find strategies that selected primary schools in the Limpopo use to address the challenges they face with the NFSP implementation, and
- determine ways of improving the NFSP implementation in selected primary schools in Limpopo.

## **1.7 MOTIVATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The call for research, criticism and observations by school principals, teachers' unions, political parties and universities (1.1) on the NFSP implementation motivated the research. However, the researcher confined the study to selected primary schools in three geographical districts, namely Capricorn, Greater Sekhukhune and Waterberg, in Limpopo due to limitations (1.6.6).

The realisation of the study objectives yielded findings to inform the department of Education (DoE) that the NFSP implementation was not effective in addressing the needs of the poor in the country due to a number of implementing challenges. These challenges for example incapable school governing bodies and late release of the no-fee school allocations affected negatively on NFSP implementation.

The study findings triggered important topics for future research on the NFSP implementation.

The study findings and recommendations aimed at assisting policy makers at school, circuit, and district, provincial and national levels on improvement of the NFSP formulation and implementation. The NFSP reformulation and improvement could, for example lead to:

- the consideration of poor learners in schools with quintiles 3, 4 and 5, and
- inclusion of school uniform costs in the no-fee school allocation for poor learners.

In this way, the reformulation and improvement on NFSP would assist the DoE in making education available and accessible to the poor learners in South Africa.

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

The researcher used qualitative research to realise the above-stated study objectives. Merriam (1998: 5, 100) states that qualitative research is an umbrella concept that covers several forms of inquiry that help us to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible. One of the forms of qualitative research is the qualitative case study. The researcher applied qualitative case study to explore no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo. Chapter 3 discusses in detail research design and methods applicable to the study.

### **1.8.1 Ethical aspects in the study**

Merriam (1998: 199) maintains that all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. The researcher conducted the study in an ethical manner by:

- being sensitive to the lives of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen 2007: 49),
- avoiding research sites where informants might feel coerced to participate in the research study,
- honouring the privacy of the participants,

- protecting the identity of the informants and research sites so that the information collected did not embarrass or harm them,
- treating the informants with respect and seeking their cooperation in the research project,
- clarifying the terms of agreement to the participants and abiding by that contract throughout the research,
- telling the truth when writing up and reporting the research findings, and
- respecting the constitutional rights of the informants (RSA 1996: 7-9, 11, 15).

In addition to the above ethical issues, the researcher communicated telephonically and personally with the interviewees at their different schools prior to the interviews, to explain the aims of the study and to hand over informed-consent letters for completion (annexure C). The telephonic and personal conversation established good interpersonal relationships between the researcher and interviewees. This measure neutralised initial distrust and served as control for contextual effects (Mouton 2002: 158).

### **1.8.2 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the study findings**

The research project ensured that study findings were valid, reliable and trustworthy by:

- collecting, through interviews and documentation, information on no-fee schools inability to address the poor in Limpopo ten purposefully selected no-fee primary schools(Merriam 1998: 212),
- interviewing 30 participants from each of the 10 primary schools in an ethical manner. In that way, the researcher triangulated the participants' experiences and interpretations of the NFSP. Triangulation of data of the participants' experiences and interpretations of the NFSP strengthened the validity and reliability of research conclusions (Merriam 1998: 200, 204, 207). Triangulation of data was further ensured by:

- tape-recording the responses of the participants,
- transcribing the recorded responses of the interviewees word by word,
- triangulating data collection methods through interviews and documentation,
- comparing data from interviewees within the same school studied and at different schools
- playing a neutral role during the interview sessions, thereby avoiding researcher biases that might otherwise had affected the conclusions negatively, and
- collecting, analysing and interpreting the data through inductive [qualitative] data analysis techniques.

### **1.8.3 Sampling**

In the study, purposive non-probability sampling technique was used to select a sample of 10 primary schools from a pool of no-fee primary schools in Limpopo in 2009. The 10 selected primary schools were located in the poorest of the communities in Limpopo. For ethical reasons, S01 to S10 substituted the real names of the selected schools.

South Africa classified communities under national poverty levels (RSA 2006a: 24-31). The national poverty levels ranged from quintile one to five, from the poorest of the poor to the least poor communities. Thus the national and provincial DoE labelled public ordinary schools as either quintile one, two, three, four or five in accordance with the poverty level of a community in which the school is located.

### **1.8.4 Data collection techniques**

The researcher collected data from the ten primary schools through qualitative data collection techniques. Yin (1989: 85-95) states that data collection techniques in qualitative research are interviews, documentation, archival records, observation and physical artefacts. Semi-structured one-to-one interviews and documentation were used to gather data on the NFSP implementation from the sampled schools.

The researcher tape-recorded the individual face-to-face open-ended interview proceedings with the participants' permission (annexure D).

Documents that were important to the study were no-fee school allocation statements, selected minutes of SGB meetings, school budgets, income-expenditure cashbooks, and audited financial statements. The researcher collected and analysed these documents to supplement the data from the interviews.

#### **1.8.5 Data analysis techniques**

The collected data were analysed through qualitative analysis techniques. The researcher transcribed verbatim the interviews. The transcripts and documented information were reduced and categorised into themes. Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 128), Miles and Huberman (1994: 10-11) regard data analysis as an ongoing process that consists of data reduction, data displaying and drawing a conclusion from verified data.

#### **1.8.6 Study limitations**

Merriam (1998: 124-125), Creswell (2003: 186) and Walonick (2007: 7) refer to time, financial constraints and un-authenticity of documents as potential limitations to a research. However, the study limitations (5.3) during the exploration on no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo were:

- The use of English in interviews,

English as the primary research language obliged the researcher to delimit the study to Capricorn, Greater Sekhukhune and Waterberg to exclude Mopani and Vhembe districts of Limpopo from the study. The language limitation was controlled by allowing those participants that could not speak English to respond to the research questions in Sepedi.

- suspicious interviewees,

The researcher realised that some participants were suspicious about the research during the pre-study visits and telephone conversations. This study limitation was eliminated by taking them through the informed consent letter (annexure C).

- researcher-bias,

Researcher biases are those that researchers bring to the research from their own background and identity Maxwell (2005: 37). In the study, this limitation was controlled by mechanisation, probing and verbatim transcription of the responses of the participants during the semi-structured interviews.

- document limitations

Document limitations that were a threat to the study were possible incompleteness, un-authenticity and inaccuracy of documents. These limitations were controlled by triangulating documentation with the semi-structured interviews.

#### **1.8.7 Study assumptions**

Walonick (2007: 7) maintains that all research studies make assumptions, of which the most obvious is that the sample represents the population. The study assumed:

- adherence to ethical aspects by the researcher;
- representation of all no-fee primary schools in Limpopo by the ten selected primary schools
- audibility of tape recordings; and
- free and open responses to the interview by participants, and
- negligible effects of study limitations on the study findings.

#### **1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS IN THE TITLE**

The key concepts in the title were implementation, no-fee school, NFSP, primary school and Limpopo. These concepts are defined as follows:

- implementation means a process of putting into effect tasks to achieve goals associated with a policy (Khalid 2001: 88),

- no-fee school means a public ordinary school that might *not levy a compulsory school fee* (RSA, 2006: 42),
- no-fee school policy means a policy that *abolished school fees in the poorest schools nationally* (Hall & Monson, 2006: 46). These schools were in the poorest of the poor communities in South Africa,
- primary school means a public ordinary school that offered tuition from grade R to 7,
- selected primary schools means primary schools, in Capricorn, Greater Sekhukhune and Waterberg districts, chosen as sites for the study, and
- Limpopo is one of the nine provinces in the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996: 60). This province has five geographic districts, namely Capricorn, Greater Sekhukhune, Mopani, Vhembe and Waterberg.

## 1.10 CHAPTER DIVISION

The study was organised into five chapters, namely Chapter 1 to 5 (Walonick 2007: 1).

1.10.1 **Chapter 1** discussed the introduction to the study focussing on basic aspects of an empirical investigation such as motivation, purpose, research questions, objectives, limitations and assumptions of the study. This chapter explained and justified the need for the study on NFSP implementation. This study was conducted in purposefully selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo.

1.10.2 **Chapter 2** concentrated on the literature review on NFSP implementation in South Africa and other sub-Saharan countries. The literature studied gave clear and detailed information on no-fee schools, NFSP and NFSP implementation. The literature review revealed that the NFSP implementation in Limpopo was associated with benefits as well as challenges. This persuaded the researcher to explore, through a case study, no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo.

1.10.3 **Chapter 3** discussed research design and methods. The qualitative case research design and methods guided the study sampling, data collection and analysis during the exploration on no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo.

1.10.4 **Chapter 4** discussed data collection, data processing and study results. The discussion identified and formulated categories and themes under data from interviews and documentations.

1.10.5 **Chapter 5** discussed study chapter summary, study findings, study limitations and recommendations. Recommendations focussed on empowering no-fee schools on addressing the needs of the poor in Limpopo and future research topics on NFSP implementation.

## 1.11 **CONCLUSION**

Mandatory school fees result in the unfair exclusion of poor learners from schools, despite their constitutional right to basic and accessible education. The shortcomings of the School Fee Exemption Policy (Hall & Monson 2006: 46), that was meant to remedy the situation but failed to address the needs of the poor, made the South African education department to introduce the NFSP at some public ordinary schools in January 2007. However, the NFSP implementation was faced with many challenges such as incapable school governing bodies, late release of the no-fee school allocations, reduced parent involvement, and incongruous national and school financial years.

This state of affairs motivated the author to conduct a qualitative study on the NFSP implementation in the selected primary schools in Limpopo. The qualitative realisation of the study objectives revealed how the selected primary schools in Limpopo were unable to address the needs of the poor. The study found that the NFSP implementing schools critically needed capacity building and ongoing monitoring. Recommendations ended with topics for future research on the NFSP implementation.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA) amended the National Norms and Standards for School Funding Policy for public ordinary and independent schools to include ‘fee exemption’ and no-fee schools (RSA 2006a: 1-52).

Knowledge gained from the literature review on the no-fee schools formed the basis for the study methodology, analysis and discussion of research findings, and formulation of the recommendations. The literature review focussed on the issues of no-fee schools and no-fee school policy (NFSP) implementation in South Africa and other countries.

### **2.2 THE ISSUE OF NO-FEE SCHOOLS**

Oliphant (2008a: 10) explains a no-fee school as a school where parents pay no school fees, since government pays for every child who goes to that school. This author remarks that not every government is economically capable of introducing and maintaining no-fee schools. This remark implies that only economically viable countries could afford to establish and maintain no-fee schools.

The literature uses various names for no-fee schools. These names are fee-free schools, non-fee paying schools, schools that have eliminated or abolished school fees, no-fee charging schools and ‘have-not’ schools (Harrison 2006: 172; Presley 2007: 1, Chuenyane 2010: 12). However, during 2007 to 2010 South Africa used the no-fee school to refer to those public ordinary schools in the poorer Qs that were prohibited from charging mandatory school fees. In the study, the researcher selected the no-fee school nomenclature to public ordinary schools that were legally prohibited from charging mandatory school fees.

#### **2.2.1 No-fee schools in other sub-Saharan African countries**

Brown (2006: 5-6) and Tomasevski (2003: 69-71) discuss countries in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, that have abolished school fees. In these countries,

the school-fee-abolition policy (SFAP) regulates school fee abolition. However, in South Africa school fee abolition is regulated by the NFSP. The study regarded these policies as similar and interchangeable. The sub-Saharan African countries, namely Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania, that had abolished school fees experienced individual gains and challenges with the implementation of NFSP. The next paragraphs look into experiences and lessons learned with the implementation of the abolition of school fees by these countries.

**Ethiopia** decided on the “big bang” approach to fee abolition in 1994 but commenced with the implementation of the NFSP, called Education and Training Policy (ETP), in 1995 for grades 1-10 in the government schools (Fredriksen 2007: 24, 29; Nsapato 2007: 1). Brown (2006: 5) says that fee abolition in this country benefited girls and reduced absenteeism significantly. Fredriksen (2007: 29) adds that in this country, the positive effect of the abolition of fees was clearly reflected in the enrolment increase of 1995/96 and thereafter. However, Ethiopia, due to its high decentralization, had the main challenges of getting funds to the school level and lack of sufficient resources necessary to sustain the NFSP. Fee abolition had negative effects upon the quality of teaching and learning processes through increased pupil teacher ratio (PTR) Brown (2006: 5).

**Ghana** started the implementation of NFSP in 2005/06 in all schools after piloting the capitation grant scheme since 2003, through which schools received some money from the government, in 40 deprived districts during 2004-05 academic years. Similar to Ethiopia there was a significant surge in learner enrolment from 2004/05 to 2005/06. Fredriksen (2007: 34-35) states that the Government of Ghana needed to address some issues for successful NFSP implementation. These issues were:

- **Additional resources**

The Ministry of Education and Sports of Ghana needed to provide schools with additional classrooms, teachers, textbooks and teaching and learning materials due to the surge in learner enrolment.

- **Community participation**

The Ministry of Education and Sports of Ghana needed to develop strategies of sustaining community participation in a fee-free context.

- **Guidelines for utilisation of capitation grants**

Fredriksen (2007: 35) remarks that districts and schools needed guidelines for proper implementation of the capitation grants.

- **Monitoring of the allocated funds**

Fredriksen (2007: 35) concludes that funds granted to schools needed to be monitored and audited at districts and school levels by district internal auditors, accountants and circuit supervisors.

- **Insufficient capitation grant to urban school**

Fredriksen (2007: 35) remarks that allocations to most urban schools were too little and needed to be reviewed by the government.

**Kenya** abolished school fees in primary education applying the “big bang” approach in 2003 following the December 2002 elections and experienced learner enrolment upsurge from 5.9m in December 2002 to 6.9 in January 2003 to 7.12 in December 2004 and to 7.6m in 2007 (Brown 2006: 5; Fredriksen 2007: 24, 36).

However, Kenya learned, over the period 2004 to 2007, that capacity building was critically important in all levels for the successful implementation of the fee abolition policy. This country conducted a capacity building program throughout the country to cultivate the spirit of ownership of the NFSP by all stakeholders, namely parents, community, schools, districts and circuits, prior to the introduction and implementation of the NFSP. The capacity building program included clear communication strategies, clear policy on roles and responsibilities by stakeholders, political commitment and goodwill, program implementation partnership, cultivation of sustainability at all levels, and prudent financial and procurement management.

This approach to policy implementation assisted Kenya to achieve a successful and smooth NFSP implementation (Brown 2006: 5).

**Malawi** introduced and implement the fee abolition policy in primary schools through a phased approach immediately after the Jomtien Conference in 1990 and later through the “big bang” approach from 1994 after the multiparty elections (Fredriksen 2007: 24, 37). Learner enrolments increased tremendously and the government of Malawi responded by building new schools to increase access of primary education to the majority of school-aged children and created more opportunities for increased schooling for all children including the poor and girls.

Fredriksen (2007: 37) remarks that the introduction and implementation of the fee abolition in Malawi focussed mainly on access than on simultaneous address to access and quality education. Malawi remained with the major challenges of promoting quality education and resourcing schools to promote quality in learning environment (Fredriksen 2007: 37).

**Mozambique** abolished compulsory school fees with effect from 2004 as a step towards removing barriers to access education (Brown 2006: 6; Fredriksen 2007: 39). It experienced a surge in learner enrolment that demanded from the government additional classrooms, teacher supply and creation of environments. Fredriksen (2007: 40) says that Mozambique could have addressed those demands by bringing down the teacher/learner ratio, ensuring environments that were conducive to learning and teaching in schools and using temporary shelters or tents until proper classrooms could be built.

**Tanzania** planned and capacitated district and school officials in 2001 for the effective implementation of school fee abolition in 2002 (Brown 2006: 6). This country replaced the charging of compulsory school fees with a system of capitation grants that was working well for the country Brown (2006: 6). However, the country faced considerable challenges with the implementation of the fee abolition policy. These challenges were overall financial sustainability, deployment of teachers to remote areas, devising special programs and incentives to reach vulnerable and out-of-school children.

The sub-Saharan African countries discussed in the foregoing paragraphs faced a number of challenges with the NFSP implementation. These challenges were learner enrolment increases, lack of classrooms, high teacher/learner ratios, deterioration in quality education, poor financial management and lack of community involvement in a fee free context (Chatani-Rizvi 2006: 3, Fredriksen 2007: 5-34, Nsapato 2005: 2). These countries addressed the challenges with the NFSP implementation through capacity building, multi-shift, building extra classrooms thereby improving on classroom/learner ratios, use of temporary classrooms or tents, supplying additional teachers and provisioning of learner and teacher support materials (Fredriksen 2007: 14-15).

### **2.2.2 No-fee schools in South Africa**

The South African government was responsible for the provision of education to learners and for school funding (RSA 2006a: 7). Through educational amendment laws, the South African government reviewed the norms and standards for school funding whenever necessary. Thus on 31 August 2006, the government issued new national norms and standards for school funding, which included the ‘no-fee school policy’. No-fee schools were an integral part of the South African government’s strategy to alleviate the effects of poverty, and to redress the imbalances of the past. These schools were a vital step towards the transformation of the South African schooling system and were situated in communities in the lowest national quintiles (Qs) of poverty (RSA 2006a: 42-44).

National Qs were ‘poverty rankings’ that the national DoE annually allocated to each public ordinary school. The Minister of DoE annually determined ‘national Qs’ or

parts of Qs in terms of Section 39(7) of SASA (RSA 2006a: 43) and allocated them to schools. The national Qs ranged from poorest to least poor (i.e. 1 to 5) with the Q 1 schools in the poorest communities and the Q 5 schools in the least poor communities. Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) (2007: 3) regards Qs as poverty scores, for each Municipality ward, that are obtainable from statistics South Africa and are used to divide schools into Qs. Hall and Monson (2006: 46) say that DoE derives the Qs from national data on income levels, dependency ratios and literacy of the community surrounding a school. Macfarlane (2007: 2) refers to the poverty rankings as ‘poverty distribution categories’, ranked from poorest to least poor, in which the national DoE places all [public ordinary] schools. SASA (RSA 2006: 43) refers to poverty rankings or distribution categories as ‘national Qs’.

However, Chuenyane (2010: 12) states that the quintile classification of schools is complicated and mentions that South Africa will introduce the ‘haves and have-nots’ school classification with the ‘have-nots’ schools being no-fee or non fee-paying schools in 2011. The study preferred the use of quintile classification of schools over the ‘haves and have-nots’ classification because the two led to the same ‘no-fee school concept’ and the former was being used in South Africa during 2007 to 2010.

The South African national DoE published lists of no-fee schools in nine provinces every October/December in a government gazette since 2006 to 2009. The first appeared public on 1 December 2006 for 2007 school year and the second on 5 December 2007 for 2008 school year (RSA 2006b: 3; RSA 2007: 3). South Africa started with the NFSP implementation in 2007.

Table 2.1: National figures on no-fee schools in nine South African provinces over 2007–2010 (RSA 2006b: 5-372; RSA 2007: 7-343; RSA; RSA 2008: 9-351; RSA 2009: 3-695).

SCHOOL YEAR	SCHOOL QUINTILE	PROVINCES								
		EASTERN CAPE	FREE STATE	GAUTENG	KWA-ZULU NATAL	LIMPOPO	MPUMALANGA	NORTHERN CAPE	NORTH WEST	WESTERNSCAPE
2007	Q 1	2050	1152	230	2027	1614	461	203	470	286
	Q 2	1812	152	191	1303	943	523	89	198	121
	Q 1 + Q 2	3862	1304	421	3330	2557	984	292	668	407
2008	Q 1	1951	1105	231	1880	1516	448	242	644	283
	Q 2	1792	148	195	1306	903	504	107	283	122
	Q 1 + Q 2	2143	1253	426	3186	2419	952	349	927	405
2009	Q 1	1957	1059	458	1875	1604	448	247	618	284
	Q 2	888	138	428	1298	1232	504	148	277	123
	Q 1 + Q 2	2845	1197	886	3173	2836	952	395	895	407
2010	Q 1	1957	944	297	1571	1631	577	197	546	324
	Q 2	1783	200	275	1563	1618	509	126	339	165
	Q 3	1374	179	474	1351	641	376	131	437	188
	Q 1+Q 2+Q 3	5114	1323	1046	4485	3890	1462	454	1322	677

Table 2.1 gives a comparison of national figures in no-fee schools in nine provinces in South Africa over the years 2007 to 2010 (RSA 2006b: 5-372; RSA 2007: 7-343; RSA; RSA 2008: 9-351; RSA 2009: 3-695). The numbers of no-fee schools differed from province to province and from Q 1 to Q 2 within a province over the period 2007-2010. Rich provinces, for example Gauteng, North West and Western Cape, had fewer no-fee schools than the poor and large provinces, namely Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Limpopo. There was a general national school allocation increase

from 2007 to 2010 in the number of no-fee schools in the nine provinces. For example Limpopo, the focal province of the study, experienced an increase in the number of the nationally declared no-fee schools from 2557 in 2007 to 3890 in 2010.

Table 2.2: A distribution of nationally declared no-fee schools in Limpopo into primary, secondary and combined primary and secondary schools over 2007–2010 (RSA 2006b: 5-372; RSA 2007: 7-343; RSA; RSA 2008: 9-351; RSA 2009: 3-695).

YEAR	SCHOOL QUINTILE	TOTAL NO FEE SCHOOLS	SCHOOL TYPE		
			Primary	Secondary	Combined Primary and Secondary
2007	Q 1	2557	1062	509	43
	Q 2		599	335	9
	Q 1 + Q 2		1661	844	52
2008	Q 1	2419	982	502	32
	Q 2		571	324	8
	Q 1 + Q 2		1553	826	40
2009	Q 1	2836	1036	560	8
	Q 2		860	350	22
	Q 1 + Q 2		1896	910	30
2010	Q 1	3890	1047	538	46
	Q 2		1043	559	16
	Q 3		395	238	8
	Q 1+Q 2+Q 3		2485	1335	70

Table 2.2 shows:

- a general decrease in the number of no-fee schools in the categories primary, secondary, and combined primary and secondary within each Q,

- a general increase in the number of no-fee schools from 2007 to 2010 within each school type and,
- the total number of 'no fee' primary schools in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 as 1661, 1553, 1896 and 2485 respectively.

