FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS’ CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by
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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Educationis

In the Faculty of Education at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

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I, REINHOLD JUSTIN GALLANT, declare that

FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS’ CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

is my own work, and all the resources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references in the bibliography, and that this dissertation or research project was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

SIGNATURE: ________________________________

DATE: ________________________________
ABSTRACT

This research was based on the question of how Foundation Phase teachers perceived and experienced their professional development. This study was done at a school in the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa. The school is situated in a developing community that has a low socio-economic status characterised by infrastructural challenges. The school is newly established and started the year 2012 with mostly newly qualified teachers.

In this study, the researcher wanted to know how the participants’ perceptions and experiences as teachers impact on their professional development. The review of relevant literature provided a conceptual framework for the study. This study explored the fact that a social constructivist theory is relevant for the professional development of foundation phase teachers. This theory is based on the fact that teachers construct their own knowledge and that more emphasis should be placed on theory within teachers’ practice.

A qualitative research approach was suitable for this study. The data for the study was obtained by using photovoice and focus group interviews. The most important theme that emerged from the data collection was that the physical environment of the school and the surrounding area played a major role in how the teachers experienced their development. Other themes that emerged from the study were the need for educational resources, teacher collaboration and leadership. The findings show that more emphasis should be placed on the professional development of Foundation Phase teachers.

Schools in poverty stricken areas of South Africa have an impact on how teachers experience their professional development. It has become clear that places of higher
education need to consider the contexts in which schools are situated, especially in poverty stricken areas. Foundation Phase teachers are a vital part of education and as such the training of teachers in this phase should develop around whole-person learning within a life-long learning framework.

**KEY WORDS:** foundation phase, higher education, identity, practice, professional development, social constructivist theory, teacher, whole-person learning
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- All my friends and colleagues who motivated and encouraged me throughout my studies.
- Last but not least, the Foundation Phase educators who took part in this study and who gave so readily of their time and experience.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Erica Paulina Gallant, a Foundation Phase teacher for 32 years and in solemn respect to my late father, Roland James Gallant. They instilled in me the value of education, dedication and a commitment to one’s work.
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<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCS</td>
<td>Centre for the Community School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuous Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHET</td>
<td>Department of Higher Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECED</td>
<td>Eastern Cape Education Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU SPSP</td>
<td>European Union's Sector Policy Support Programme Strengthening</td>
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<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>Foundation Phase Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td>General Motors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade R</td>
<td>Reception year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immuno Deficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOLT</td>
<td>Language of Learning and Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMMM</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMMU</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes-Based Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNCS</td>
<td>The Revised National Curriculum Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACE</td>
<td>South African Council for Educators</td>
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<td>SAIDE</td>
<td>South African Institute for Distance Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>School Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Teacher Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND, RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

“I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teacher for living well.”

Alexander the Great

1.1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Musset (2010) is of the opinion that the term professional development is frequently reserved for continuous professional development in schools. She views professional development as the body of systematic activities to prepare teachers for their job, including initial training, induction courses, in-service