LDoE (2008: 11) says that a decline in the number of no-fee schools from 2007 to 2008 in tables 2.1 and 2.2 in Limpopo was a result of the abolishment and merging of some schools that were mainly no-fee schools in 2007, and exclusion of the newly established and inherited schools from neighbouring provinces due to cross-boundary exchanges. Thus LDoE (2008: 3) quotes the MEC for LDoE on 13 May 2008 saying the number of no-fee schools in Limpopo was more than 70% in 2008.

Oliphant (2008a: 10) says that in South Africa, a school qualifies as a no-fee school if it meets the government's poverty assessment criteria, based on statistics provided by Statistics South Africa. However, SASA (RSA 2006a: 43) states that a school becomes a no-fee school if:

- it has been placed in a national Q, or in part of a Q, where a school may not collect mandatory school fees from certain grades that have been determined by the Minister as being in need of a total prohibition of compulsory school fees, or will be classified as a 'have-not' school as from 2011, and
- it receives a per-learner school allocation that is greater than or equal to the no-fee threshold for a given school year. The no-fee threshold is the per-learner amount that the government considers minimally adequate for each year (RSA 2006a: 31).

However, Oliphant (2008b: 10) quotes school principals, teachers and unions saying that this indexing of schools is not viable, as the demographics have changed in many South African schools. Chuenyane (2010: 12) adds that the quintile classification of schools is wrong, complicated and discriminatory. Oliphant (2008b: 10) remarks that no-fee school allocations are not enough to assist schools to meet their financial demands.

Harrison (2006: 174) states that there was a mixed response towards the no-fee school initiative. Firstly, no-fee schools made free education available to a percentage of learners rather than improving the quality of education. Secondly, political parties, such as the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Independent Democrats (ID), the School Governors and the SGB Federation maintained that the government should have allocated subsidies to individual poor learners to allow them to seek admissions at schools of their own choice, rather than allocating them to schools as this left poor learners without a choice. Thirdly, the no-fee school allocations did not cater for additional (extra) books, nutrition, uniforms and extra-mural costs that are barriers for poor learners. However, South Africa caters for prescribed books and nutrition are catered for through state grant. This state provides nutrition separately to schools through the National School Nutrition Program (NSNP).

Similarly, Reschovsky (2006: 37) argues that although at first sight the no-fee initiative seems sensible, it may not be a desirable option to follow in the South African schooling system. Reschovsky (2006: 37) supports this argument by stating that:

- In a developing country with limited public resources, the revenue from school fees makes an important contribution and in effect frees up public resources that could be used for schools serving children from poor families and thereby alleviate poverty in poor communities,
- Prohibiting school fees would render public schools centres of poor quality education in comparison with private schools. This would lead many well-to-do families to send their children to private (i.e. independent) schools to receive better quality education, while children from poor families would remain in public schools. This would affect learner enrolments at public schools and also discriminate against the poor learners by denying them quality education, and
- Schools with relatively high fees may be producing many of South Africa's best-educated students, who are likely to make significant contributions to the country's economic growth and prosperity.

## 2.3 THE NO-FEE SCHOOL POLICY

This section comprises the definition of no-fee school policy, responsibilities of key role players, accessing no-fee school allocations, and uses of no-fee school allocations. The author deduced the definition of no-fee school policy from existing definitions of policy in the literature. The remaining items deal with the roles that national and provincial departments played in facilitating the implementation of the no-fee school policy, how no-fee schools access and use their allocations.

### 2.3.1 Definition of policy in general

Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997: 23) argue that the concept of policy is not easy to define. Consequently, it is not easy to give a definition of a no-fee school policy (NFSP). The following are some of the existing definitions of policy in the literature:

- Harman (1984: 13) defines policy as the *implicit or explicit specification of courses of purposive action being followed or to be followed in dealing with a recognised problem or matter of concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals. Policy also can be thought of as a position or stance developed in response to a problem or issue of conflict, and directed towards a particular objective,*
- Dye in Taylor et al. (1997: 22) defines policy as *whatever governments choose to do, or not to do,* and
- Ball (1994a: 10) in Taylor et al. (1997: 25) defines policy as *what is enacted as well as what is intended.*

### 2.3.1 Definition of no-fee school policy (NFSP)

Based on the above policy definitions, this study defines the “no-fee” school policy as the course of purposive action to follow in dealing with the problem of making quality

education available and accessible to poor learners by prohibiting public schools from charging mandatory school fees.

The intent (i.e. goal or purpose) of the NFSP is to make basic quality education available and accessible to learners in poverty-stricken areas such as farms, townships and villages through fee abolition (Presley 2007: 1; Mogakane 2007: 5). RSA (2006a: 10) says that *to effect redress and improve equity, public spending on schools must be specifically targeted to the needs of the poorest.*

The NFSP targeted those learners that were already attending school and assumed that their schools are readily accessible. Thus the allocation of the no-fee school amounts aimed at particular groups (viz. Q 1 and 2 plus some Q 3 schools) and dealt with what the policy formulators intended to do (e.g. abolish school fees in Q 1 and 2 plus some Q3 schools). This kind of a policy was both re-distributive and substantive (Taylor et al. 1997: 33–34). These authors state that re-distributive policies are those policies through which the allocation of resources (e.g. no-fee school amounts) aim at a particular group (e.g. Q 1 and 2 plus some Q3 schools), while substantive policies are those that deal with what the policy formulators intend to do (e.g. abolition of school fees in Q 1 and 2 plus some Q3 schools).

The NFSP used a spatial method of selecting no-fee schools (Macfarlane 2006: 46). That is each school's ranking (i.e. national Q) was determined in relation to the level of poverty in the surrounding area. This presupposed that all poor learners live in poor areas, and that the poor learners came from the area around the school. The policy therefore excluded poor learners who were attending schools in higher Qs. Schools in higher Qs were located in rich areas and were not declared no-fee schools.

### **2.3.2 Responsibilities of key role players**

The literature reviewed identifies the key role players in NFSP implementation as the national Minister of Education, the provincial Member of the Executive Council (MEC) and the school governing body (SGB). The NFSP required the:

- Minister of Education to determine and make public by 1 August of every year, in terms of Section 39(7) of SASA, Qs or parts of Qs where schools may not charge compulsory school fees (RSA 2006a: 43),
- MEC to identify schools that qualify as no-fee schools and determine details of any no-fee grades in the provinces and submit a proposed no-fee school list to the Minister of Education by 1 September of each year (RSA 2006a: 43),
- Minister of Education to assess the validity of the provincial no-fee school lists and publish them in the Government Gazette by 30 September of each year (RSA 2006a: 43),
- SGB to manage the no-fee school amounts effectively through proper budgeting and procurement procedures, and to consider charging a school fee, in terms of Section 37(11) of SASA, if its school allocation is less than the corresponding no-fee threshold (RSA 2006a: 44). The agreed-upon school fee should be the difference between the no-fee threshold and the allocation. Table 2.3 gives annual per learner allocation, learner population targets and no-fee thresholds per Q during 2007 to 2010 (RSA 2006a: 31, RSA 2008: 3).

Table: 2.3: National targets for the school allocations over 2007–2010, adapted from RSA (2006a: 31) and RSA (2008: 3)

NATIONAL QUINTILE	PERCENTAGE UNDERLINING PRO-POOR FUNDING	NATIONAL ANNUAL PER ALLOCATION AND LEARNER POPULATION TARGETS							
		2007		2008		2009		2010	
		A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
1	30,0	738	100%	775	100%	807	100%	855	100%
2	27,5	677	100%	711	100%	740	100%	784	100%
3	22,5	554	100%	581	100%	605	100%	641	100%
4	15,0	369	67%	388	67%	404	67%	428	67%
5	5,0	123	22%	129	22%	134	22%	147	22%
<b>OVERALL</b>	100,0	492	89%	517	89%	538	89%	571	89%
<b>NO-FEE THRESHOLD IN RANDES</b>		554		581		605		641	

The second column, in table 2.3, provides the percentages that underlie the pro-poor funding approach. The South African schooling system applied this approach to distribute equitably school allocations in favour of the learners in the poorest of the poor Qs throughout the nine provinces. This indicates that the South African government regarded as a priority the preferential public funding of schools in the poorer communities RSA (2006a: 31). For example, learners attending school in Q 1 schools received 30% of the public funding irrespective of the province they found themselves. This was six times more than the 5% allocation to those learners attending Q 5 schools.

Column A indicates the national average per learner target value (in Rand) for each of the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 in Rand that would be for the whole country in each of those years. Once again, the average allocations per learner within this column clearly indicate a pro-poor funding approach. For example, in 2007, the annual allocation per learner for a Q 1 (i.e. R 738) learner exceeded that of a Q 5 learner (i.e. R 123) by R 615.

Column B gives the maximum percentage of learners in each national Q that would be funded to the no-fee threshold level for each of the school years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. Thus all learners in Qs 1, 2 and 3 qualified for subsidisation to the no-fee threshold because 100% in each case qualified to be funded to the no-fee threshold. This implied that the Q 1, 2 and 3 schools were no-fee schools during 2007 to 2010.

The contents of table 2.3 were nationally set to guide provincial MECs in determining their annual school allocations as well as no-fee school allocations. Provinces also faced their own budgetary constraints when allocating funds to no-fee schools. This made no-fee school allocations to differ from province to province in South Africa. The provincial no-fee school allocations for the period 2007–2010 were as in table 2.4 below. These provincial no-fee school allocations were the actual amounts allocated to the no-fee schools per learner per specific school year.

Table 2.4: Provincial no-fee school allocations per learner over 2007–2010: (RSA 2006b: 5-372; RSA 2007: 7-343; RSA; RSA 2008: 9-351; RSA 2009: 3-695).

SCHOOL YEAR	SCHOOL QUINTILE (Q)	PROVINCIAL ANNUAL PER LEARNER ALLOCATION								
		RAND								
		EASTERN CAPE	FREE STATE	GAUTENG	KWA-ZULU NATAL	LIMPOPO	MPUMALANGA	NORTHERN CAPE	NORTH WEST	WESTERNSCAPE
2007	1	554	721	554	629	579	829	557	563	738
	2	554	596	554	560	579	649	555	563	677
2008	1	581	775	775	775	629	649	775	775	775
	2	581	775	775	711	629	649	713	711	711
2009	1	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807	807
	2	740	740	807	740	740	740	740	740	740
2010	1	855	817	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	2	784	784	855	784	784	784	784	784	784
	3	784	784	855	784	784	784	784	784	784

The annual per learner allocations (table 2.4) were generally more than the no-fee thresholds (table 2.3) for 2007 to 2010. The increments differed from province to province due to individual annual budgetary constraints. For example, for 2007 to 2008 per learner allocation in Q 1 schools for Kwa-Zulu Natal increased by R 146, Gauteng by R 221 and for Limpopo by R 50. Annual per learner allocations displayed the same trend within Q 2 and 3 schools.

### 2.3.3 Accessing no-fee school allocations

The LDoE assigned Section 21 status to all no-fee schools to effect direct transfers of no-fee allocations into the individual school fund accounts (RSA 2006: 37, 39). The Section 21 status allowed the no-fee schools to carry out their procurement and deal

directly with suppliers and contractors for relevant budgeted items in accordance with standard procurement procedures. However, no-fee school allocations transfers had been challenging to no-fee schools (4.4.2.5, 4.4.4.5, 4.4.6.5).

#### **2.3.4 Uses of no-fee school allocations**

The South African government makes annual no-fee school allocations to ordinary public schools (RSA 2006a: 24). The use of the no-fee school allocation is regulated in the NFSP, which empowers the nine provincial MECs for education to:

2.3.4.1 divide the no-fee school per-learner allocation into school funds and a fund for purchasing of LTSM. In Limpopo, the school-fund allocation for all schools was in terms of subsidy per learner. For example, the per-learner subsidy in Qs 1 and 2 schools for 2007 was R270 and for 2008 was R329. The other portion of a school allocation per learner was for the purchase of LTSM.

2.3.4.2 set guidelines for the utilisation of the no-fee school allocations as dictated by the general and critical needs of the no-fee schools in their provinces. Thus the MEC of LDoE in Limpopo dictated that all no-fee schools should use their allocations according to a particular priority list of needs (LDoE 2006: 4-5, LDoE 2007: 5, LDoE 2008: 21). The priority list of needs was:

- proper security fencing,
- provision of clean water or borehole,
- repair of all broken windows and doors,
- repairs and improvements to school buildings, hostels and grounds, excluding capital projects (e.g. building classrooms),
- payment of services: electricity, water (including rates and taxes), and telephone,
- extra-mural curriculum and choice of subject options in terms of Provincial Curriculum policy,
- purchasing of non-scholastic stationery and educational media e.g. overhead projector, chalk/white board and photocopiers, and

- purchasing of “additional” learner support materials (i.e. not prescribed textbooks, and scholastic stationery).

LDoE (2007: 5) maintains that the fulfilment of these prescribed directives would put the no-fee schools at the same level with the other well-to-do schools in the province. However, the MEC for LDoE advised all the no-fee schools to adequately budget for their annual normal running costs and manage their school funds properly because no school would receive additional government allocations in that year (LDoE 2007: 5).

#### 2.4 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NO-FEE SCHOOL POLICY

South Africa commenced with the NFSP implementation in its nine provinces in January 2007. These provinces were Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape. Table 2.2 gives the distribution of no-fee schools in these provinces. The NFSP implementation in selected primary schools in Limpopo was the focus of the study.

Different literature sources define policy implementation in different ways (Khalid 2001: 88). For example:

- Khalid (2001: 88) defines policy implementation as *the process of putting into effect or accomplishing a task to achieve some specific goals or transferring goals associated with a policy into results,*
- Nakamura and Smallwood (1980: 1) define policy implementation as *the process of carrying out authoritative public policy directive – it is neither easy nor automatic,* and
- Van der Vegt, Smyth and Vandenberghe (2000: 11) view implementation as *a critical intervention, upsetting in varying degrees the “steady state” of the organisation.*

Based on these definitions and views of policy, the study defined the NFSP implementation as the process through which the DoE in South Africa abolished mandatory school fees in schools in lower Qs. Van der Vegt et al. (2000: 11) remarks

that the process of abolishing mandatory school fees requires the implementing schools to realign and rearrange their financial management styles and procurement procedures, in so doing upsetting their customary ways of managing finances and procuring resources.

Policy implementation is a complicated and non-automatic issue that requires suitable techniques and procedures, strong impetus, co-ordinated efforts, organisational redefinition, and ownership of the policy in question (Khalid 2001: 88). However, different authors list different factors necessary for successful policy implementation.

Harman (1984: 25) maintains that success depends on policy design, implementation strategy, commitment and capacity of the bureaucratic system, and environmental factors.

Nakamura and Smallwood (1980: 1) state that the implementation of policies is dependent on economic factors such as the availability of money and other resources, on geographic considerations such as territorial jurisdiction, and on sociological factors such as interpersonal work relationships. Key influences within the policy implementation process are actors and arenas, organisational structures and bureaucratic norms, and communications networks and compliance mechanisms (Nakamura & Smallwood 1980: 46).

Cheng and Cheung (1995: 16) list preparation for policy implementation as a key area for the success and smoothness of the implementation. Preparation for educational policy implementation includes the readiness of the concerned parties, the readiness of resources, the timeframe of implementation, and the legal preparations (Cheng & Cheung 1995: 17).

Readiness of the concerned parties includes the cognitive, psychological and technological readiness of education officers, school administrators, teachers, learners, parents and other interested professionals (Cheng & Cheung 1995: 17). Cognitive readiness refers to the comprehension of the policy objectives and the possible

consequences of implementing the policy. Psychological readiness indicates the willingness in concerned parties to support and be enthusiastically involved in implementation of the policy.

Regarding readiness of resources, Cheng and Cheung (1995: 17) mention human resources, equipment and facilities, accommodation or space and monetary resources. If resource requirements and their use and availability are not fully calculated beforehand, there will be difficulties during policy implementation.

The timeframe of implementation includes the availability of time and the feasibility of the schedule. Cheng and Cheung (1995: 18) maintain that hasty policy implementation will not only be unsuccessful but will receive criticism from the public.

Policy makers undertake to protect and respect the legal rights of all concerned parties through legal preparations (Cheng & Cheung 1995: 18). This enhances the psychological and cognitive readiness of the concerned parties to support the policy implementation.

Since the commencement of the NFSP on 1 January 2007, there had been questions and criticism from various parties on its implementation. For example, Oliphant (2008a: 10) quotes school principals, teachers and unions saying, "*it does not work and the idea must be revisited*". In addition, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC1: 17 February 2008) found a 50:50 split response from callers to the question: "*Are no-fee schools doomed to fail?*" Such questions, criticisms and findings warned that various experiences existed with the NFSP implementation. These experiences might be advantages or challenges with the NFSP implementation.

The foregoing paragraphs discuss the generic prerequisites for the successful implementation of an educational policy including NFSP. Fredriksen (2007: 15-20) lists and highlights the following important requirements for the successful NFSP implementation.

#### **2.4.1 Political leadership**

Strong political leadership at the highest (national or provincial) level plays an important role in successful policy implementation, especially when the policy originates from current policies (Fredriksen 2007: 15). For this study, the NFSP departs from current policies such as the South African Constitution and SASA. Thus its success depends on strong national and provincial involvement and drive.

#### **2.4.2 Careful planning**

Fredriksen (2007: 15) states that success requires careful planning and that careful planning involves a number of activities, such as prior analytical assessment of the magnitude, use and replacement of existing fees; construction of strategies necessary to address possible policy implementation challenges; and building implementation and monitoring capacity.

#### **2.4.3 Communication/building partnership**

The ideal preparation for the implementation of a NFSP should include comprehensive communication and consultation processes with key stakeholders such as the parents, teachers, local communities, political constituencies, and education administrators (Frederiksen 2007: 16). These processes are vital for the explanation of the content, impact and implementation of the new policy, thereby preventing any possible resistance to its implementation.

#### **2.4.4 Phasing in the reforms**

Frederiksen (2007: 16) observes that the five sub-Saharan countries he studied used either the “big bang” or “phasing in” approach when introducing the fee abolition policy. The phasing-in approach is more favourable. For example, it imparts a state of readiness to policy makers, implementers and beneficiaries. It also allows more

time to mobilise the physical, human and financial resources required for the NFSP implementation.

#### **2.4.5 Fee abolition as part of more comprehensive reforms**

Fredriksen (2007: 17) states that the success of the NFSP implementation depends on the NFSP being part of the wider policy package. This implies that countries implementing the NFSP should do so with strong regard to other educational policies. The policy package may include curriculum reforms, school feeding/nutrition programmes and revision of textbooks.

#### **2.4.6 Measures to protect quality**

Fredriksen (2007: 17, 25) maintains that the NFSP implementation usually brings about the deterioration of quality of education at school level. This deterioration results from inadequate resources necessary to address the challenges associated with the implementation. Fredriksen (2007: 17) advises countries planning to introduce the NFSP to put in place measures necessary for addressing the potential challenges well in advance.

#### **2.4.7 Community involvement**

Fredriksen (2007: 18) maintains that no-fee schools should attract more community support by practising transparent financial management. A successful implementation of the fee abolition policy requires active involvement of the school community. This involvement is necessary to give undivided support to the no-fee schools. The supportive community could render voluntary services, sponsor certain school activities and/or agree to contribute or raise some money to augment the departmental no-fee school allocation. However, Fredriksen (2007: 18) warns that any additional contribution should not deny children, whose parents cannot afford to pay or contribute anything towards the school fund, their right to basic education.

#### **2.4.8 The need for further research to improve the knowledge base**

Fredriksen (2007: 20) maintains that knowledge sharing and learning from countries that have abolished school fees are important for the successful NFSP implementation. Such knowledge and learned experiences gathered through scientific research are necessary to serve as a base for the successful implementation of the initiative.

### **2.5 CHALLENGES WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NO-FEE SCHOOL POLICY**

The empirical studies in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, new South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda show mixed experiences with the NFSP implementation. For example:

- 2.5.1 Nsapato (2007: 1–2) found that the abolition of school fees benefited all children from rural and urban areas, from poor and rich households, male and female, vulnerable and non-vulnerable, and gave an opportunity for them to access education in Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda.
- 2.5.2 Reschovsky (2006: 35), Fredriksen (2007: 6, 14, 25) and Nsapato (2007: 1) indicate that there is a general learner enrolment increase with the abolition of school fees in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, new South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.
- 2.5.3 Nsapato (2007:2) says that the abolition of school fees minimises the schooling costs borne by households. This author states that schooling costs borne by households in Malawi are tuition fees, compulsory uniforms, charges for textbooks and other learning materials, transport to and from schools, meals, examination fees, Parent Teacher Association dues, and school-based activity fees.

These were positive experiences with the implementation of the fee abolition policy in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda.

## **2.6 NO-FEE SCHOOL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES REVEALED BY EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

Empirical studies of Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, new South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda found challenges related to the NFSP implementation as:

### **2.6.1 Overcrowding**

Fredriksen (2007: 5-34); Manzo (2006: 10), Nsapato (2007: 1-2) and Reschovsky (2006: 35) associate learner-enrolment increases with the implementation of the abolition-of-school-fees initiative. This results in overcrowding and places big demands on no-fee schools. Manzo (2006: 10) and Nsapato (2007: 2) list these big demands as the need for providing more facilities, sustaining education quality, improving management of the system and school level, teachers, teaching and learning materials, and sustaining community participation in a no-fee context. Failure to meet these demands has a negative impact upon the quality of education offered by schools (Nsapato 2007: 2).

The countries studied combine a number of strategies to cope with enrolment surge and protection of education quality (Fredriksen 2007: 14-15). These are: multi-shift, increasing favourable classroom-pupil and pupil-teacher ratios, recruitment of more teachers, use of temporary classroom facilities, and increased provision of textbooks and other training materials.

### **2.6.2 Financial difficulties**

Reschovsky (2006: 26) states that the South African constitution requires each province to use its equitable share to provide for basic services, including education and health, and to perform functions allocated to it. Thus each provincial department of education received an allocation from the provincial government to cater for personnel costs and non-personnel costs. The allocation included LTSMs, learner transport, school maintenance and equipment (Reschovsky 2006: 26-32).

In January 2007, each provincial department of education in South Africa added no-fee school allocation to its list of non-personnel costs. This introduced financial difficulties that filtered down to no-fee schools in provinces. Macfarlane (2007: 2) remarks that questions are asked about both the per-learner allocations and the categories into which schools are divided, and also indicates that no-fee school allocations are too little and reach schools too late. Thus no-fee schools experienced mounting financial difficulties that affected payments for their non-personnel costs, resulting in the collapse of services in some schools (Macfarlane 2007: 1-2).

### **2.6.3 Non-alignment of the national and school financial years**

The South African national and school financial years are, respectively, 1 April of the current year to 31 March of the next year, and 1 January to 31 December of the same year (Presley 2007: 1). Provincial education departments transfer the allocated funds to schools in April long after the school financial year's start on 1 January, owing to the non-alignment of the two financial years. Thus a 'funding gap' is created that leaves no-fee schools with little or no money to pay for non-capital costs during the months January to April of the same year (Presley 2007: 1).

This was a problem in no-fee schools studied in Limpopo, where their SGBs also lacked skills for budgeting, financial management and administration (5.4.8.1). Hence, this study recommended capacitating the no-fee schools in Limpopo with skills for budgeting, financial management and administration (5.5.2).

### **2.6.4 Deficiency in enforcement of the school fees abolition policy**

Nsapato (2007: 2) observed that deficiency in enforcement of the no-fee schooling resulted in some schools and communities imposing other forms of fees on pupils. These other forms of fees are development fees, textbook fees and uniform fees. The imposition of other fees forces those learners who cannot afford them to be absent from school and eventually drop out. Nsapato (2007: 2) advises government and

communities to supervise, inspect and monitor the implementation of the initiative to detect any form of charging school fees and to act on it.

## **2.7 BENEFITS WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NO-FEE SCHOOL POLICY IN SUB-SAHARAN COUNTRIES**

The foregoing paragraphs assert that there are challenges associated with the implementation of the no-fee school or fee abolition policy. Contradictory to this assertion, Brown (2006: 1-2) and Fredriksen (2007: 4-5) present and discuss benefits with the NFSP implementation that the implementing governments and their countries enjoy or would enjoy. Thus Fredriksen (2006: 4) succinctly refers to this policy as an indispensable measure to maintain the momentum towards education for all in sub-Saharan Africa. This emphasises the existence of advantages associated with the NFSP implementation. These advantages are:

### **2.7.1 Enhancing access to education**

Brown (2006: 1) and Fredriksen (2007: 22) put that fee abolition brings education to the most vulnerable children and reduces the number of out-of-school children. Thus it promotes the level of literacy within a country by making education accessible for all [children] poor or rich. Chatani-Rizvi (2006: 2) adds that fee abolition brings the world closer to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. Fredriksen (2007: 39) says that NFSP contributes greatly towards equity and rights to education and more broadly, to poverty reduction. Thus NFSP supports a government's commitment to fulfilling a state's constitutional obligation to provide education to its people (RSA 2006a: 25). For example, Malawi and Mozambique experienced a major success in making education available to the vast majority of school-aged children after abolishing school fees at primary school level in 1994 (Fredriksen 2007: 37, 39). These countries increased the schooling opportunities for their citizens particularly for the vulnerable children, including the poor and girls.

### **2.7.2 Promoting quality in education**

Governments allocate amounts of money to schools through norms and standards part of which is the NFSP. These allocated no-fee school funds benefit schools in many ways aimed at improving the quality of education at the no-fee schools. Through the no-fee school allocations, schools are able to purchase basic learning and teaching support materials that are necessary to enhance the quality of the learning and teaching processes (Fredriksen 2007: 39).

### **2.7.3 Impacting directly on gender equity**

In the study, gender equity refers to a provision of equal rights to education for both men and women. However, women have been traditionally discriminated against by denying them equal rights to education as men (Tomasevski 2003: 72). This author maintains that various grounds of exclusion and discrimination combine in trapping new generations, especially girls, into a vicious downward circle of denied rights, where the lack of access to education leads to the exclusion from the labour market, which then results in perpetuating and increasing impoverishment.

Thus the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) directs its members to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure them equal rights with men in the field of education (Tomasevski 2003: 31). This implies that educational departments should plan and effect ways of abolishing those factors, like charging school fees, that epitomise discrimination against women as well as the most vulnerable children (Fredriksen 2007: 4).

Tomasevski (2003: 31-32) concludes that state members of CEDAW heed the above directive by eliminating school fees. These members experience a significant increase in girls attending schools, following the abolition of school fees. For example, Brown (2006: 2) found that learner enrolment of vulnerable children, including girls, showed a tremendous surge following the introduction of fee abolition in Kenya, Tanzania,

Uganda, Malawi and Zambia. Fredriksen (2007: 14) found independently that in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique, the percentage of girls enrolled showed improvement with the implementation of the no-fee initiative.

These examples indicate that education became accessible to more girls in these countries than prior to the implementation of the NFSP. The NFSP thus narrowed the gender disparity gap in schools in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Ethiopia, Ghana and Mozambique. Brown (2006: 2) says that school-fee abolition addresses the gender equity, basic educational rights and needs of the marginalised, excluded and vulnerable children.

#### **2.7.4 Increasing learner enrolment**

Fredriksen (2007: 5-6, 29, 31, 36-37) maintains that increased learner enrolments result from the implementation of the NFSP. For example, subsequent to the abolition of school fees, Kenya experienced an upsurge in learner enrolment, from 6.9 million in 2003 to 7.12 million in 2004; while in 1996 Ghana primary school enrolments increased from 3.4 million to 5.7 million (Brown 2006: 2; Fredriksen 2007: 36). This indicates that in these countries the vast majority of school-aged children, including the vulnerable and disadvantaged, had access to education during that period. Thus the increasing learner enrolments reflect the success of the NFSP implementation.

Although the number of no-fee schools in South Africa increased from 13825 in 2007 to 24304 in 2010 (tables 2.1-2.2), there was criticism over the NFSP implementation (1.2). These public debates triggered this study on the inability of no-fee schools to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo, where no-fee schools increased from 2557 in 2007 to 3890 in 2010.

#### **2.7.5 Increasing gross enrolment ratio (GER)**

Gross enrolment ratio (GER) is the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the

theoretical age group for the same level of education (UNESCO 2008: 1). GER shows the general level of participation in a level of education and indicates the capacity of the education system to enrol learners of a particular age-group. A high GER generally indicates a high degree of participation, whether the learner belongs to the official age-group or not. Fredriksen (2007: 6-7) found that the abolition of school fees in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique generally increased the GER values.

Chatani-Rizvi (2006: 2) states that school fees keep the most vulnerable children out of the classroom across the developing world. The results are low learner enrolments that affect negatively the GER values.

To calculate GER, one has to divide the number of learners enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age by the number of children of the same official age-group in a given country, and multiply the result by 100.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

The literature review reveals that schools in countries that have abolished school fees gained benefits and experienced various challenges with the NFSP implementation. The challenges with the NFSP implementation might be discouraging and scary. However, experts advise and encourage countries to initiate, implement and sustain the policy rather than to deny children their right to education (Manzo 2006: 11). South Africa has therefore introduced the NFSP that the nine provinces (including Limpopo) implement to avail basic education to learners from poor families. However, critics questioned and public debated over the NFSP implementation. Those questions and debates triggered the problem statement, purpose and associated objectives for this case study (chapter 1).

The next chapter deals with the research design and methods that the researcher used to answer empirically the study objectives.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapters 1 and 2 referred to the introduction and the questionable nature of the NFSP implementation in South Africa.

The empirical qualitative realisation of the study objectives was of the utmost importance to the study. To achieve this, the researcher needed an appropriate research design and methods. The research design directed the research, while study methods dealt with sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis techniques. The study objectives, research design and methods answered the ‘what, how and why’ of the study (King 2008: 1) on the NFSP implementation in the selected primary schools in Limpopo. This chapter discusses central sections, for example the purpose of the study, qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, that assisted the researcher to draw study conclusions.

#### **3.1.1 Problem statement**

The problem statement (1.3) for the study was no-fee schools’ inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo.

#### **3.1.2 Purpose of the study**

The purpose (intent or objective) of this case study was to explore no-fee schools’ inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo.

To achieve this purpose, the researcher had to answer the research questions and to realise the study objectives through the utilisation of appropriate research design and methods.

#### **3.1.3 Research questions**

The research questions for the study were listed in section 1.5.

### 3.1.4 Study objectives

The study objectives were given in section 1.6 of the study. The scientific realisation of the study objectives assisted the researcher to find answers to the research questions and to achieve the study purpose. The researcher chose an appropriate research approach to realise the objectives in section 1.6.

## 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Creswell (2003: 3-5) lists three approaches to research: quantitative (positivistic, scientific) approach, qualitative (interpretive) approach, and mixed-methods. The researcher used a qualitative approach to achieve the objectives for this study.

Different authors define qualitative research in different ways. For example:

- Merriam (1998: 5, 10) describes qualitative research as *an umbrella concept that covers several forms of inquiry that help us to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible.*
- Strauss and Corbin (1990: 17), cited in Hoepfl (1997: 2), broadly define qualitative research as *any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification.*
- Creswell (1994), cited in Ruskin (2007: 3), defines a qualitative study as *an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.*
- Denzin and Lincoln (1994), cited in Ruskin (2007: 2), say: *Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter...Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human*

*question. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.*

These definitions imply that qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings (Hoepfl 1997: 2). However, Key (1997: 1) says that this research methodology seeks to understand people's interpretations under their natural conditions.

Thus the researcher chose qualitative research to collect data from the selected primary in their natural settings. The naturalistic context-specific settings were the prevalent situations at the schools studied and the targeted informants were the interviewees.

The choice of a qualitative research implied that the study needed a qualitative research design to conduct a study on NFSP implementation.

### **3.2.1 Research design**

Fouché and de Vos (2003; 137, 271) maintain that definitions of research design are rather ambiguous. Some of the existing definitions of research design refer to it as a plan or blueprint of how one intends conducting research (Fouché & de Vos 2003: 137). Marshall and Rossman (2006: 56) and McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 22) do not define research design but instead state its purpose as that of a road map, a plan or a general plan for directing a systematic investigation of the phenomenon of interest.

King, Keohene and Verba (1994: 12) cited in Institute of International Studies (2008: 2), argue that *first-rate social scientists do not regard a research design as a blueprint for a mechanical process of data-gathering and evaluation*. They view research design as a specific and highly flexible process that points an investigator towards relevant data. However, McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 22) classify research designs under quantitative; mixed-methods; and qualitative.

The study chose a qualitative [case study] research design that was flexible, modifiable, mouldable, and reflexive (Yin 1989: 59, Maxwell 2005: 2, Bogdan & Biklen 2007: 54-55) to construct the overall study plan for investigating how the selected schools in Limpopo implement the NFSP. Thus certain activities, for example data collection and analysis, were open to future adjustment and took place more or less simultaneously as the study proceeded without altering the main study objective. The opted research design was both interactive [through multi-site case study] and non-interactive [through documentation].

### **3.2.2 Research methods**

Yin (1989: 13) lists methods for conducting a qualitative case study as exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, intrinsic, instrumental and collective. The study applied an exploratory qualitative case study methodology to study how the selected primary schools in Limpopo implement the NFSP. Through the exploratory qualitative case study methodology, the study engaged interviews and documents to gather from the selected no-fee schools information on NFSP implementation.

### **3.2.3 Ethical measures in the study**

The chosen research design and methods allowed the researcher to observe and abide by the ethical measures stated under 1.6.1 throughout the study.

### **3.2.4 Study assumptions**

The chosen qualitative research design and methods made the study to adopt the assumptions stated under 1.8.7.

## **3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 119) maintain that a population is either a target population or survey population. McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 119) and,

Strydom and Venter (2003: 199) refer to universe and survey population as sampling frame. The study adopted their understanding of population and stated:

- the study universe as all (i.e. 2836) no-fee schools in Limpopo during 2009. It consisted of 1896 primary schools, 910 secondary, and 30 combined primary and secondary schools, and
- the survey/study population as all (i.e. 1896) no-fee primary schools in Limpopo during 2009.

The researcher applied purposeful non-probability/non-randomisation sampling technique to select 10 schools for the study from the survey population of 1896 no-fee primary schools. This allowed the researcher to choose representative or information-rich no-fee primary schools in Limpopo to participate in the study. Merriam (1998: 61) maintains that purposeful sampling technique allows the researcher to select particular elements that are representative or informative about the topic of interest.

The applied sampling technique assisted the researcher to make appropriate sample size. Leech (2005: 1-4) adds that making appropriate sampling and sample size decisions is central to qualitative research and does assist the qualitative inquirer to make analytic generalisations by collecting data that reach data saturation, theoretical saturation or informational redundancy.

Selected no-fee primary schools were labelled S01 to S10 for ethical reasons. A principal, treasurer and chairperson of the SGB represented each school. Thus thirty (i.e.  $3 \times 10 = 30$ ) informants provided information on the NFSP implementation for the study.

### 3.4 **INSTRUMENTATION**

Miles and Huberman (1994: 34) state that instrumentation concerns the designing and structuring of instruments or tools a researcher needs to get information required to

answer the research question. Creswell (2003: 182) mentions that qualitative studies often use observations, interviews, documents and audiovisual materials as instruments for collecting data.

Thus the study used [open-ended] interviews (annexure D) and documents to collect data at the selected no-fee primary schools. These research tools assisted the researcher to gather rich information during the study.

However, Key (1997: 1), Merriam (1998: 7) and Creswell (2003: 183) indicate that the human person, that is the researcher, is the primary collection instrument. Thus qualitative researchers mention, amongst other characteristics, *the researcher as key instrument* as a characteristic of qualitative research. In this study, the researcher as the key, primary or active instrument/tool designed, collected, analysed data, and reported on the data

However, Bogdan and Biklen (2007: 37-39), and Merriam (1998: 20) warn that being the primary [human] instrument in the qualitative research may introduce researcher bias, subjectivity and observer effects in data collection, analysis and reporting. The study eliminated researcher biases, subjectivity and observer effects through application of appropriate methods and consideration of ethical procedures and good communication skills during the proceedings of the qualitative study.

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

The study used semi-structured one-to-one interviews and documentation to collect data. Greeff (2003: 302) states that the semi-structured one-to-one interview gives the researcher and participants much more flexibility. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to follow up particular interesting avenues that emerged in the interview and the participants were able to give a fuller picture.

A Sanyo Talk Book Pro, Model No TRC 2050C audiotape recorder was used to record the interview proceedings with the participants' permission (annexure C). The

investigator took notes of non-verbal expressions of the participants during the interview sessions.

An interview schedule (annexure D) made up of a set of open-ended main questions was prepared prior to the interview. Interviews were conducted in classrooms at each selected school during the week after school hours when schools were quiet. When required, probing questions were asked to get more details, elaboration and clarification from the interviewees. Ruskin (2007: 6) maintains that one of the key techniques in good interviewing is the use of probes.

The researcher collected photocopies of no-fee school allocation statements, minutes of SGB meetings, school budgets, income-expenditure cashbooks, and audited financial statements from each selected primary school on the day of the interview to supplement the interview data. These documents were analysed during data processing.

### **3.6 DATA PROCESSING PROCEDURES**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 364) and Merriam (1998: 178) say that data processing, through data analysis, makes sense of the collected data and thereby finds an answer or answers to the research question. In qualitative studies, it consists of interwoven and integrally related processes of data recording and management, analysis and interpretation (Marshall & Rossman 2006: 151; Miles & Huberman 1994: 45). This implies that there are no firm boundaries between these processes. However, the researcher discussed them as separate processes to show their central importance in the study.

#### **3.6.1 Data recording and management**

Miles and Huberman (1994: 45) advise researchers to put in place careful data management plans for them to arrive at genuine data analysis and reporting. The

collected data were manually and electronically recorded and managed to prepare them for data analysis and reporting.

Manually, the researcher labelled audiotapes, transcribed the interviews, coded and categorised data segments and opened data hard files.

Electronically, data were typed, formatted and saved for future printouts. Finally, the data were organised into electronic backups, and files for future reference and verification.

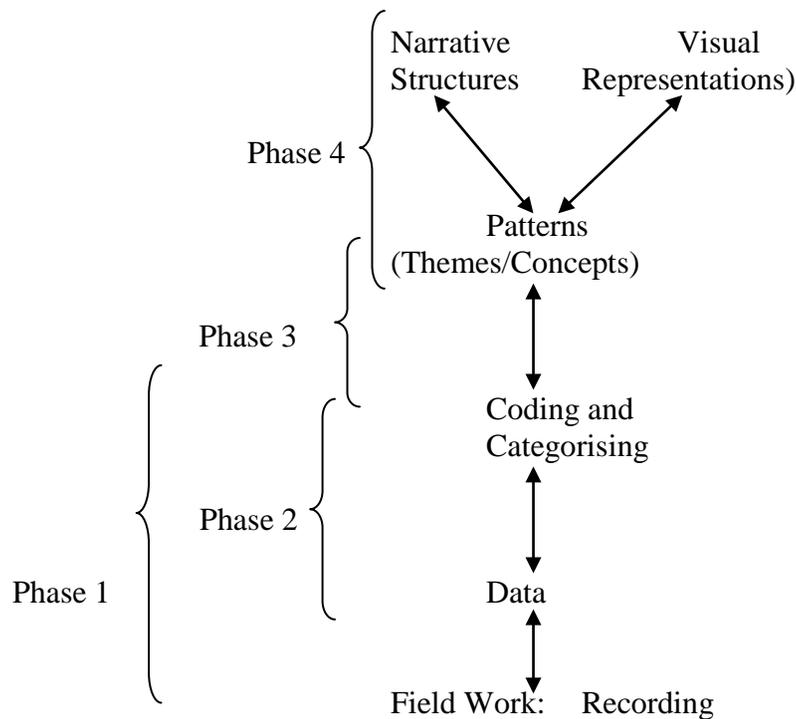
### **3.6.2 Data analysis**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 364-365) state that data analysis is an ongoing cyclical process that is integrated into all phases of a qualitative research. Richards (2005: 183), Marshall and Rossman (2006: 162), and Bogdan and Biklen (2007: 197) add that data analysis continues into data reporting or writing through data interpretation. McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 364-365) divide the process of data analysis into interim and inductive data analyses. Their representation of inductive data analysis is given in figure 3.1.

The study adopted this approach of data analysis by regarding qualitative data analysis as an ongoing process that proceeds through interim and inductive data analyses. Interim data analysis was conducted during data collection when making data collection decisions and identifying recurring topics. Inductive data analysis was applied after the completion of data collection through data coding and categorisation.

Thus the researcher conducted data analysis during and after data collection, and optimised inductive data analysis only when all data from the selected schools were in. This approach to data analysis assisted the researcher to explore no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo.

Figure 3.1: General process of inductive data analysis (McMillan and Schumacher 2006: 365)



### 3.6.2.1 Data analysis methods

The study applied data reduction and coding to analyse the collected data. Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the [voluminous qualitative] data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions into manageable chunks (Miles & Huberman 1994: 10; Marshall & Rossman 2006: 156). These authors mention that it occurs continuously throughout a qualitative study.

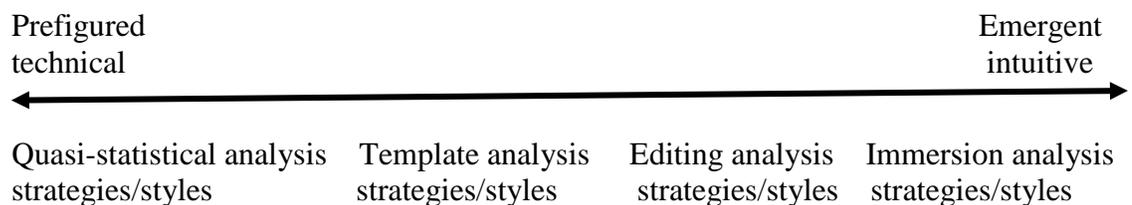
Data reduction fragmented voluminous transcripts and documentary information into manageable segments, sub-categories, categories and themes. Generation of categories and themes was done through reading and re-reading of the data. The researcher noted patterns expressed by participants and documents studied during generation data reduction. Data reduction immersed and obliged the researcher to analyse segments of text, compare the data with similar or improbable situations and to treat all pieces of data as important to the study. McMillan and Schumacher

(2006: 370) maintain that generation of categories forces the researcher to think with analytic depth and search for what people really mean, regardless of the terms they use.

Marshall and Rossman (2006:160) regard coding data as the formal representation of analytic thinking. It is a way of attaching codes to chunks of varying size-words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting (Miles & Huberman 1994: 56). Through coding, the data segments, categories and themes were labelled A01 to A44, C01 to C19 and T01 to T06 respectively.

The study employed template and editing analysis strategies to effect data reduction and coding. Marshall and Rossman (2006: 155) give a continuum of analysis strategies (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: A continuum analysis strategies/styles, adapted from Marshall and Rossman (2006: 155).



The prefigured technical/quasi data analysis styles are technical, scientific and standardised and are on the extreme left of the continuum. A researcher who analyses data through these means assumes an objectivist approach to the research and does stipulate categories in advance. On the extreme right of the continuum are the emergent/intuitive analytic styles in which categories are not predetermined. The template and editing analysis strategies stand along the continuum, with the template processes more prefigured and stipulative than the editing processes (McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 365; Marshall & Rossman 2006: 155).

The use of template and editing styles in data analysis allowed the researcher to use both predetermined and non-predetermined categories during the ongoing process of data analysis.

### **3.6.2.2 Data interpretation and reporting**

Marshall and Rossman (2006: 161) maintain that data interpretation brings meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns and categories, developing linkages and a story that makes sense and is engaging to read. Creswell (2003: 195) says that qualitative researchers may use a combination of categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, establishing patterns, naturalistic generalisation and detailed description to interpret data.

The study used direct interpretation, establishing patterns, naturalistic generalisations and detailed description to interpret data gathered from the selected primary schools. These different forms of data interpretation helped the researcher to:

- look at a single instance (namely NFSP) and draw meaning from it,
- establish patterns to look for correspondence between categories, and
- draw generalisation from the case for applying it to the population (i.e. all no-fee primary schools in Limpopo)
- develop generalisations about the case in terms of the patterns and how they compare and contrast with published literature on the same topic in different sites.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007: 197), and Richards (2005: 183) state in categorical terms that data analysis and interpretation continue into the writing stage (i.e. reporting stage or dissertation) through which researchers refine and justify analysis. Thus in this study, the researcher continued with data analysis throughout the writing up of the dissertation.

3.7 **RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH**

The use of reliability and validity to judge and evaluate the quality and accuracy of a research is common in quantitative (i.e. positivistic, rationalistic, scientific) research but questionable in qualitative (i.e. interpretive, naturalistic) research (Niemann 2000: 283; Golafshani 2003: 597).

Thus some qualitative researchers have introduced alternative terms to both reliability and validity (Miles & Huberman 1994: 278-280; Key 1997:4-5; Niemann 2000: 283; Golafshani 2003: 597; Marshall & Rossman 2006: 201-203; Trochim 2006: 1). These alternative terms to reliability and validity are listed in table 3.3. However, the researcher retained them as criteria for judging and evaluating quality and accuracy of the study.

Table 3.3: Traditional criteria for evaluating quantitative research and alternative criteria for qualitative research.

<b>TRADITIONAL CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.</b>
Internal validity	Credibility/Authenticity
External validity	Transferability/Fittingness
Internal Reliability	Dependability/Auditability
External Reliability/Objectivity	Confirmability
Rigor	Trustworthiness

Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002:14) maintain that the use of verification strategies ensure and enhance both reliability and validity during the course of the research process. These verification strategies are methodological coherence, sampling sufficiency/appropriateness, developing a dynamic relationship between sampling, data collection and analysis, thinking theoretically, and theory development (Morse et al. 2002: 9-13).

These verification strategies were engaged during the course of the study to establish reliability and validity of the study (Morse et al. 2002: 12-13). Merriam (1998: 198) mentions that research consumers say that research results are trustworthy if there has been some accounting for qualitative validity and reliability in the research.

### **3.7.1 Reliability**

Merriam (1998: 205) acknowledges that reliability is problematic in the social sciences (e.g. education) simply because human behaviour is never static. This author states that reliability in a research design is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will yield the same results. Thus to ensure study reliability, the research rigorously heeded to this assumption by tape-recording and transcribing word by word the proceedings for each and every interview with the principals, treasurers and SGB chairpersons of the selected primary schools in Limpopo.

Qualitative researchers distinguish two forms of reliability, namely internal and external reliability (Niemann 2000: 284). Some qualitative researchers refer to these terms as dependability/auditability and confirmability/objectivity (Trochim: 2006: 1-3; Miles & Huberman 1994: 278).

#### **3.7.1.1 Internal reliability**

Internal reliability refers to reliability during the research project (Niemann 2000: 284). This implies that during the research the researcher has to eliminate or limit random errors that would otherwise distort the object of the study.

The researcher eliminated or limited random errors by triangulating methods of data collection and analysis, tape-recording individual interviews (i.e. mechanisation), transcribing and making printouts of the tape-recorded interviews (i.e. auditing).

### **3.7.1.2 External reliability**

External reliability refers to the verification of the findings of the research (Niemann 2000: 284). In other words, how certain is one that any person using the same research instruments (e.g. interview schedule and documents) and procedures (interviewing and tape-recording) will not sway the answers of the interviewees?

External reliability was ensured by interviewing and tape-recording participants who dealt directly with the NFSP implementation, namely principals, treasurers and chairpersons of SGBs of the selected primary schools in Limpopo.

### **3.7.2 Validity**

Creswell (2003: 195-196) describes [qualitative] validity as a strength of qualitative research and is used to determine whether the research findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (i.e. consumers of the research).

Qualitative researchers distinguish two forms of validity, namely internal and external validity (Miles & Huberman 1994: 278-279; Niemann 2000: 285).

#### **3.7.2.1 Internal validity**

Niemann (2000: 285) describes internal validity as validity within the research study. It is concerned with the extent to which study results are credible, authentic, sensible or congruent to reality (Miles & Huberman 1994: 278; Trochim 2006: 1).

The researcher ensured internal validity of the research results by:

- establishing categories of data that were used during data analysis,
- conducting audit trails for correcting categories during data analysis,
- guarding against researcher bias and reactivity,
- conducting a representative investigation, and
- reaching theoretical saturation/data redundancy.

Internal validity was enhanced by tape-recording face-to-face semi-structured interviews with knowledgeable thirty participants (principals, treasurers and chairpersons of SGBs), and analysis of documents from different schools studied.

### **3.7.2.2 External validity**

External validity concerns with the extent to which study results are applicable, transferable, fittingness and generalisable to other context or settings (Miles & Huberman 1994: 279; Merriam 1998: 207; Niemann 2000: 285; Trochim 2006: 1).

External validity was ensured by:

- conducting a multi-site study, and
- describing accurately the research process, research methods and circumstances under which the research was conducted.

External validity was enhanced by collecting, tape-recording and transcribing data from ten selected primary schools from which thirty participants were interviewed and required documents for the research were obtained. This yielded applicable, transferable and generalisable study results.

### **3.7.3 Trustworthiness**

Merriam (1998: 198) mentions that research consumers can say that research results are trustworthy if there has been some accounting for qualitative validity and reliability. Key (1997: 4) and Morse et. al (2002: 5) say that qualitative researcher results are trustworthy if they are credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. Miles and Huberman (1994: 277) add that trustworthy qualitative results are replicable, reliable, reasonable, probably true, significant, accurate, compelling, precise, legitimate, non-biased and empowering.

In this study, the author employed ethical behaviour, triangulation, comparison, mechanisation and minimisation of researcher bias to ensure the trustworthiness of the

study results. The use of these techniques in data collection and analysis produced reliable, valid and trustworthy study results.

### **3.7.3.1 Ethical behaviour**

Merriam (1998: 131, 212) maintains that ethical behaviour in qualitative studies is important to protect the identity and privacy of the participants, but is also important for the promotion of researcher-participant relationship. Good researcher-participant relationship builds up mutual trust between researcher and participants and, more importantly, enhances validity and reliability, and thus trustworthiness, of qualitative results (McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 327). Merriam (1998: 198-201) shows that establishing validity and reliability brings about trustworthiness of the results.

The researcher conducted the study in an ethical manner to establish trustworthiness of the study results. The author discussed appropriate guidelines for ethical behaviour in the study under 3.2.4.

### **3.7.3.2 Triangulation**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 325), Maxwell (2005: 112) and Richards (2005: 140) describe triangulation as a way of collecting research data from different sources and settings, and analysing the same data by applying different analytical techniques. For example, in the study, the author employed semi-structured face-to-face interviews and documentation to collect data, and analyse the latter by applying data reduction and coding (3.6.1) to ensure trustworthiness of findings.

### **3.7.3.3 Comparison**

In this multi-site qualitative case study, the researcher collected data from ten different selected primary schools in Limpopo. The analysis of these data brought about findings that were either similar or different. Study findings were compared with each other to highlight possible commonalities and differences amongst them. The differences in findings prompted the researcher to revisit the tapes to confirm them. Richards (2005: 140) and Maxwell (2005: 111) refer to the confirmation of findings

with participants or participants' voices as *member checking* or *respondent validation*. Key (1997: 4) says that the use of member checking or respondent validation ensures the trustworthiness of the study results.

#### **3.7.3.4 Mechanisation**

In the study, mechanisation referred to the use of a tape recorder to capture the voices and essence of the informants. McMillan & Schumacher (2006: 326) maintain that tape recorders provide accurate and relatively complete records. The study used Sanyo Talk Book Pro, Model No TRC 2050C to record the voices of principals, treasurers and chairpersons of the SGB of the selected primary schools during the face-to-face interviews. This ensured the correctness or credibility of the data (Maxwell 2005: 110). The recorded data was transcribed verbatim and analysed. The researcher revisited the voices on the tapes during data analysis when there was a feeling that the transcript or part thereof did not express the anxiety or other emotions heard during the interview (Richards 2005: 76). This confirmed the captured responses of participants and finally promoted the trustworthiness of the study results.

#### **3.7.3.5 Researcher bias**

Maxwell (2005: 37) states that traditionally "researcher bias" is what researchers bring to the research from their own background and identity. According to this view, researcher bias poses threats to a research design and thus needs to be eliminated or controlled (Maxwell 2005: 106-107). In opposition to this traditional view, Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 104) postulate that researcher bias is valuable for qualitative research in forming a study basis. These two views of researcher bias were applicable to the study.

The knowledge and experience gathered and gained through the literature review and personal experiences in circuit management by the researcher (1.2.2), who was the primary research instrument about the no-fee schools and management of circuit schools where financial management was not good, posed threats to the research design.

These effects of researcher bias were reduced by applying mechanisation (3.4.3) and probes during the face-to-face interviews with participants, and employing appropriate data analysis strategies (3.4.4).

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the research design and methods necessary to explore no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo. The adopted research design was a specific and flexible exploratory multi-site qualitative case study design that pointed the investigator towards the collection of relevant and rich data (Bogdan & Biklen 2007: 54-55; Institute of International Studies 2008: 2).

Central to the description of the study research design were data collection and data processing methods that were essential to answer the research question. The chapter explained that purposeful non-probability sampling was employed to select no-fee primary schools for the study and face-to-face interviewing techniques were used to gather the experiences on the NFSP implementation from the principals, treasurers and chairpersons of SGBs of the selected schools. This chapter further indicated that data collection and data processing were conducted in a manner that ensured reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the emerging study results. It concluded by stating that data analysis continued into the writing-up of the dissertation.

The next chapter discusses data collection and processing, and presentation of study results.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION, DATA PROCESSING AND RESULTS DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In chapter 3, the researcher chose qualitative non-probability/purposeful sampling and semi-structured one-to-one individual interviews as techniques for selecting study sites and participants, and for collecting data to realise the purpose of the case study, namely to explore no-fee schools' inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo. Non-probability/purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to select particular elements that were representative of or informative about the topic of interest (Merriam 1998: 61), while the semi-structured one-to-one interviews gave the researcher and participants much flexibility (Greef 2003: 302). This chapter dealt with the realisation of sampling and discussion of results obtained from semi-structured interviews and documentation.

### **4.2 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

The researcher discussed data collection under the realisation of sampling and data collection procedures as follows:

#### **4.2.1 Realisation of sampling**

The researcher realised sampling through qualitative purposeful means and selected no-fee primary schools for the study on the NFSP implementation in Limpopo. Merriam (1998: 61–62), and McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 319) maintain that the power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about the topic.

Thus through this technique, the researcher selected ten no-fee primary schools that were representative of and informative about the implementation of the NFSP. These no-fee primary schools satisfied the criteria of having been registered with LDoE since 2007 and easy accessibility during the collection of data. These schools were named

S01 (primary school number 01) to S10 (primary school number 10), while their principals (S01P–S10P), SGB chairpersons (S01C–S10C) and treasurers (S01T–S10T) were numbered for confidentiality. Thus thirty (i.e.  $3 \times 10 = 30$ ) participants were available to provide rich information on the NFSP implementation in Limpopo.

The researcher contacted the informants both telephonically and personally prior to the actual interviews to explain the purpose of the study and the contents of the informed consent letters. This enabled the researcher to identify suitable places for the interview sites at studied schools. It also ensured the full knowledge and co-operation of the subjects, and established a good rapport and relationship between the researcher and the participants, thereby neutralising initial distrust and serving as a control for context effects and role selection (Mouton 2002: 158; Strydom 2003: 66). These researcher-participant interactions prepared the subjects for the ensuing interviews and for providing documents for the study. The interactions set the stage for data collection.

#### **4.2.2 Data collection procedures**

Creswell (2003: 185) lists data collection steps as setting the boundaries for the study; collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials; and establishing the protocol for recording information. Of these, setting boundaries for the study, and collecting information through semi-structured interviews and documents were important.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews and documentation to collect data from the selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo, though the interview remained the major data collection method in the study.

Data were collected through the following steps:

#### **4.2.2.1 Setting the boundaries for the study**

The researcher employed non-probability (i.e. purposeful) sampling to select ten no-fee primary schools (labelled S01 to S10) for the study in Limpopo. From each of the chosen schools studied, a principal, treasurer and chairperson of the SGB were interviewed on NFSP implementation.

#### **4.2.2.2 Collecting data from semi-structured interviews**

An interview schedule was drawn up to guide the semi-structured interviews. Three individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted per day per school studied, in a classroom or school office, after school. The researcher used SANYO Talk Book Pro, Model TRC 2050C to tape record the responses from the interviewees. The tape-recorded responses of participants were transcribed every three days later.

#### **4.2.2.3 Collecting information from documents**

Data were also collected from documents to supplement the data from the interviews. Documents that were important to the study were no-fee school allocation statements, selected minutes of SGB meetings, school budgets, income-expenditure cashbooks, and audited financial statements. The photocopies of the original documents were requested from each participating school for later use.

### **4.3 DATA PROCESSING PROCEDURES**

The researcher conducted data processing to make sense of the collected data and to find an answer to the research question (Merriam 1998: 178; McMillan & Schumacher (2006: 364). Marshall and Rossman (2006: 151) and Miles and Huberman (1994: 45) maintain that data processing consists of interwoven and related processes of data recording and management, data analysis, and interpretation.

Data processing familiarised or immersed the researcher in the collected data (Marshall & Rossman 2006: 151; Miles & Huberman (1994: 45). In the study, the researcher became immersed in the data through the processes of data triangulation, data analysis, data interpretation and data presentation (reporting).

#### **4.3.1 Data triangulation**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 325), Maxwell (2005: 112) and Richards (2005: 140) describe the use of more than one method in collecting data, and collection of data from different sources and settings, as triangulation of methods and data. Triangulation of multiple sources of data enhanced generalisability, validity and reliability of study findings (Marshall & Rossman 2006: 204; McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 28).

In the study, triangulation was employed by collecting data via two methods (semi-structured interviews and documents) at multiple research sites (schools) and comparing data from the two data sources. Data from documents fitted well into the categories and themes that emerged from transcripts of semi-structured interviews. This confirmed and validated the data from the semi-structured interviews, thus enhancing trustworthiness of the study results.

#### **4.3.2 Data analysis**

The researcher used interim and inductive data analyses to analyse the collected data. Interim analysis was conducted during the data collection phase to make data decisions and identify recurring topics.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 364) state that qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process that occurs after data collection. Thus the researcher conducted inductive analysis at the end of data collection, to analyse the data from interviews and documents. Steps involved in inductive data analysis were data organisation and management; data reduction; and data coding (McMillan & Schumacher

2006: 364-365, 367-375; Creswell 2003: 191-195). In each of these analytic steps, data were read and re-read before they were analysed (Marshall & Rossman 2006: 159; McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 370). This immersed the researcher in data that were analysed.

#### **4.3.2.1 Data organisation and management**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 367) assert that it is almost impossible to interpret data without organising them. This showed the importance of data organisation in a qualitative data analysis. Thus, the researcher applied data organisation to prepare transcripts and documents for analysis. In the study, data organisation took the following steps:

- The researcher organised the collected data from interviews manually and electronically.
- The used tapes were marked manually with applicable sites (S01 to S10), informants (S01P to S10P; S01T to S10T; or S01C to S10C) and dates.
- Transcripts were captured electronically in a personal computer (PC) and organised into files, and
- Data from documents were organised into main and sub-files. The main files were labelled: no-fee school allocations, minutes of SGB meetings, school budgets, and income and expenditure cashbooks, and audited financial problems. Each sub-file was labelled according to the applicable sites, informants and dates.

These steps of data processing generated well-organised and retrievable data during the ongoing qualitative data analysis.

#### **4.3.2.2 Data reduction**

Miles and Huberman (1994:10) and Marshall and Rossman (2006: 156) describe data reduction as an ongoing part of data analysis that selects, focuses, simplifies, abstracts and transforms the voluminous qualitative data that appears in written-up field notes or

transcriptions into manageable chunks. The researcher took the following steps to reduce data:

- The transcripts from the interviews were read and re-read and finally reduced or fragmented into manageable chunks (Richards 2005: 53-54; Marshall & Rossman 2006: 159; McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 370),
- Data reduction ended in picking up the relevant data in the form of plausible segments, sub-categories, categories and themes (patterns) from interview transcripts. This assisted the researcher in discarding off-topic or irrelevant information (Richards 2005: 54), and
- The generated segments, sub-categories, categories and themes were confirmed through the re-reading process. Each of these units of analysis was exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitising, and conceptually congruent. In other words, the list of reasonable, useful and interrelated categories that made sense together was fully identified in the study.

Merriam (1998:183) maintains that categories, as well as themes, reflect the purpose of the research and answer research questions. Thus the identified categories and themes reflected the purpose of the study and the research questions. Creswell (2003: 194) adds that themes are the ones that appear as major findings in qualitative studies.

#### **4.3.2.3 Data coding**

Data reduction generated meaningful segments, sub-categories, categories and themes from the collected data. These units needed to be coded before they could be effectively applied in data analysis. In the study, data coding was done through the following steps:

- Each unit was identified and coded using letters and numbers (annexure E), and
- The units were re-read and re-coded when there was a need. The re-coding process generated new or discarded some of the already coded segments,

categories and themes. The final coding was segments (A01 to A44), categories (C01 to C219) and themes (T01 to T06).

The re-coding process immersed and caused the researcher to engage critical thinking when analysing the data.

#### **4.3.3 Data interpretation**

The gathered data were interpreted through direct interpretation, detailed description, and naturalistic generalisation techniques. These three analytic processes enabled the researcher to make sense of the data in two broad ways by drawing:

- meanings through comparing and contrasting the results on NFSP implementation in selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo with those found in the studied literature, and
- generalisations on the NFSP implementation from the studied primary schools to other no-fee schools in Limpopo.

#### **4.3.4 Data presentation**

The data on NFSP implementation in schools studied were divided into data from semi-structured interviews and data from documents, based on the applied data collection methods.

Data from interviews were presented as data segments, sub-categories, categories and themes (annexure E).

Data from documents were discussed and presented in paragraphs under no-fee allocations, minutes for SGB meetings; school budgets, income and expenditure-cashbooks, and audited financial problems (4.4.1–4.4.5).

#### 4.4 **DISCUSSION OF DATA FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

The researcher used one-to-one semi-structured interviews to collect data from the participants. Greeff (2003: 302) states that semi-structured one-to-one interviews give researchers and participants flexibility during data collection. For example, in the study, the researcher allowed those who could not express themselves in English to respond to the interview questions in Sepedi, their vernacular.

An interview schedule (annexure C), with seven structured and open-ended research questions, was prepared to guide the interviews. The schedule contained probes that were used when needed. Interviews were conducted in classrooms during the week after school hours when schools were quiet. These interview localities allowed prevalence of ethical issues during the interviews. This enhanced the validity and reliability of the study results. Merriam (1998: 198–201) maintains that establishing validity and reliability in a research project adds to the trustworthiness of the results.

The subjects for the study were principals, treasurers and SGB chairpersons at the selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo. Nineteen (19) participants were interviewed in English while eleven (11) responded in Sepedi. They were asked the same questions in the same order.

Sanyo Talk Book Pro (Model No TRC 2050C) audiotape recorder was used to capture the responses of participants to the research questions. This mechanisation ensured correctness or reliability of the data (McMillan and Schumacher 2006: 326, Maxwell 2005: 110). Non-verbal expressions of the participants were also noted during each interview sessions. Probes were used to elicit more information from the participants (Ruskin 2007: 6). The English responses were transcribed verbatim but Sepedi voices were first translated into English and then transcribed.

Data were reduced to segments that were assigned unique codes, namely A01 to A44 (annexure E). Non-predetermined categories and subcategories emerged from data (annexure E). Categories were clustered into predetermined themes that were deduced

from research questions. These themes, categories, subcategories and their corresponding quotations were listed in annexure E. The themes, categories and subcategories assisted the researcher to draw conclusions on and to list recommendations on the implementation of the NFSP in Chapter 5.

#### **4.4.1 Interview schedule**

The interview schedule (annexure C) that guided all interviews in the research project consisted of seven open-ended research questions. The participants at each selected no-fee primary school were asked these questions in the same order, in other words, first question 1, then question 2, and so on, up to the seven question. These research questions were labelled ¥ 1 to ¥ 7.

- **¥ 1:** How did your school community become aware that this is a fee-free school?

This question sought to find out whether both internal and external school communities of the studied schools were duly informed of and prepared for the implementation of the NFSP. The internal school community composed of the school governing body, parents of learners, teachers, and learners. The external school community consisted of other people residing in the local community of the studied school.

- **¥ 2:** How does your school and its community benefit from the no-fee amount?

This question sought to determine the benefits that the selected primary schools and their communities receive from the NFSP implementation.

- **¥ 3:** What resources does your school need in order to implement the NFSP?

The question needed the participants to indicate whether their schools had the human and physical resources to implement the NFSP. Human resources referred to persons with the academic and practical skills to handle the no-fee school amounts. Regarding physical resources, the study needed to find out whether the selected schools had security and electronic equipment, such as computers, to administer the no-fee school amount.

- **¥ 4:** What capacity does your school have to manage and administer the implementation of the NFSP?

The question intended to establish whether the selected schools had skilled persons and physical resources to deal with the daily management and administration of the no-fee school amounts.

- **¥ 5:** What challenges does your school experience with the implementation of the NFSP?

The aim of this question was to find out if there were challenges related to NFSP implementation.

- **¥ 6:** How does your school address the challenges that it experiences with the implementation of the NFSP?

This question intended to determine coping strategies that selected no-fee primary schools applied to address the challenges with the NFSP implementation.

- ¥7: How could you improve the implementation of the NFSP?

This question was prompted by the sceptical remarks by media, teacher unions, political parties and professionals on the implementation of the NFSP (chapter 2). Thus it needed proposals from participants regarding the improvement of the NFSP implementation.

Responses of participants to these questions were important in exploring no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo. These participants' responses, followed by the research findings, were set out and discussed below. This was done firstly for the principals (4.4.2, 4.4.3), secondly for the treasurers (4.4.4, 4.4.5) and lastly for the SGB chairpersons (4.4.6, 4.4.7).

#### **4.4.2 Interviews with principals**

Ten principals availed themselves for the interviews in the study. They were keen to furnish the information on NFSP implementation. Nine principals, namely S01P to S09P, responded to the interview questions in English. The tenth principal, namely S10P, responded to the questions in Sepedi. The responses of principals to the seven research questions were grouped into the following six themes.

##### **4.4.2.1 NSFP implementation awareness**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 1. However, two categories, linked to it, emerged from the responses of the principals. The categories were LDoE and schools disseminating information on NFSP implementation. Through these categories, it was clear that internal and external school communities became aware of the NFSP implementation in meetings. For example, principals S07P, S03P and S10P responded to ¥ 1 in this manner:

S07P: MEC called principals and chairpersons to come and inform us that there will be criteria that will be used to determine no-fee schools.

S03P: We convened a parents meeting to inform them that our school will no longer charge the school fees because the government has declared it a no-fee school.

and

S10P: We agreed and advised the SGB to go out and break the good news to the villagers at the headman's kraal.

#### **4.4.2.2 NFSP implementation benefits**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 2. It consisted of two categories, namely school and communal benefits, which emerged from the data by principals. The principals indicated that the no-fee school benefited their schools and local communities in various ways. They said that the no-fee school money helped them to gain money, supply their schools with equipment, renovate their schools, decrease dropout rates, increase learner enrolment and improve learner attendance. They also indicated that the no-fee school amounts relieved parents from paying mandatory school fees and it created jobs for their local communities. The voices of other principals in this regard were as follows:

S06P: The benefit that we are sure of is that the department is going to give us money. Now with the no-fee school, we are sure that the department is going to give us so much and we are going to work on that.

S04P: Pupils were dropping out because of school fees. It [NFSP] helps us in reducing the dropout rate.

S05P: The no-fee has actually also assisted in improving learner attendance.

S04P: I think the parents are gaining because their children are getting education that is basic for them.

and

S02P: The no-fee school allocation has relieved the parents from paying school fees.

#### **4.4.2.3 Utilisation of no-fee school amounts**

This theme emerged from the voices of principals when responding to ¥ 2. The theme had six categories, which revealed how the no-fee school amounts were used at the selected no-fee primary schools. Principals indicated that no-fee school amounts were used to acquire school resources, pay for services, develop physical structures, establish security, create employment and offer services to their local communities. In this regard, principals S08P, S03P, S07P and S04P said:

S08P: We are able to buy equipment that we were unable to buy previously when parents were contributing school fees.

S01P: We are able to repair broken windows and repaint classrooms without requesting money from the community.

S01P: We did also erect a security fence around the school.

S03P: We do not run out of money to, for example, to pay for electricity. We don't have questions of paying for teachers when they attend workshops.

and

S07P: When we have minor manual labours, we give them to the parent component and in turn, we then pay them something that assists them in their families.

S04P: We declared the school as the centre of community. We are able to help them because like we are having the photocopier machine where, if they want to fill

in the forms for the Id [*identity document*] applications, we are able to photocopy for them and fill up for them.

#### **4.4.2.4 NFSP implementation requirements**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 3 and ¥ 4. It had four categories that emerged from the responses of the interviewed principals. Here principals strongly felt that, for proper implementation of the NFSP, schools needed financial management and administration capacity, school-development plans, financial structures and NFSP implementation monitoring. Their assertive expressions in this regard were as follows:

S04P: We require administration clerk that will help us in managing these funds and making proper fundraising.

S04P: We need to have capacity building, in particular to the SGBs. We must capacitate them.

S09P: We need to identify the school needs, sit down with the SGB and draw what we call the school development plan in which the needs of the school will be prioritised.

and

S03P: The school must have functional and knowledgeable structures in place to run the finances. If we do have such structures, I think we may manage the no-fee school properly.

#### **4.4.2.5 Challenges with the NFSP implementation**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 5 and ¥ 6. It had three categories on challenges with the NFSP implementation and another on addressing the NFSP implementation challenges.

The three categories emerged from the responses of the principals to ¥ 5. These categories were school-centred, communal and LDoE-inherent. Principals vehemently explained that the challenges associated with the NFSP implementation had serious effects upon its implementation at their schools and exposed their schools to financial deficits during certain months of the school year. Principals S07P, S04P and S10P confidently and firmly answered ¥ 5 in the following manner:

S07P: There are certain prescripts that you have to follow when you use the money. Like the fact that before you buy a particular equipment or stationery for the school, you have to have three quotations. There has to be a bid committee, such things, so in most of the schools you find out that this is not being done because schools have no capacity to deal with such technicalities.

S04P: The challenge that we are having is that we are having a lower learner enrolment. The no-fee fund is depending on learner enrolment. This makes the money that we receive to be too little. The little amount that we are getting depending on the learner enrolment is not enough.

S10P: When we hire parents, sometimes those who are in the SGB, for casual work, they overcharge the school, saying that the school has received a lot of money from the government.

S07P: The financial year of the school does not run concurrently with that of the provincial or national department of education. One financial year [*school year*] begins in January and the other one [*provincial or national*] begins in April.

and

S07P: The only challenge that I see here is that the money is not given to schools at the same time throughout the years. Sometimes you get it in May. At other times, you get it in July. However, if the money comes in May or July, for example, we have a challenge of, like, five months' gap where the money is not there.

The fourth category on addressing the NFSP implementation challenges was predetermined from ¥ 6. Four sub-categories that corresponded with this category emerged from the responses by the principals on ¥ 6. These sub-categories were restructuring budgets, fundraising, learner recruitment and fair procurement practices. Thus most schools studied addressed the NFSP implementation challenges by restructuring their budgets, fundraising, learner recruitment and practising fair procurement procedures. Here follows what S06P, S08P and S09P said on addressing challenges with NFSP implementation:

S06P: We draw our budget so that as we implement it, there should always be money available to the school throughout. We budget in such a way that the money that we receive in August runs the school until next August.

S08P: We do raise funds through casual days where learners contribute some kind of money for wearing casual clothing on school day.

S04P: We are trying to recruit more learners to our school so that our learner enrolment goes up. We introduce things, for example, educational excursions and activities that make our curriculum interesting that will make parents register their children with us.

and

S09P: We practise fair adjudication processes to choose the best from the three quotations.

#### **4.4.2.6 Improvement with the NFSP implementation**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 7. A single category that corresponded with this theme emerged from the responses by the principals to ¥ 7. This category was ‘areas for improvement in the NFSP implementation’. Under this category, principals emphatically stated their opinions on how to improve NFSP implementation. They then indicated that areas that needed improvement in the NFSP implementation were the SGB capacity, school financial year, criteria for no-fee school allocations, school

administration clerks, school tendering procedures and deposit period for no-fee school allocations. In this regard, S07P, S10P and S04P affirmed these indications by saying:

S05P: The improvement calls for the capacity building for our SGB. The SGB should actually understand their roles properly as far as the no-fee school is concerned. Truly speaking, in most cases the SGB that we have now, rely a lot on the office of the SMT whereas that is the area of governance.

S07P: I think the very first thing that needs to be done is to align the schools' financial year with the provincial/national financial year so that the time that the money is deposited in the school is done at the beginning of the schools' financial year to close gaps.

S10P: We suggest to the government not to use learner enrolments when allocating money to schools but allocate same amount of money to those schools that have the same poverty level.

S04P: Whether a big or small school, the government should give us administration clerks so that they help us in how to manage those funds and how to make proper fundraising with them.

and

S10P: We are appealing to the government to develop school project procedures.

#### **4.4.3 Research findings from interviews with principals**

Interviews with principals revealed a number of important findings related to the NFSP implementation in Limpopo. These findings were:

##### **4.4.3.1 State of un-readiness for the NFSP implementation**

Interviews with principals revealed that no-fee schools were only informed in meetings about the NFSP implementation. This implied that LDoE and consequently

the school authorities did not prepare implementers and stakeholders within and without no-fee schools adequately for the NFSP implementation. Cheng and Cheung (1995: 16) regard preparation for policy implementation as a key area for the success and smoothness of the implementation. Cheng and Cheung (1995: 17) add that preparation for educational policy implementation includes the readiness of the concerned parties, the readiness of resources, the timeframe of implementation, and the legal preparations.

Seeing that no-fee schools in Limpopo were only informed about the implementation of the new initiative, they were then found not ready to implement the NFSP. Thus the no-fee schools studied were in state of unreadiness for the NFSP implementation. In this regard, principal S04P said, “We need to have capacity building, in particular to the SGBs. We must capacitate them”.

#### **4.4.3.2 Insufficient capacity to implement the NFSP**

From the interviews with principals, it was discovered that the schools studied had insufficient capacity to implement NFSP successfully. The interviewed principals categorically indicated that their SGBs needed to be capacitated in financial management and administration as well as procurement procedures in order to implement the NFSP successfully. Chapter 2 of the study refers to capacity building as critically important in all levels for the successful implementation of a policy, for example NFSP. The literature review indicated that Kenya conducted a capacity building programme prior to the implementation of the NFSP and achieved successful NFSP implementation (Brown 2006: 5).

#### **4.4.3.3 Benefits of the NFSP implementation**

The study discovered, from the interviews with principals, that no-fee schools did receive school and communal benefits from the NFSP implementation. These benefits, put together, were money, decreased learner dropout-rate, learner attendance improvement, access to basic education and school-fee relief. The monetary benefits

enabled these schools to afford payments for services, renovation of physical structures and purchase of resources. Basic education was available and accessible to more children of school-going age after the abolition of school fees than before. In that way, the NFSP implementation advantaged the schools studied in Limpopo.

Thus the interviewed principals regarded the NFSP implementation as a good venture. S04P affirmed this, saying, “But with my recommendation, the no-fee school is a good thing that the department has done because at least by now we know each and every school has something to run from. Unlike previously when we depended from the parents, and if the parents were unable to pay, then the schools were not able to march”.

#### **4.4.3.4 Utilisation of no-fee school allocations**

Participating principals indicated that no-fee schools were utilising their allocations to acquire resources, pay for services, and create employment and offer services for local communities. The benefit list shows that no-fee schools extended the utilisation of their allocations to local communities.

#### **4.4.3.5 Requirements for successful NFSP implementation**

The respondents emphasised that, for successful NFSP implementation, their schools seriously needed financial administrators, capable SGBs, functional financial structures, school development plans and monitoring of NFSP implementation. As principal S01P explained, “This money requires proper handling and utilisation. It has to be used appropriately. This is the reason why I propose that the government should provide schools with financial administrators to deal with daily accounting issues”.

#### **4.4.3.6 Challenges related to the NFSP implementation**

The interviewed principals pointed out a number of challenges experienced by the selected no-fee primary schools with the NFSP implementation in Limpopo. These

challenges were related to school, LDoE or local community. The respondents emphasised that these challenges hampered the smooth running of the NFSP implementation.

The challenges that were inherent to individual schools studied were little allocated amounts, low enrolments and incapable SGBs.

Challenges related to LDoE were the late release of school allocations, financial management prescripts and non-concurrent school and provincial financial years. The late release of the allocations impoverished no-fee schools during the first and second school terms (i.e. January to June). The respondents indicated that financial management prescripts restricted the utilisation of the no-fee allocation by their schools. The non-concurrent financial years resulted in inconsistent and late release of the no-fee school amounts to schools.

In addition to school and departmental challenges, participants in the study mentioned that parents or prospective service providers quoted inflated amounts when asked to do some pieces of work at no-fee schools.

However, the participating principals described strategies that their schools used to combat those challenges with the NFSP implementation that were within their influence. These strategies were:

- **Restructuring budgets**

The literature review in chapter 2 referred to non-alignment of the provincial/national and school financial years. Interviewed principals also mentioned it as one of the challenges that their schools experienced with NFSP implementation. It created a 'funding gap' at the schools studied. Participating principals indicated that their schools combated the funding gap by budgeting for the released no-fee allocations beyond 31<sup>st</sup> December of each normal school year. These principals referred to this action as 'restructuring budgets'.

- **Fundraising**

Principals indicated that their schools raised funds to cope with the challenge of late release of allocations. No-fee schools used ‘casual days’ to raise funds. During these days, their schools allowed learners to wear casual clothing and pay a certain amount in return. That strategy took their schools through financial-gap periods.

#### **4.4.3.7 Areas for improvement in NFSP implementation**

The interviews with principals revealed that there were areas that needed improvement in the NFSP implementation. Principals convincingly stated that aligning the provincial/national financial year with that of schools, capacitating SGBs, reviewing no-fee allocation criteria, and allocating administration clerks to all no-fee schools could improve the NFSP implementation.

#### **4.4.4 Interviews with treasurers**

Ten treasurers, from the selected no-fee primary schools, participated in the study. At S04, the treasurer was a parent in the SGB. The remaining nine treasurers were teachers representing their colleagues in the SGBs of the studied schools. They were free to supply the information on how their schools implement the NFSP. Seven treasurers, namely S02T to S08T, responded to the interview questions in English. Treasurers S01T, S09T and S10T, responded in their vernacular, namely Sepedi.

The responses of the treasurers to the seven research questions resembled those of the principals regarding the NFSP implementation in their schools. This revealed that the researcher had reached data saturation or informational redundancy during data collection through the semi-structured interviews. Leech (2005: 1–4) maintains that reaching data saturation in a qualitative research assists the qualitative inquirer to make analytic generalisations. Merriam (1998: 204–205), Niemann (2000: 285) and Maxwell (2005: 112–114) add that qualitative researchers combat validity threats

through data saturation, triangulation of methods of collecting and interpreting data, comparison, member checks, guarding against researcher bias and observance of ethical behaviour (3.7.2).

However, the responses of treasurers to the seven research questions were grouped into six themes, similar to those of the principals and SGB chairpersons. These were:

#### **4.4.4.1 NSFP implementation awareness**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 1. However, two categories linked to it emerged from the responses of the treasurers. The categories were LDoE and schools disseminating information on NFSP implementation. Through these categories, it was clear that both internal and external school communities were informed of the NFSP implementation in meetings. For example, S02T and S10T responded to ¥ 1 as follows:

S02T: The department informed our school governing body that our school has been declared a no-fee school. The school governing body convened a parents' meeting and informed the parents that our school is declared a no-fee school.

and

S10T: The SGB convened a parents meeting and informed them that the government has declared our school a no-fee school, meaning that children were no longer going to pay school fees. In the parents meeting, the SGB was advised to go out and break the good news to the villagers at the headman's kraal.

#### **4.4.4.2 NFSP implementation benefits**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 2. It consisted of two categories, namely school and communal benefits, which emerged from the interviews with treasurers. These categories were similar to those that emerged from interviews with principals and SGB

chairpersons. These treasurers, just like the principals and chairpersons, indicated that the no-fee school benefited their schools and local communities in various ways. They said that the no-fee school money helped their schools to gain money, supply their schools with equipment, renovate their schools, decrease dropout-rates, increase learner enrolment and improve learner attendance. They also indicated that the no-fee school amounts relieved parents from paying mandatory school fees and created jobs for their local communities. Thus, when responding to ¥ 2, treasurers said:

S04T: It [*NFSP*] has benefited the parents a lot, because they are able to send their children to the school. Our learner enrolment has since gone up.

S01T: Previously, our learners were not attending school very well because their parents were unable to pay school fees. Now because of the no-fee schooling, our learner attendance has improved.

S02T: Poor parents are relieved from paying the school fee.

and

S09T: The school community no longer pops out money to buy resources, for example computers and photocopiers, for the school.

#### **4.4.4.3 Utilisation of no-fee school amounts**

This theme emerged from the voices of treasurers when responding to ¥ 2. The theme had four categories, which revealed how the no-fee school amounts were used at the selected no-fee primary schools. Treasurers indicated that no-fee school amounts were used to acquire school resources, develop physical structures, establish security and create employment. In this regard, treasurers S02T, S07T, and S03T said:

S02T: We consider all school activities when developing our school budget. For example, we allocate money to sport activities and learning and teaching aids.

S10T: Our school benefit a lot from the no-fee school amount. We have laid ceramic tiles on the floors of our classrooms since the inception of the no-fee school initiative. We have also paved some areas between blocks of classrooms and we are sure that the remaining areas will be paved next year.

S03T: We have made the alarm system and have erected the security fence around the school. We have also built a strong room.

and

S03T: We do hire people, with that money, to clean the school.

#### **4.4.4.4 NFSP implementation requirements**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 3 and ¥ 4. It had four categories that emerged from the responses of the interviewed treasurers. Here treasurers strongly felt that for proper implementation of the NFSP, schools needed financial management and administration capacity, school development plans, financial structures and NFSP implementation monitoring. Their assertive expressions in this regard were as follows:

S01T: I wish the department could employ a specific person to deal with this money because this money is not given proper handling if the treasurer is a teacher. This money requires proper handling and utilisation. It has to be used appropriately and this is the reason why I propose that the government should provide schools with financial administrators to deal with daily accounting issues.

S04T: We need to develop progressive plans that will guard us from buying redundant items. For example, if we have bought something like a photocopier, we should not keep on buying a photocopier. Rather buy something different that will benefit learners in times of need.

S09T: We need departmental officials who will monitor how the no-fee school amount is being utilised, that is: what is going on, what are we doing and have what we done with the allocated money. These monitors must come to our school to check whether the no-fee school money has been used to buy what the school intended to and secondly to audit the claims.

and

S08T: We need to engage the services of all school structures, that is the SGB, school-development team and finance committee, when budgeting for the utilisation of the no-fee school amount.

#### **4.4.4.5 Challenges related to the NFSP implementation**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 5 and ¥ 6. It had three categories on challenges with the NFSP implementation and the fourth on addressing the NFSP implementation challenges.

The three categories emerged from the responses of the treasurers to ¥ 5. These categories were school-centred, communal and LDoE-inherent challenges. Treasurers stated that these challenges with the NFSP implementation left their schools in financial difficulties. Treasurers S06T, S02T, S03T, S07T and S09T confidently and firmly answered ¥ 6 in the following manner:

S06T: Our school finds it difficult to raise funds because the local community says that the government has given a lot of money to it. The no-fee allocation makes it difficult for us to fundraise.

S02T: Our school receives insufficient allocations from the government due to low learner enrolment. Small schools get little amounts from the government. These little amounts are not enough for them to meet their daily needs. The learner enrolment criterion for allocating no-fee school amounts is unfair.

S03T: We are challenged by thieves. For example, they stole our computer and water pump.

S07T: Our school is experiencing reduced parent involvement from the day we were told that their children were no longer required to pay mandatory school fees.

S09T: Service providers overcharge us saying that the government has allocated lots of money to schools.

and

S05T: The challenge is that our school receives a paper budget and get the allocated money only in May-June. Our school is without funds during January-April.

The fourth category on addressing the NFSP implementation challenges was predetermined from ¥ 6. Three sub-categories that corresponded with this category emerged from the responses by the treasurers to ¥ 6. These sub-categories were developing budgets, establishing security and raising funds. Treasurers described strategies for coping with the NFSP implementation challenges as restructuring budgets, establishing security and fundraising. Here follows what S03T and S08T said on addressing NFSP implementation challenges:

S03T: We were able to restructure our budget to buy only important things.

S08T: We allocate the money and develop activities according to our school budget.

S03T: We made the alarm system, erected the security fence and built a strong room.

and

S03T: We do not just wait for the money from the government somehow; we do raise funds to increase the money.

#### **4.4.4.6 Improving the NFSP implementation**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 7. A single category that corresponded with this theme emerged from the responses by the treasurers to ¥ 7. This category was ‘areas for improvement in the NFSP implementation’. Under this category, treasurers emphatically stated their opinions on how to improve NFSP implementation. They indicated that areas that needed improvement in the NFSP implementation were criteria for no-fee school allocations, strategic planning, monitoring, deposit period for no-fee school allocations, and annual reporting. In this regard, S01T, S04T, S03T, S09T and S10T affirmed these indications by saying:

S01T: The government should not determine the no-fee school allocation amount based on learner enrolment. It is too unfair to small schools.

S04T: The SGBs have to develop strategic plans for the utilisation of the no-fee school allocation to consider those items that will benefit schools and learners now and in the future.

S03T: I could improve the implementation of this policy by conducting regular checking. By regular checking, I mean not only checking books but also what schools have done with the allocation.

S09T: The department should monitor the implementation of this policy to ascertain that schools use the allocation appropriately.

S03T: I can also improve this policy implementation by sending the money on the exact time that is before schools closed at the end of each school year.

and

S10T: I suggest that the no-fee schools should give annual reports on how they have utilised their no-fee school allocations to the government.

#### **4.4.5 Research findings from interviews with treasurers**

Interviews with treasurers revealed a number of important findings related to the NFSP implementation in Limpopo. However, the deductions from the interviews with treasurers were notably similar to those from interviews with principals and SGB chairpersons. This was the case because the researcher reached data saturation or informational redundancy when interviewing principals, treasurers and chairpersons of the SGBs (4.4.4). Thus research findings from interviews with treasurers were:

##### **4.4.5.1 State of un-readiness for the NFSP implementation**

Interviews with treasurers revealed that LDoE informed no-fee schools in Limpopo about the NFSP implementation through meetings. This implied that LDoE and consequently the school authorities did not prepare implementers and stakeholders within and without no-fee schools sufficiently for the NFSP implementation. Thus the no-fee schools studied were in a state of unreadiness for the NFSP implementation. In this regard, treasurer S01T said, “I wish the department could employ a specific person to deal with this money because this money is not given proper handling if the treasurer is a teacher. This money requires proper handling and utilisation.”

##### **4.4.5.2 Insufficient capacity to implement the NFSP**

From the interviews with treasurers, it was discovered that the studied schools had insufficient capacity to implement NFSP successfully. The interviewed treasurers categorically stated that their SGBs needed to be capacitated in financial management and administration as well as procurement procedures to implement the NFSP effectively. Treasurer S01T confirmed this by saying, “I wish the department could employ a specific person to deal with this money because this money is not given

proper handling if the treasurer is a teacher. This money requires proper handling and utilisation.”

#### **4.4.5.3 Benefits of the NFSP implementation**

The study discovered, from the interviews with treasurers, that no-fee schools received school and communal benefits from the NFSP implementation. These benefits, put together, were money, learner-enrolment increase, learner-attendance improvement and school-fee relief. The monetary benefits enabled these schools to afford payments for services, renovation of physical structures and purchase of resources. In addition, basic education was available and accessible to more children of school-going age after the abolition of school fees than before. In that way, the NFSP implementation advantaged the schools studied in Limpopo.

Thus the interviewed treasurers regarded the NFSP implementation as a good venture. S02T affirmed this, saying, “The allocated money is very important for us”, while S06T added, “The government has done a very good job for the schools”. S08T reaffirmed in this way: “The government should declare each and every school a no-fee school”.

#### **4.4.5.4 Utilisation of no-fee school allocations**

Participating treasurers indicated that no-fee schools were utilising their allocations to acquire resources, pay for services, and create employment and offer services for local communities. The benefit list showed that no-fee schools extended the utilisation of their allocations to local communities. In line with this, S03T said, “We do hire people, with that money, to clean the school”.

#### **4.4.5.5 Requirements for successful NFSP implementation**

The respondents felt strongly that, for successful NFSP implementation, their schools seriously needed financial administrators, school development plans and monitoring of

NFSP implementation. Treasurer S09T said, “We need departmental officials who will monitor how the no-fee school amount is being utilised, that is: what is going on, what we are doing and what have we done with the allocated money. These monitors must come to our school to check whether the no-fee school money has been used to buy what the school intended to and secondly to audit the claims”.

#### **4.4.5.6 Challenges related to the NFSP implementation**

The interviewed treasurers pointed out a number of challenges experienced by the selected no-fee primary schools with the NFSP implementation in Limpopo. These challenges were related to the school, community or LDoE. The respondents emphasised that these challenges hampered the smooth running of the NFSP implementation.

One challenge experienced by schools studied was lower learner enrolment. No-fee schools with lower learner enrolments ended up receiving small amounts from the department. This made it difficult for the affected schools to afford what they needed. S02T said, “Our school receives insufficient allocations from the government due to low learner enrolment. Small schools get little amounts from the government. These little amounts are not enough for them to meet their daily needs. The learner enrolment criterion for allocating no-fee school amounts is unfair”.

Communal challenges were reduced parent involvement, difficult fundraising and high quotations. Interviewed treasurers felt that these challenges hampered smooth NFSP implementation.

Treasurers mentioned the late release of no-fee school allocations by the LDoE as a challenge. The late release of the allocations impoverished no-fee schools during the first and second school terms (i.e. January to June). In this regard, S05T stated, “The challenge is that our school receives a paper budget and get the allocated money only in May or June. Our school is without funds from January to April”.

However, the participating treasurers explained strategies that their schools used to combat those challenges, relating to with the NFSP implementation that was within their influence. These strategies were:

- **Restructuring budgets**

Participating treasurers indicated that their schools combated the late release of no-fee amounts by budgeting mainly for indispensable items. In summary, treasurer S03T put it like this: “We were able to restructure our budget to buy only important things”.

- **Fundraising**

Treasurers indicated that their schools raised funds to cope with the challenge of late release of allocations. No-fee schools used casual days to raise funds. During these days, their schools allowed learners to wear casual clothing and pay a certain amount in turn. That strategy took their schools through financial-gap periods.

- **Establishing security**

Interviews with treasurers revealed that no-fee schools established security in the form of alarm systems and physical structures. In this regard, treasurer S03T said, “We erected a security fence. We built a strong room and installed an alarm system to secure our school”.

#### **4.4.5.7 Areas for improvement in NFSP implementation**

The interviews with treasurers revealed that there were areas that needed improvement in the NFSP implementation. Treasurers convincingly believed that monitoring, releasing funds timeously and submitting annual reports to LDoE could improve the NFSP implementation.

#### **4.4.6 Interviews with SGB chairpersons**

Ten SGB chairpersons, who were parents at the selected no-fee primary schools, participated in the study. They freely gave the information on NFSP implementation. Three chairpersons, namely S05C, S06C and S07C, responded to the interview questions in English because they were fluent in this language. The remaining seven chairpersons, namely S01C, S02C, S03C, S04C, S08C, S09C and S10C, responded to the study interview questions in their vernacular, namely Sepedi.

The responses of the SGB chairpersons to the seven research questions resembled those of the principals and treasurers regarding the NFSP implementation in their schools. This revealed that the researcher had reached data saturation or informational redundancy during data collection through the interviews (4.4.4). Thus their responses to the seven research questions were grouped into six themes, similar to those of the principals and treasurers. The responses of the SGB chairpersons were as follows:

##### **4.4.6.1 NSFP implementation awareness**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 1. However, two categories linked to it emerged from the responses of the SGB chairpersons: LDoE and schools disseminating information on NFSP implementation. Through these categories, it was clear that internal and external school communities became aware of the NFSP implementation through meetings. For example, SGB chairpersons S08C and S09C responded to ¥ 1 as follows:

S08C: The department informed our school that it is declared a no-fee school because our community is the poorest of the poor. The school management sat with us, the committee members, and informed us about the no-fee status of our school. We wrote letters to parents and called them for a meeting. We informed them that our school is a no-fee school and that means that no child will be asked to pay a school fee anymore.

and

S09C: We convened a parents meeting where we informed them that our school is declared a no-fee school. We told them that the MEC sent a message that certain schools including ours are no longer going to charge mandatory school fees.

#### **4.4.6.2 NFSP implementation benefits**

This theme was predetermined from  $\text{¥} 2$ . It consisted of two categories, namely school and communal benefits, which emerged from the data by SGB chairpersons. These categories were similar to those that emerged from interviews with principals and treasurers. The SGB chairpersons, just like the principals and treasurers, indicated that the NFSP benefited their schools and local communities. However, monetary benefit/gain was central to their responses to the two research questions. They also indicated that the no-fee school amounts relieved parents from paying mandatory school fees and it created jobs for their local communities. For example, S02C and S03C responded to  $\text{¥} 2$  as follows:

S02C: It is benefiting the school because we receive the money.

and

S03C: Right now parents are not paying any money to the school. The school runs without them paying even a cent. That is how they benefit.

#### **4.4.6.3 Utilisation of no-fee school amounts**

This theme emerged from the responses of SGB chairpersons to  $\text{¥} 2$ . The theme had five categories that revealed how the no-fee school amounts were used at the selected no-fee primary schools. SGB chairpersons indicated that no-fee school amounts were used to acquire resources, pay for services, develop physical structures, establish

security and create employment. In this regard, chairpersons S04C, S06C, S02C, S03C and S07C said:

S04C: We drilled a water borehole, bought flowering plants and bought learner hand-towels, for them to dry hands after washing. We also bought buckets to hold drinking water in the classrooms for our learners. We did build a cooking centre, for the national school nutrition programme, and a strong room. We do buy stationery for our educators. We do afford all these things because of the no-fee school money.

S06C: We made our school fence look nice and repaired broken windows and doors.

S02C: We also use it to pay for transporting our learners to athletic competitions ...

S03C: The school has erected a security fence.

and

S07C: When we have minor manual labour, we give it to the parent component and in turn, we then pay them something that assists them in their families.

#### **4.4.6.4 Requirements for the NFSP implementation**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 3 and ¥ 4. It had one category that emerged from the responses of the interviewed SGB chairpersons. Here the chairpersons felt that for proper implementation of the NFSP, schools needed budgets and planning. Unlike principals and treasurers, chairpersons did not refer to financial management and administration capacity, school development plans, NFSP monitoring or financial structures as requirements for proper NFSP implementation. However, S07C and S04C answered ¥ 3 as follows:

S07C: What we need as a school is to have a budget that would indicate how to utilise the no-fee school allocation.

and

S04C: We require a plan in which school needs are prioritised and we have to stick to that priority list when utilising the no-fee school amounts. We cannot just use the money without planning.

However, chairpersons S01C, S02C, S08C and S09C pointed out that their schools had no capacity to manage and administer the no-fee school amount. S08C put it like this: “We do not have the capacity”. S09C said similarly, “we do not have capacity; we still need training in this regard”.

#### **4.4.6.5 Challenges related to the NFSP implementation**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 5 and ¥ 6. It had three categories on challenges with the NFSP implementation and the fourth on addressing the NFSP implementation challenges.

The three categories emerged from the responses of the SGB chairpersons to ¥ 6. These categories were school-centred, communal and LDoE-inherent challenges. The responses of SGB chairpersons were divergent within the group and from those of other interviewees. Firstly, they differed from those of principals and treasurers. Secondly, they varied within the chairpersons’ group. Thus dividing this group of respondent into extreme ends of a continuum, namely, those who experienced challenges with the NFSP implementation and those who did not experience any challenge.

Six chairpersons mentioned reduced parent commitment, late deposits, financial management prescripts, tendering procedures and burglary as challenges that affected the NFSP implementation. This list resembled those of principals and treasurers. Chairpersons S03C, S05C, S06C, S07C, S09C and S10C answered ¥ 5 as follows:

S03C: Parents are no longer willing to support fundraising and no longer attend meetings in large numbers.

S07C: One serious challenge about the system is the timing of the payments of the money into schools' accounts. That is the major challenge. Therefore, the challenge is how you then utilise the money because when you started, you expected to have the money, which came late!

S06C: The challenge that we experience as the school is the financial management prescripts that tend to limit the utilisation of the no-fee school amount. No-fee school amounts are not supposed to be used for paying for educational excursions for learners.

S09C: As the SGB, we are required to adjudicate three quotations of potential service providers who compete for our school projects. We are usually faced with a challenge of selecting the best service provider based on quotations at hand. This is a serious challenge because we often choose service providers whose services are regrettable.

and

S10C: There are burglars in our community who scare and challenge our school development.

However, four chairpersons stated emphatically that their schools experienced no challenges with the NFSP implementation. These were S01C, S02C, S04C and S08C. S01C confidently and firmly said, "We have not yet encountered challenges with the implementation of the NFSP".

The fourth category on addressing the NFSP implementation challenges was predetermined from ¥ 6. Three sub-categories that corresponded with this category emerged from the responses by the SGB chairpersons: restructuring budgets,

establishing security, and raising funds. Thus chairpersons mentioned strategies for coping with the challenges that they had stated in response to ¥ 5. Here follows what S07C, S10C and S05C said on addressing NFSP implementation challenges:

S07C: When the school utilises money for a particular academic year, it ensures that it remains with a little reserve to take it through the first quarter of the following year so that almost the school budget does not run, as one would want it to run.

S10C: The SGB explains to the community the importance of joint efforts in guarding our school because it belongs to all of us. We also persuade the villagers to draw the attention of susceptible [suspicious] person, in and around the school, to the entire community immediately  
and

S05C: When our school experiences financial shortages, we do raise funds during casual days and use the income that we collect to buy chalks and maintain machines.

#### **4.4.6.6 Improving the NFSP implementation**

This theme was predetermined from ¥ 7. A single category from the responses by the chairpersons emerged from this theme, namely areas for improvement in the NFSP--implementation. Under this category, chairpersons emphatically stated their opinions on how to improve NFSP implementation. They indicated that areas that needed improvement were SGB capacity, school financial year, monitoring, and no-fee school allocation criteria. In this regard, S06C, S07C and S08C affirmed as follows:

S06C: I think it will be better if the department can familiarise the SGBs with policies and prescripts. I do not think that SGBs can be able to implement policies and prescripts properly if they do not understand them. Department should

therefore arrange workshops whereby SGBs are familiarised with relevant policies.

S07C: I think the department should look into the question of how to synchronise the supply of these funds with the academic year of the school. I think that is the key to successful NFSP implementation.

S07C: The department must have monitoring tools for ensuring that people stick to their budgets and that public finances are utilised in a responsible manner.

and

S08C: I suggest that the allocations for no-fee schools be reviewed by giving first priority to the poorest of the poor schools. The poorest of the poor schools should be allocated some more no-fee school money so that they could afford things that they dearly do need.

#### **4.4.7 Research findings from interviews with SGB chairpersons**

Interviews with SGB chairpersons revealed a number of important findings related to the NFSP implementation in Limpopo. However, the deductions from the interviews with chairpersons were markedly similar to those from interviews with principals. This was the case because the researcher reached data saturation or informational redundancy when interviewing principals, treasurers, and chairpersons of the SGBs (4.4.4). Thus research findings from interviews with chairpersons were:

##### **4.4.7.1 State of unreadiness for the NFSP implementation**

Interviews with SGB chairpersons revealed that LDoE informed no-fee schools in Limpopo about the NFSP implementation through meetings. This implied that LDoE and consequently the school authorities did not prepare implementers and stakeholders within and without no-fee schools sufficiently for the NFSP implementation. Thus the

no-fee schools studied were in a state of unreadiness for the NFSP implementation. In this regard, chairperson S08C said, “The department informed our school that it is declared a no-fee school because our community is the poorest of the poor. The school management sat with us, the committee members, and informed us about the no-fee status of our school. We wrote letters to parents and called them for a meeting. We informed them that our school is a no-fee school and that means that no child will be asked to pay a school fee anymore”.

#### **4.4.7.2 Insufficient capacity to implement the NFSP**

From the interviews with chairpersons, the study discovered that the no-fee schools had insufficient capacity to implement NFSP successfully. The interviewed chairpersons categorically stated that their schools needed to develop school plans. Chairperson S04C confirmed this by saying, “We require a plan in which school needs are prioritised and we have to stick to that priority list when utilising the no-fee school amounts. We cannot just use the money without planning”.

#### **4.4.7.3 Benefits of the NFSP implementation**

The study discovered, from the interviews with chairpersons, that no-fee schools received school and communal benefits from the NFSP. These benefits, put together, were money and school-fee relief. The monetary benefits enabled these schools to afford payments for services, renovation of physical structures and purchase of resources. Through NFSP implementation, parents were relieved from paying mandatory school fees. In that way, the NFSP implementation benefited the schools studied in Limpopo.

Thus the interviewed chairpersons regarded the NFSP implementation as a good venture. S04C said, “The no-fee school policy has brought us good things” and S01C commented, “I wish and pray to God that the NFSP implementation may not come to an end but continue into the future for the benefit of our children”.

#### **4.4.7.4 Utilisation of no-fee school allocations**

Participating chairpersons indicated that no-fee schools were utilising their allocations to acquire resources, pay for services, and create employment. The benefit list showed that no-fee schools extended the utilisation of their allocations to local communities. In line with this, S07C said, “When we have minor manual labour, we give it to the parent component and in turn, we then pay them something that assists them in their families”.

#### **4.4.7.5 Requirements for successful NFSP implementation**

The informants felt strongly that, for successful NFSP implementation, their schools seriously needed school development plans and monitoring of NFSP implementation. Chairperson S07C affirmed, “What we need as a school is to have a budget that would indicate how to utilise the no-fee school allocation”. S04C expressed it this way, “We require a plan in which school needs are prioritised and we have to stick to that priority list when utilising the no-fee school amounts. We cannot just use the money without planning”.

#### **4.4.7.6 Challenges related to the NFSP implementation**

The interviewed chairpersons pointed out a number of challenges experienced by the selected no-fee primary schools with the NFSP implementation in Limpopo. These challenges were related to their schools, communities and LDoE. The respondents emphasised that these challenges hampered the smooth running of the NFSP implementation.

A challenge experienced by the studied schools was reduced parent involvement. Chairperson S03C indicated that parents were no longer willing to support fundraising and were no longer attending meetings. Chairpersons felt that lack of parent involvement in their school matters had negatively affected NFSP implementation.

A communal challenge was the presence of burglars in local communities. These burglars were potentially threatening the no-fee school development. Schools feared that burglars would steal their equipment. Consequently, no-fee schools were not free to utilise their allocations. In this regard, chairperson S10C said, “There are burglars in our community who scare and challenge our school development”.

Chairpersons mentioned the late release of no-fee school allocations and financial management prescripts as challenges for which LDoE was responsible. The late release of the allocations impoverished no-fee schools during the first and second school terms (i.e. January to June). In this regard, S07C stated, “One serious challenge about the system is the timing of the payments of the money into schools’ accounts. That is a major challenge. So the challenge is how you then utilise the money because when you started, you expected to have the money, which came late”.

Chairpersons pointed out that departmental prescripts on utilisation of no-fee school amount, limited their school development. For example, chairperson S06C boldly said, “The challenge that we experience as the school is the financial management prescripts that tend to limit the utilisation of the no-fee school amount. No-fee school amounts are not supposed to be used for paying for educational excursions for learners”.

However, the participating chairpersons explained strategies that their schools used to combat challenges related to the NFSP implementation that were within their influence. These strategies were:

- **Restructuring budgets**

Participating chairpersons indicated that their schools combated the late release of no-fee amounts by extending their budgets into the next school financial year. Chairperson S07C explained, “When the school utilise money for a particular academic year, it ensures that it remains with little reserve to take it through the

first quarter of the following year so that almost the school budget does not run as one would want it to run”.

- **Fundraising**

Chairpersons revealed that their schools conduct fundraising to cope with late release of allocations. No-fee schools used casual days to raise funds. During these days, their schools allowed learners to wear casual clothing and pay a certain amount in turn. In that way, no-fee schools collected some little income that took their schools through financial-gap periods. This was reflected in the following comment by S05C, “When our school experiences financial shortages, we do raise funds during casual days and use the little income that we collect to buy chalks and maintain machines”.

- **Establishing security**

Interviews with chairpersons revealed that no-fee schools established security in the form of alarm systems, school guards and community involvement. Chairperson S10C said, “The SGB explains to the community the importance of joint efforts in guarding our school because it belongs to all of us. We also persuade the villagers to draw the attention of susceptible [suspicious] persons in and around the school, to the entire community immediately”.

#### **4.4.7.7 Areas for improvement in NFSP implementation**

The interviews with chairpersons revealed that there were areas that needed improvement in the NFSP implementation. These areas were SGB capacity, monitoring, alignment of school and provincial/national financial years, and no-fee allocations criteria.

#### **4.4.8 Conclusion on data from semi-structured interviews**

The foregoing discussion concentrated on semi-structured interviews with principals, treasurers and SGB chairpersons at the selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo. Through these interviews, the research project revealed that no-fee schools:

- were in a state of unreadiness for the NFSP implementation
- benefited from the NFSP implementation
- needed capacity and resources for successful NFSP implementation
- utilised no-fee allocations to purchase office equipment and carry out minor infrastructure renovations
- experienced challenges with NFSP implementation
- applied strategies to cope with NFSP implementation challenges
- suggested areas for improvement in NFSP implementation

However, in the study, data from semi-structured interviews were triangulated with data from documentation. Thus the next discussion is on data from documents.

#### **4.5 DISCUSSION OF DATA FROM DOCUMENTS**

In the study, data were also collected from official documents of the selected no-fee primary schools. The objective of documentation was to supplement the interview data (Bogdan & Biklen 2007: 64; Marshall & Rossman 2006: 107). Thus documentation assisted the researcher in exploring no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo. However, the semi-structured interview remained the major data collection method in the research project.

The ten selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo freely supplied the required written or printed official documents on the day of each interview. These documents were no-fee school allocation statements, minutes of SGB meetings, school budgets, income-expenditure cashbooks, and audited financial statements. The contents of each of these documents were read and re-read to gather pertinent information on NFSP

implementation in Limpopo. The conducted document analysis brought relevant discoveries to the fore. The discoveries were as follows:

#### **4.5.1 No-fee school allocation statements**

No-fee school allocation statements revealed the following:

4.5.1.1 No-fee schools knew about their status concerning school fees and indicative allocations by the end of October prior to each new school year. In these documents, LDoE clearly informed the SGB of each school studied that their *school fell under quintile 1 or 2, which meant it was a no-fee school and was therefore not supposed to charge mandatory school fees*. No-fee schools received printed final allocations in March of the relevant school academic year. However, deposits of these allocations into individual no-fee school accounts were done in July, August or September of the same school year. This situation left no-fee schools without money to operate on from January to June or even to August. This concurred with principal S07P who said, “If the money comes in May or July, for example, we have a challenge of like five months’ gap where the money is not there”.

4.5.1.2 LDoE prescribed to all no-fee schools to use their allocations for:

- payment for improvements and repairs on immovable capital,
- payments of services, and
- purchase of educational materials and equipment for the school.

The prescription restricted no-fee schools to utilise no-fee school amounts for the acquisition of these items. This was explained by chairperson S06C who said, “The challenge that we experience as the school is the financial management prescripts that tend to limit the utilisation of the no-fee school amount. No-fee school amounts are not supposed to be used for paying for educational excursions for learners”.

4.5.1.3 No-fee allocations for small schools were far smaller than allocations for big schools. For example in 2008, school S04 (with learner enrolment of 217) received R69 141, while S06 (with learner enrolment of 1352) received R531 097. Thus S04P emphasised, “the challenge that we are having is that we are having a lower learner enrolment. The no-fee fund is depending on learner enrolment. This makes the money that we receive to be too little. The little amount that we are getting depending on the learner enrolment is not enough”.

#### **4.5.2 Minutes for SGB meetings**

SGBs at the selected no-fee schools kept minutes of their discussions. However, seven out of ten did not include an item on no-fee schools in their agendas. This indicated that these schools did not hold formal discussions on NFSP implementation. The remaining three schools, namely S04, S06 and S09, did discuss the NFSP programme with parents during their parents meeting. This concurred with chairperson S09C who responded to ¥ 1 as follows, “We convened a parents meeting where we informed them that our school is declared a no-fee school. We told them that the MEC sent a message that certain schools including ours are no longer going to charge mandatory school fees”.

Minutes for the SGB meetings made mention of late deposits of the allocated no-fee amounts and that their schools combated that challenge by allowing their budgets to run into the next school financial year. For example, at S06, the budget for school financial year 2008 was extended to August 2009.

#### **4.5.3 School budgets**

The no-fee primary schools studied did budget for the utilisation of their no-fee school allocations. Their budgets were duly approved by the parents and adopted by their SGBs. Their budgets focussed on payments for services, purchasing resources such as computers, payments for improvement and minor repairs for immovable capital. For

example, chairperson S06C said, “We made our school fence look nice and repaired broken windows and doors”.

#### **4.5.4 Income-expenditure cashbooks**

Bisschoff and Mestry (2003: 37) put it clearly that the governing body of a public school must keep records of funds received [income] and spent [expenditure] by the public school (no-fee schools included). The ten no-fee schools studied complied by completing income and expenditure cashbooks and availed them to the researcher for examination. However, only four of them did list the no-fee school allocation [money] received from the LDoE together with other funds received in the income section of their income-expenditure cashbooks. This indicated that SGBs at the studied schools needed assistance in recording financial transactions. In this regard, principal S04P was prompted to say, “We need to have capacity building, in particular to the SGBs. We must capacitate them”.

#### **4.5.5 Audited financial statements**

The ten selected no-fee primary schools presented their audited financial statements to the researcher. It was found that school assets and liabilities were not among the audited items. Bisschoff and Mestry (2003: 40) explain that public schools must audit assets, liabilities, and financial statements.

However, an auditor, who audited financial statements from schools S01, S02, S04, S07 and S08, remarked that, “the financial statement only reflected the cash received and paid out by the school fund and was not intended to present the financial position and results of operations in conformity with generally accepted accounting practice”. This statement indicated that the school financial books were lightly audited.

Thus treasurer S03T responded to ¥ 7 like this, “I could improve the implementation of this policy by conducting regular checking and by regular checking I mean not only checking books but also what schools have done with the allocation”.

#### **4.5.6 Conclusion on documentary data**

The documents examined, through content analysis, revealed that:

4.5.6.1 SGBs did not explain the concept of no-fee schools to all stakeholders within and without their schools and hence the NFSP implementation was not well understood. That created a state of un-readiness for the NFSP implementation within and without the studied no-fee schools,

4.5.6.2 No-fee schools utilised the allocations without prior proper budgeting. Bisschoff and Mestry (2003: 122) maintain that a school budget should lead to the achievement of the objectives of a school. The no-fee school SGBs excluded their schools' objectives when budgeting, thereby displaying financial management incapacity,

4.5.6.3 No-fee schools lacked knowledge of financial management and administration. As a result SGBs, through their treasurers, left no-fee allocations and other money received by their schools out of the income section of their cashbooks,

4.5.6.4 The LDoE released no-fee allocations to relevant schools any time between July and October of every school year. This created a financial vacuum at the no-fee schools studied during the months of January to June, and

4.5.6.5 Audited financial statements did not present the financial positions and results of operations of the no-fee schools in conformity with generally accepted accounting practices.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

The foregoing sections concentrated on research results that emerged from semi-structured interviews and document examination. These methods of data collection revealed similar findings on the NFSP implementation in Limpopo.

The next chapter dealt with the conclusion, recommendations and limitations of the study on NFSP implementation.

## **CHAPTER 5: STUDY SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discussed the study summary, limitations, findings and recommendations. The study summary was a synopsis of chapters 1 to 4 of the study. The section on study limitations focused on those factors that tended to limit the quality of study results. The study findings stated the experiences of the studied schools with the NFSP implementation and the extent to which the study objectives were realised. Finally, the chapter concluded with study recommendations for use by the study beneficiaries and future researchers on NFSP implementation.

### **5.2 STUDY SUMMARY**

5.2.1 **Chapter 1** discussed the introduction to the study focussing on basic aspects of an empirical investigation such as motivation, purpose, research questions, objectives, limitations and assumptions of the study. This chapter explained and justified the need for the study on NFSP implementation in selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo.

5.2.2 **Chapter 2** concentrated on the literature review on NFSP implementation in South Africa and other sub-Saharan countries. The literature studied gave clear and detailed information on no-fee schools, NFSP and NFSP implementation. The literature review revealed that the NFSP implementation in Limpopo was associated with benefits as well as challenges. This persuaded the researcher to explore, through a case study, no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo.

5.2.3 **Chapter 3** discussed research design and methods. The qualitative case research design and methods guided the study sampling, data collection and analysis during the exploration on no-fee schools inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo.

5.2.4 **Chapter 4** discussed data collection, data processing and study results. The discussion identified and formulated categories and themes under data from interviews and documentations.

### 5.3 **STUDY LIMITATIONS**

Merriam (1998: 124–125), Creswell (2003: 186) and Walonick (2007: 7) state that all research has limitations that have the potential to weaken the results. Consequently, the trustworthiness of a study is threatened by study limitations. Thus Marshall and Rossman (2006: 42) emphasise that a discussion of the study limitations is a good demonstration that the researcher understands that they do exist and need to be circumvented in order to improve the quality of the study results. Study limitations were briefly discussed in section 1.8.6. This chapter grouped and discussed the same study limitations under semi-structured interview and document limitations below in 5.3.1 to 5.3.2.

The effects of the study limitations on the study results were circumvented, avoided or addressed by applying appropriate methodological steps in the study. These steps were triangulation of interviews and documents, flexibility in designed methods of collecting research data, signing consent letters with participants, and delimiting the study to accessible areas and three districts (namely Capricorn, Greater Sekhukhune and Waterberg) where the predominant language was Sepedi.

The researcher discussed the study limitations under semi-structured interview and document limitations as follows:

#### 5.3.1 **Semi-structured interview limitations**

Three limitations were a potential threat to the study. These were:

#### **5.3.1.1 The use of English in the interview processes**

English as the primary research language obliged the researcher to delimit the study to the Capricorn, Greater Sekhukhune and Waterberg districts of Limpopo, where the majority of the participants speak either English or Sepedi. This excluded Mopani and Vhembe, as people there spoke predominately Xitsonga or Tshivenda, which were unfamiliar to the researcher.

English was the primary language used to compile the interview guide and to collect data from participants through semi-structured interviews. However, some participants, for example S09T, S09C, S10P, S10T and S10C, were interviewed in their vernacular (namely Sepedi) on their request. This created a good researcher-participant rapport and interaction, and led to free participation by the interviewees.

Therefore the language limitation was controlled by allowing those participants that could not speak English to respond to the study questions in Sepedi, and by interviewing 30 participants in total to make research results reliable, valid, credible and transferable to other no-fee schools in Limpopo.

#### **5.3.1.2 Suspicious interviewees**

Through pre-study visits and telephone conversations with the participants, the researcher realised that some participants were suspicious about the research. This study limitation was eliminated by taking them through the informed consent letter (annexure C). Reading and signing the informed consent letter, and receiving a copy, made each feel relaxed in the study.

#### **5.3.1.3 Researcher bias**

Maxwell (2005: 37) describes researcher bias as that which researchers bring to the research from their own background and identity. In the study, this limitation was

controlled by mechanisation, probing and verbatim transcription of the responses of the participants during the semi-structured interviews.

### **5.3.2 Document limitations**

Document limitations that were a threat to the study were possible incompleteness, un-authenticity and inaccuracy of documents. These limitations were controlled by triangulating documentation with the semi-structured interviews. This enhanced generalisability, validity and reliability of study findings (Marshall & Rossman 2006: 204; McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 28).

## **5.4 STUDY FINDINGS**

The purpose (intent or objective) of this case study was to explore no-fee schools' inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo. The study employed qualitative case study techniques to realise this main research objective, by using semi-structured interviews and documents to gather data on NFSP implementation at the schools studied. The collected data were analysed and findings were compiled for each data collection method.

A comparison of the set of findings from semi-structured interviews with those from documentation revealed great convergence. This yielded a set of plausible study findings based on the six formulated study themes (numbered T01 to T06). The quality of these results, measured in terms of reliability, validity, and trustworthiness, was discussed in sections 5.4.1 to 5.4.3).

### **5.4.1 Reliability of the study findings**

Golofshani (2003: 601) explains that reliability is used to test and evaluate all kinds [qualitative and quantitative] of research. Niemann (2000: 284) states that qualitative researchers distinguish internal reliability from external reliability:

#### **5.4.1.1 Internal reliability**

Niemann (2000: 284) describes internal reliability as reliability during the research project, and states that random errors often distort it. The researcher attained internal reliability by eliminating random errors during the study, through triangulation of interviews with documentation, tape-recording individual interviews (i.e. mechanisation), and transcribing and making printouts of the tape-recorded interviews (i.e. auditing). These measures made the study findings dependable and auditable.

#### **5.4.1.2 External reliability**

External reliability is the verification of the findings of the research (Niemann 2000: 284). In other words, any person using the same research instruments and procedures will come to the same findings. The researcher ensured external reliability by interviewing and tape-recording participants that were dealing directly with the NFSP implementation at their schools. The study participants were principals, treasurers and SGB chairpersons of the selected no-fee schools in Limpopo. That made the study findings to discover confirmable study findings.

#### **5.4.2 Validity of the study findings**

Creswell (2003: 195–196) describes [qualitative] validity as a strength of qualitative research and is used to determine whether the research findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant or the readers of an account. This implies that [qualitative] validity addresses whether one's research explains what one said one would be observing or determining. Miles and Huberman (1994: 278–279), and Niemann (2000: 285) distinguish two forms of validity, namely internal validity and external validity:

#### **5.4.2.1 Internal validity**

Merriam (1998: 201) and Niemann (2000: 285) describe internal validity as the criterion for validity of the quality of qualitative research. Miles & Huberman (1994: 278) and Trochim (2006: 1) describe validity of a qualitative research study in terms of credibility and authenticity. Niemann (2000: 285) lists researcher bias and reactivity as potential threats to internal validity of a qualitative study.

In the study, the researcher controlled researcher bias and reactivity by tape-recording the responses of thirty participants during face-to-face semi-structured interviews on NFSP implementation, to enhance the internal validity of the study results. This contributed towards the credibility and authenticity of the study findings.

#### **5.4.2.2 External validity**

Miles and Huberman (1994: 279) state that external validity concerns itself with the extent to which study results are applicable, transferable and generalisable to other context or settings.

In the study, the researcher enhanced external validity by interviewing and tape-recording thirty participants from ten different schools, and transcribing their responses. This yielded study results that were applicable, transferable and generalisable to other no-fee primary and secondary schools in Limpopo. The study findings and recommendations, based on these results, aimed at assisting the LDoE and the national DoE in reviewing the NFSP.

#### **5.4.3 Trustworthiness of the study findings**

Miles and Huberman (1994: 277), Key (1997: 4), and Morse et. al. (2002: 5) maintain that qualitative results are trustworthy if they are credible, transferable, dependable, confirmable, replicable, reliable, reasonable, probably true, significant, accurate, compelling, precise, legitimate, non-biased and empowering.

The study engaged ethical procedures, triangulation of interviews and documentation, data analysis techniques, comparison of data, tape-recording (i.e. mechanisation), and control of researcher bias during data collection and analysis, to ensure trustworthiness of the study findings. Thus the study produced trustworthy study findings.

The foregoing paragraphs (5.4.1–5.4.3) demonstrated the reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the study results. The following sections (5.4.4–5.4.10) discussed the study findings with regard to each theme:

#### **5.4.4 T01: NFSP implementation awareness**

The study found that the LDoE localised the NFSP implementation awareness to the no-fee schools.

In this regard, participant S07P said, “MEC called principals and chairpersons and informed us that there will be criteria that will be used to determine no-fee schools”.

This implied that the schools studied were informed about the NFSP implementation without prior and careful planning to include no-fee school awareness campaigns. The schools studied were in a state of unreadiness for the NFSP implementation and the no-fee school concept was localised to schools in Q 1 and Q 2 plus some in Q 3. This excluded other poor learners in no-fee Q 3, Q 4 and Q 5 schools.

#### **5.4.5 T02: NFSP implementation benefits**

The study found that there were school and communal benefits associated with the NFSP implementation (annexure E). These benefits were monetary gains, decreased learner dropout rate, increased learner enrolment, improved learner attendance, and relief from school fees. The benefit list resembled in many respects that given by Fredriksen (2007: 22, 39) on NFSP implementation in sub-Saharan countries.

For example, S02P stated, “The no-fee school allocation has relieved the parents from paying school fees”.

#### **5.4.6 T03: NFSP implementation requirements**

The study found that the NFSP–implementing schools required capacity in financial management and administration, school development plans, and NFSP implementation monitoring and financial structures.

In this regard, S04P said, “We need to have capacity building, in particular to the SGBs. We must capacitate them”.

#### **5.4.7 T04: Utilisation of no-fee school amounts**

The study discovered that the schools studied utilised the allocated no-fee school amounts in two general ways, namely purchase of official equipment and minor infrastructure renovations.

With regard to the second category of utilisation, S07C stated, “When we have minor manual labour, we give it to the parent component and in turn, we then pay them something that assists them in their families”.

However, the official equipment purchased did not include equipment that was necessary to promote learning and teaching activities, even though the no-fee schools studied conformed to the no-fee amount utilisation guidelines as stipulated by the department (LDoE 2006: 4–5, LDoE 2007: 5, LDoE 2008: 21). Fredriksen (2007: 39) asserts that no-fee school allocations should be utilised for purchasing basic learning and teaching-support materials to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning process.

#### **5.4.8 T05: Challenges related to the NFSP implementation**

There were two major discoveries under this theme:

5.4.8.1 The study found that the schools experienced challenges with the NFSP implementation. These challenges were lack of capacity in financial management and administration, small-allocated amounts, reduced parent involvement, high quotations, burglary, incongruous school and provincial financial years, inconsistent deposit times for allocated amounts, and financial management prescripts.

For example, S07P said, “The financial year of the school does not run concurrently with that of the provincial or national department of education. One financial year [*school year*] begins in January and the other one [*provincial or national*] begins in April.”

5.4.8.2 The study also found that the schools studied developed coping strategies to address the challenges experienced with the NFSP implementation. These strategies were restructuring budgets, establishing security, fundraising, learner recruitment, fair procurement practices and utilisation of free periods. However, the researcher noted that these strategies were mostly aimed at keeping the particular schools going but not at the NFSP implementation sustenance and improvement.

For example, participant S05C said, “When our school experiences financial shortages, we do raise funds during casual days and use the little income that we collect to buy chalks and maintain machines”.

#### 5.4.9 **T06: Improving the NFSP implementation**

The study discovered areas that needed improvement in the NFSP implementation. These areas were development of strategic planning, SGB–capacity building, school financial year, monitoring NFSP implementation, criteria for no-fee school allocations, NFSP implementation reporting, school finance administration, deposit-period for allocated amounts, and school–project tendering procedures.

Participants emphasised that the success of NFSP implementation rests on checks and reviews of these areas. For example, S03T said, “I could improve the implementation

of this policy by conducting regular checking. By regular checking, I mean not only checking books but also what schools have done with the allocation”.

#### **5.4.10 Conclusion**

The study concluded that no-fee schools were unable to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo. The issues that contributed towards this inability were:

##### **5.4.10.1 NFSP implementation unreadiness**

The study discovered that the LDoE and school authorities did not use capacity building to prepare their no-fee schools for the NFSP implementation. They merely informed them about the NFSP implementation during awareness campaigns and meetings. These awareness campaigns and meetings did not lead to a smooth and successful NFSP implementation.

Cheng and Cheung (1995: 16) regard preparation for policy implementation as a key area for the success and smoothness of the implementation. Cheng and Cheung (1995: 17) add that preparation for educational policy implementation includes the readiness of the concerned parties, the readiness of resources, the timeframe of implementation, and the legal preparations.

No-fee schools studied were without resources and capacity for a smooth and successful NFSP implementation. Comments in this regard were:

- Principal S04P said, “We need to have capacity building, in particular to the SGBs. We must capacitate them”, and
- Treasurer said, “I wish the department could employ a specific person to deal with this money because this money is not given proper handling if the treasurer is a teacher. This money requires proper handling and utilisation.”

Thus the inability of the no-fee schools to address the needs of the poor, due to their unreadiness for the NFSP implementation, was prevalent in Limpopo.

#### **5.4.10.2 No-fee schools' lack of capacity for NFSP implementation**

The study concluded that the NFSP–implementing schools needed capacity in financial management and administration, budgeting, recording and reporting, school development and improvement plans, procurement procedures, and NFSP implementation monitoring. This implies that school managers and governors at no-fee schools in Limpopo need to be capacitated to handle these issues. Through this capacity building of their school managers and governors, no-fee schools would offset their inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo. In the study, capacity building entailed the acquisition of skills and resources by the no-fee schools, from the LDoE or their SGBs, for the successful and smooth NFSP implementation.

For example, Kenya achieved a successful NFSP implementation after conducting capacity-building programmes throughout the country, prior to the introduction and implementation of the NFSP, to cultivate a spirit of ownership of the NFSP implementation by all parents, the community, schools, districts and circuits (Brown 2006: 5). Their capacity-building program included clear communication strategies, clear policy on roles and responsibilities by stakeholders, political commitment and goodwill, program implementation partnership, cultivation of sustainability at all levels, and prudent financial and procurement management.

The studied no-fee schools lacked knowledge and skills in budgeting, financial and procurement management. In this regard, chairperson S07C said, “What we need as a school is to have a budget that would indicate how to utilise the no-fee school allocation”. Bisschoff and Mestry (2003: 122) attest that a school budget leads to the achievement of the objectives of a school.

However, the no-fee schools in Limpopo did not receive similar capacity building programs prior to the NFSP implementation. This shortcoming in policy implementation prevented them from addressing the needs of the poor

#### **5.4.10.3 Deficiency in enforcement of the NFSP implementation**

The study findings showed that supervision, inspection and monitoring did not accompany the NFSP implementation. For example, treasurer S03T said, “I could improve the implementation of this policy by conducting regular checking. By regular checking, I mean not only checking books but also what schools have done with the allocation”. This implied that no supervision, inspection or monitoring took place; no-fee schools may have misappropriated funds, thus enhancing no-fee schools’ inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo.

Nsapato (2007: 2) observes that deficiency in enforcement of the sub-Saharan no-fee schooling resulted in some schools and communities imposing other forms of fees on pupils, which caused those who could not afford such fees to be absent from school and eventually drop out.

Realising that there was no supervision, inspection and monitoring of the NFSP implementation, the Limpopo no-fee schools, used weekly fundraising activities on casual days to impose some fees on learners. Chairperson S05C said, “When our school experiences financial shortages, we do raise funds during casual days and use the income that we collect to buy chalks and maintain machines”. This practice made those learners who could not afford casual-day fees to be absent from school on casual days. Consequently, no-fee schools were unable to provide basic education to the poor in Limpopo on those days.

#### **5.4.10.4 NFSP implementation challenges**

The study concluded that no-fee schools were unable to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo due to challenges related to the NFSP implementation.

The no-fee schools in Limpopo experienced challenges with the NFSP implementation. These challenges were lack of capacity in financial management and administration, budgeting, small allocated amounts, reduced parent involvement, high quotations, burglary, incongruous school and provincial financial years, inconsistent deposit times for allocated amounts, and financial management prescripts.

For example, S07P said, “The financial year of the school does not run concurrently with that of the provincial or national department of education. One financial year [*school year*] begins in January and the other one [*provincial or national*] begins in April.”

The schools that were studied developed and applied strategies to combat those NFSP implementation challenges that were within their influence. These strategies were restructuring budgets, establishing security, fundraising, learner recruitment, fair procurement practices, and utilisation of free periods. For example, participant S05C said, “When our school experiences financial shortages, we do raise funds during casual days and use the little income that we collect to buy chalks and maintain machines”.

However, the researcher noted that these strategies were aimed at keeping the particular schools going but not at sustaining or improving the NFSP implementation. Thus these strategies were not enough to offset the negative impact of the NFSP.

## **5.5 STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The researcher drew up recommendations based on the above conclusion (5.4.10). These study recommendations are with regard to:

### **5.5.1 NFSP implementation unreadiness**

The study recommends that the LDoE conduct an intensive and extensive awareness campaign, as part of the NFSP implementation, to filter the intentions of the NFSP

down to parents, teachers, local communities, political constituencies and education administrators. This would spread awareness of the NFSP implementation beyond the internal school communities. The awareness campaign would also prepare communities for the NFSP implementation and ownership. Cheng and Cheung (1995: 16) regard preparation for policy implementation as a key area for the success and smoothness of the implementation.

### **5.5.2 No-fee schools incapacity for NFSP implementation**

The study recommends that the LDoE capacitate no-fee schools and their SGBs in NFSP implementation procedures, school financial management and administration, school development plans, and NFSP implementation monitoring. Participant S05P referred to the need for capacity building in this way: “The improvement calls for capacity building for our SGB. The SGB should actually understand their roles properly as far as the no-fee school is concerned. Truly speaking, in most cases the SGB that we have relies a lot on the office of the SMT, whereas that is the area of governance”.

Cheng and Cheung (1995: 16) maintain that capacity building is critical for the success and smoothness of the NFSP implementation by preparing and empowering schools for management and administration of school funds. For example, Brown (2006: 5) observed that capacity building assisted Kenya to succeed in their NFSP implementation.

### **5.5.3 Deficiency in enforcement of the NFSP implementation**

The study recommends that the LDoE monitor and enforce the NFSP implementation at no-fee schools to avoid the imposition of other forms of fees (e.g. fundraising) as strategies for coping with the NFSP implementation challenges. The imposition of other forms of fees has the potential to take the schooling system in Limpopo back to mandatory school fees. Nsapato (2007: 2) remarks that deficiency in monitoring and enforcement of the NFSP results in some schools and communities imposing other

forms of fees on pupils, which forces those learners who cannot afford them to be absent from school and drop out eventually.

To emphasise the importance of monitoring in NFSP implementation, S09T said, “We need departmental officials who will monitor how the no-fee school amount is being utilised, that is: what is going on, what we are doing and what have we done with the allocated money. These monitors must come to our school to check whether the no-fee school money has been used to buy what the school intended to, and secondly, to audit the claims”.

#### **5.5.4 NFSP implementation challenges**

The study recommended that the LDoE develop and establish coping strategies aimed at offsetting, addressing or eliminating the challenges related to the NFSP implementation. The coping strategies should include broad capacity building, monitoring, and stakeholder involvement.

Some sub-Saharan countries developed and applied strategies to address the challenges related to the NFSP implementation and succeeded in sustaining the no-fee schooling system (Fredriksen 2007: 14–15).

#### **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The recommendations are that future research should expose more areas in NFSP implementation to scientific research. The scientifically researched areas would serve as a knowledge base for successful NFSP implementation. Fredriksen (2007: 20) adds that knowledge sharing and learning from countries that have abolished school fees are important for the successful implementation of the NFSP in Limpopo. Consequently, the study recommends the following areas in NFSP implementation for future research:

- **The impact of the NFSP implementation on teaching-learning interaction,**
- **The impact of the NFSP implementation on retention and completion rates,**
- **The effect of the NFSP on the level of literacy,**
- **The link between the NFSP implementation and quality education,**
- **The link between access and quality education,**
- **The role of school governing bodies in the NFSP implementation,**
- **The role of parents in the NFSP implementation, and**
- **How the NFSP implementation affects learner enrolments of a particular age group.**

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

The purpose (intent or objective) of this case study was to explore no-fee schools' inability to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo. The study applied qualitative case study methodology to realise its purpose. The researcher used non-probability sampling to select ten primary schools from which ten principals, ten treasurers and ten SGB chairpersons were interviewed on NFSP implementation. Semi-structured interviews were triangulated with documentation to collect data. This ensured reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the study findings. The data was qualitatively analysed through inductive techniques. The study discovered that no-fee schools were unable to address the needs of the poor in Limpopo due to NFSP implementation unreadiness, lack of capacity for NFSP implementation, deficiency in enforcement of the NFSP implementation, and NFSP implementation challenges.

The study concluded with recommendations for empowering no-fee schools on addressing the needs of the poor in Limpopo and for topics on future research.

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7. ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A

7.1 Application for permission to conduct research

Box 11  
MAHWELERENG  
0626  
...../...../2008

To.: The Head of Department  
Limpopo Department of Education  
Private Bag X 9489  
**POLOKWANE**  
0700

Dear Head of Department,

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.

1. I am studying for a Masters Degree in Education (Educational Management) with the University of South Africa (UNISA) and wish to conduct an empirical research study on the *implementation of the no-fee school policy in selected primary schools in Limpopo.*
2. The objectives of this research are to:
  - 2.1 determine empirically how the selected primary schools in Limpopo implement the NFSP.
  - 2.2 determine the requirements for the NFSP implementation by selected primary schools in Limpopo,
  - 2.3 establish the benefits that selected primary schools gain from the NFSP implementation,
  - 2.4 determine the challenges that selected primary schools in Limpopo face with the implementation of NFSP,
  - 2.5 find strategies that selected primary schools in Limpopo use to address the challenges they face with the NFSP implementation, and
  - 2.6 determine ways of improving the NFSP implementation in selected primary schools in Limpopo.
3. Please give me permission to conduct this research at no-fee primary schools within your province by interviewing the principals, treasurers and chairpersons of school governing bodies of these schools.

Thank you,

.....  
SETOABA, MP (UNISA Student No. 283-869-9; Cell No. 082 7067 368)

ANNEXURE B

7.2 **Granted permission to conduct research**



**LIMPOPO**  
**PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Enquires: Armeri I, Telephone: 015 290 7951 e-mail: [Armeri@edu.limpopo.gov.za](mailto:Armeri@edu.limpopo.gov.za)

M.P. Setoaba  
P.O.Box 11  
Mahwelereng  
0626

Dear Researcher

**Request for Permission to Conduct Research**

1. Your letter of request bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that you are granted permission to conduct research. The title of your research project is "The implementation of the 'no-fee' school policy in selected primary schools in Limpopo."
3. The following conditions should be observed.
  - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with both the Circuit Offices and the schools concerning the conduct of the study. Care should be taken to disrupt the academic programme at the schools.
  - 3.3 The study should be conducted during the first three terms of the calendar year as schools would be preparing themselves for the final end of year examinations during the fourth term.
  - 3.4 The research is conducted in line with ethics in research. In particular, the principle of voluntary participation in this research should be respected.
  - 3.5 You share with the Department, the final product of your study upon completion of the research assignment.
4. You are expected to produce this letter at schools/offices where you will be conducting your research, as evidence that permission for this activity has been granted.
5. The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

  
.....  
Head of Department

26/06/2009  
Date

ANNEXURE C

**7.3 Informed consent letter**

Box 11  
**MAHWELERENG**  
0626  
...../...../2009

To: Interviewee (viz. Principal/Chairperson of the SGB/Treasurer)

Dear Interviewee,

**AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE INTERVIEWEE AND INTERVIEWER**

1. If you agree to participate in this research, this letter will serve as a binding agreement between us. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask for more clarification. This will help you to decide if you give me consent to interview you.
2. Please be informed that:
  - 2.1 I am studying for a Masters Degree in Education (Educational Management) with the University of South Africa (UNISA) and am conducting a research study on *The implementation of the no-fee school policy in selected primary schools in Limpopo.*
  - 2.2 The objectives of this research are:
    - 2.2.1 to determine empirically how the selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo implement the no-fee school policy (NFSP);
    - 2.2.2 to determine the requirements for the NFSP implementation by the selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo; and
    - 2.2.3 to determine ways of improving the NFSP implementation in the selected no-fee primary schools in Limpopo.
  - 2.3 The interview will be audiotaped and might be repeated.
  - 2.4 Before I interview you, it is important to remind you of your constitutional rights:
    - 2.4.1 of freedom of expression,
    - 2.4.2 to an environment that is not harmful to your health or well-being, and
    - 2.4.3 to privacy regarding your identity.

- 2.5 You are entitled to end your involvement or recall your consent to participate in this research at any time you wish but information already given up to the point of your termination of interviews may still be used by the researcher.
- 2.6 The interviewer will therefore respect your constitutional rights by, for example, keeping your participation anonymous and treating your responses to the interview questions as strictly confidential.
- 2.7 Your participation in this research is not remunerable.
- 2.8 If you agree to take part, you will be informed of a suitable date of the interview, which will take place at your school.

I do hope that the above information is interesting and acceptable to and that you will give me consent to interview you.

Thank you,

.....  
 SETOABA, MP (UNISA Student No. 283-869-9)  
 Cell No. 082 7067 368

*N.B* Now that you have read and understood the above given information you are at liberty to complete the following agreement. The researcher will give you the original of this agreement.

I,.....on this.....day of	
.....2009, having read and understood the contents of the above letter, do hereby give consent to MP SETOABA to interview me on the topic: The implementation of the no-fee school policy in selected primary schools in Limpopo.	
SIGNATURE:.....	DATE:.....

ANNEXURE D

7.4 Interview schedule

QUESTION TYPE	EXAMPLE/S
Open-ended main questions	How did your school community become aware that this is a no-free school?
	How does your school and its community benefit from the no-fee school amount?
	What resources does your school need in order to implement the NFSP?
	What capacity does your school have to manage and administer the implementation of the NSFP?
	What challenges does your school experience with the NFSP implementation?
	How does your school address the challenges that you experience with the NFSP implementation?
	How could you improve the NFSP implementation?
Detail-oriented probes	You are saying that your “SGB is monitoring the budget”. What do you mean by monitoring the budget?
	What other challenges do your school experience with the NFSP implementation?
	What other criteria should the government use to allocate no-fee school money to schools?
Elaboration probes	Tell me more about the use of the no-fee school amount
	Talk more about this ‘budget gap’ between the school year and national financial year
Clarification probes	I am having trouble understanding the problem of not receiving the allocated no-fee school amount in good time. Can you talk a more about that?
	I am sorry. I do not quite get it when you say learners from nearby schools seek admission at your school since your school became a no-fee school. Tell me again about that, would you?

ANNEXURE E

7.5 Classification of data from semi-structured interviews

<b>Data Segment Code (centre; bold) and Data Segments</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>Category Code and Category</b>	<b>Theme Code and Theme</b>
<b>A01</b> MEC called principals and chairpersons to come and inform us that there will be criteria that will be used to determine no-fee schools.	S02P, S02T S04P, S07P S08C, S09C S10P	—	<b>C01</b> <b>LDoE disseminating information on NFSP implementation</b>	<b>T01</b>
<b>A02</b> We convened parents meeting to inform the parents that our school will no longer charge the school fees because the DoE has declared it a no-fee school.	S01P, S01T S01C, S02P S02T, S02C S03P, S03T S03C, S04P S04T, S04C S05P, S05T S05C, S06P S06T, S06C S07P, S07T S07C, S08P S08T, S08C S09P, S09T S09C, S10P S10T, S10C	Internal community meetings	<b>C02</b>  <b>Schools disseminating information on NFSP implementation</b>	<b>NFSP implementation awareness</b>
<b>A03</b> We agreed and advised the SGB to go out and break the good news to the villagers at the headman's kraal.	S10P, S10T	External community meetings		
<b>A04</b> The benefit that we are sure of is that the department is going to give us money. Now with the no-fee school, we are sure that the department is going to give us this much and we are going to work on that.	S04P, S04T S06P, S09P S02C, S03C	Monetary gains	<b>C03</b> <b>School benefits</b>	<b>T02</b>

<p><b>A05</b></p> <p>Pupils were dropping out because of school fees. It (NFSP) helps us in reducing dropout rate.</p>	<p>S04P, S08P S10P</p>	<p>Decreased dropout rate</p>		
<p><b>A06</b></p> <p>They (parents) are able to send their children to the school and our learner enrolment has gone up.</p>	<p>S04T, S07T S10P</p>	<p>Increase in learner enrolment</p>		
<p><b>A07</b></p> <p>The no-fee has actually also assisted in improving learner attendance.</p>	<p>S01T, S05P S10T</p>	<p>Improved learner attendance</p>		<p><b>NFSP implementation benefits</b></p>
<p><b>A08</b></p> <p>I think the parents are gaining because their children are getting education, which is basic for them.</p>	<p>S04P, S05P S05C, S07T S10P</p>	<p>Access to basic education</p>	<p><b>C04</b></p> <p><b>Communal benefits</b></p>	
<p><b>A09</b></p> <p>The no-fee school allocation has relieved the parents from paying school fees.</p>	<p>S02P, S02T S09T</p>	<p>School-fee relief</p>		
<p><b>A10</b></p> <p>The no-fee school is a good thing that the department has done because at least by now we know each and every school has got something to run from, unlike previously when we dependent from the parents.</p>	<p>S01C, S04P</p>	<p>No-fee school a good thing</p>		
<p><b>A11</b></p> <p>This money requires proper handling and utilisation. It has to be used appropriately. This is the reason why I propose that the DoE should provide schools with financial administrators to deal with daily accounting issues.</p>	<p>S01T, S03P S04P</p>	<p>Financial administrators</p>	<p><b>C05</b></p> <p><b>Financial management and administration capacity</b></p>	<p><b>T03</b></p>
<p><b>A12</b></p> <p>We need to have the capacity building in particular to the SGBs. We must capacitate them.</p>	<p>S03P, S04P S07P, S09P S09C</p>	<p>Capable SGBs</p>		

<p><b>A13</b></p> <p>We need to identify the school needs, sit down with the SGB and draw what we call the school development plan in which the needs of the school will be prioritised.</p>	<p>S02T, S04P S04T, S05P S04C</p>	<p>—</p>	<p><b>CO6</b></p> <p><b>School development plans</b></p>	
<p><b>A14</b></p> <p>We need people who will monitor how the no-fee school amount is being utilised. That is, what is going on with the allocated money, what we are doing with it, and what have we done with it.</p>	<p>S09T</p>	<p>—</p>	<p><b>C07</b></p> <p><b>NFSP implementation monitoring</b></p>	
<p><b>A15</b></p> <p>The school must have functional and knowledgeable structures in place to run the finances. If we have all such structures, I think we may manage the no-fee school properly.</p>	<p>S01T, S03P S06C, S08T S07C</p>	<p>—</p>	<p><b>C08</b></p> <p><b>Financial structures</b></p>	
<p><b>A16</b></p> <p>We are able to buy equipment that we were unable to buy previously when parents were contributing the school fees.</p>	<p>S01P, S02T S03P, S03T S03C, S04P S07P, S07T S07C, S08P S09P, S10C</p>	<p>—</p>	<p><b>C09</b></p> <p><b>Acquiring resources</b></p>	<p><b>T04</b></p> <p><b>Utilisation of no-fee school amounts</b></p>
<p><b>A17</b></p> <p>We do not run out of money to, for example, pay for electricity. We do not have problems of paying for teachers when they attend workshops.</p>	<p>S02C, S03P S05P, S07C</p>	<p>—</p>	<p><b>C10</b></p> <p><b>Paying for services</b></p>	
<p><b>A18</b></p> <p>We are also capable of renovating our school buildings.</p>	<p>S01P, S02P S02C, S03T S05P, S06P S04C, S07T S06C, S07C S08C, S09C S10T</p>	<p>—</p>	<p><b>C11</b></p> <p><b>Developing physical structures</b></p>	

<p><b>A19</b></p> <p>We have made alarm system. We have made the security wire (<i>fence</i>) around the school. We have made the strong room.</p>	<p>S03T, S03T</p>	<p>—</p>	<p><b>C12</b></p> <p><b>Establishing security</b></p>	
<p><b>A20</b></p> <p>When we have minor manual labours, give it to the parent component and in we then pay them, something that assi them in their families.</p>	<p>S03T, S06P S07C, S10C</p>	<p>—</p>	<p><b>C13</b></p> <p><b>Creating employment</b></p>	
<p><b>A21</b></p> <p>We declared the school as the centre of community. We are able to help them because like we are having the photocopier machine where, if they want to fill in the forms for Id (<i>identity document</i>) applications, we are able to photocopy for them and fill up for them.</p>	<p>S04P</p>	<p>—</p>	<p><b>C14</b></p> <p><b>Offering services to community</b></p>	
<p><b>A22</b></p> <p>There are certain prescripts that you have to follow when you use the money. Like the fact that before you buy a particular equipment or stationery for the school, you have to have three quotations. There has to be a bid committee, such things, so in most of the schools you find out that this is not being done because schools have no capacity to deal with such technicalities.</p>	<p>S04T, S07P S08P, S09P S09T</p>	<p>Financial management and administration incapacity</p>	<p><b>C15</b></p> <p><b>School-centred challenges</b></p>	<p><b>T05</b></p>
<p><b>A23</b></p> <p>The challenge that we are having is that we are having a lower learner enrolment. This makes the money that we receive to be too little. The little amount that we are getting depending on the learner enrolment is not enough.</p>	<p>S02P, S02T S04P, S04C S05P, S09C S10P</p>	<p>Small allocated amounts</p>		<p><b>Challenges related to the NFSP implementation</b></p>
<p><b>A24</b></p> <p>They (<i>parents</i>) are no longer willing to support the fundraising. In meetings, at times, parents are not in large numbers.</p>	<p>S03C, S04P S06T, S07T</p>	<p>Reduced parent involvement</p>		

<p><b>A25</b></p> <p>When we hire parents, sometimes those who are in the SGB, for casual work, they overcharge the school, saying that it has received a lot of money from the DoE.</p>	<p>S03T, S09P S10P</p>	<p>High quotations</p>	<p><b>C16</b></p>	
<p><b>A26</b></p> <p>There are burglars in our community who scare and challenge us.</p>	<p>S03T, S10C</p>	<p>Burglary</p>	<p><b>Communal challenges</b></p>	
<p><b>A27</b></p> <p>The financial year of the school does not run concurrently with that of the provincial or national DoE. One financial year (<i>school year</i>) begins in January and the other one (<i>provincial year</i>) begins in April.</p>	<p>S04P, S07P S07C, S09C</p>	<p>Incongruous school and provincial financial years</p>		
<p><b>A28</b></p> <p>The only challenge that I see here is that the money is not given to schools at the same time throughout the years. Sometimes you get it in May. At other times, you get it in July. But, if the money comes in May or July, for example, we have a challenge of like five months' gap where the money is not there.</p>	<p>S03T, S05T S05C, S06P S07P</p>	<p>Inconsistent deposit times of allocated amounts</p>	<p><b>C17</b></p>	
<p><b>A29</b></p> <p>The challenge that we experience as the school is the financial management prescripts that tend to limit the utilisation of the no-fee school amount. No-fee school amounts are not supposed to be used for paying for educational excursions for learners.</p>	<p>S06C</p>	<p>Financial management prescripts</p>	<p><b>LDoE-inherent challenges</b></p>	
<p><b>A30</b></p> <p>We were able to restructure our budget to buy only important things.</p>	<p>S05C, S03T S08T</p>	<p>Restructuring budgets —</p>	<p><b>C18</b></p> <p><b>Addressing the NFSP implementation challenges</b></p>	
<p><b>A31</b></p> <p>We ensure that our budget allows the school to remain with a certain amount in the first three to four months of the following year.</p>	<p>S06P, S07C</p>	<p>—</p>		

<p><b>A32</b></p> <p>We have made the alarm system. We made security wire around the school. We made the strong room.</p>	<p>S01P, S03T S03C, S06C, S10C</p>	<p>Establishing security</p> <p>—</p>		
<p><b>A33</b></p> <p>We are not just waiting for the money from the DoE; somehow, we do raise funds to increase the money.</p>	<p>S03T, S05T S05C, S08P</p>	<p>Fundraising</p> <p>—</p>		
<p><b>A34</b></p> <p>We are trying to recruit more learners to our school so that our learner enrolment goes up. We introduce things, for example, educational excursions and activities that make our curriculum interesting that will make parents register their children with us.</p>	<p>S04P</p>	<p>Learner recruitment</p>		
<p><b>A35</b></p> <p>We practice fair adjudication processes to choose the best from the three quotations.</p>	<p>S09P</p>	<p>Fair procurement practices</p>		
<p><b>A36</b></p> <p>The SGBs have to develop strategic plans for the utilisation of the no-fee school allocation to consider those items that will benefit schools and learners now and in the future.</p>	<p>S04T</p>	<p>Strategic planning</p>		<p><b>T06</b></p> <p><b>Improving the NFSP implementation</b></p>
<p><b>A37</b></p> <p>The improvement calls for the capacity building for our SGB. That the SGB should actually understand their roles properly as far as the no-fee school is concerned. Truly speaking, in most cases the SGB that we have now, rely a lot on the office of the SMT whereas that is the area of governance.</p>	<p>S03P, S04P S05P, S06C S07C, S08P</p>	<p>SGB capacity building</p>	<p><b>C19</b></p>	
<p><b>A38</b></p> <p>I think the very first thing that needs to be done, is to align the schools' financial year with the provincial financial year so that the time that the money is deposited in the school is done at the beginning of the school's financial year to close gaps.</p>	<p>S04P, S06P S07P, S07C S09P</p>	<p>School financial years</p>	<p><b>Areas for improvement in the NFSP implementation</b></p>	

<p><b>A39</b></p> <p>The department must have monitoring tools, maybe on quarterly basis they have got ways of ensuring that people stick to their budgets and the public finances are utilised in a manner that is, you know, is responsible.</p>	<p>S03P, S03T S07T, S07C S09T</p>	<p>Monitoring NFSP implementation</p>		
<p><b>A40</b></p> <p>We suggest to the DoE not to use learner enrolments when allocating moneys to schools but allocate same amount of money to those schools that have the same poverty level. The no-fee school amount needs to cater for curriculum development and teacher development”.</p>	<p>S01T, S02P S02C, S04P S08C, S10P</p>	<p>Criteria for no-fee school allocations</p>		
<p><b>A41</b></p> <p>I will also suggest that the no-fee schools should give annual reports, on how they used this money, to the DoE. The DoE will then trace whether the no-fee schools are using their allocated money appropriately or not.</p>	<p>S10T</p>	<p>NFSP implementation reporting</p>		
<p><b>A42</b></p> <p>Whether a big or school, they (DoE) give us administration clerks so that they help us in how to manage those funds, and how to make proper fundraising with them.</p>	<p>S04P, S01T</p>	<p>School finance administration</p>		
<p><b>A43</b></p> <p>I think I can improve this policy by sending the money on the exact time. By the exact time, I mean before the schools close at the end of each year.</p>	<p>S01P, S03T S04P</p>	<p>Deposit period for no-fee school allocations</p>		
<p><b>A44</b></p> <p>We are appealing to the DoE to develop school project tendering procedures.</p>	<p>S10P</p>	<p>School project tendering procedures</p>		

- A01–A10: Data segments number 01–40.
- S01-S10: Primary Schools number 01–10
- S01P-S10P: Principals at S01-S10
- S01T-S10T: Treasurers at S01-S10
- S01C-S10C: SGB chairpersons at S01–10
- C01-C24: Category number 01-24
- T01-T07: Theme number 01-07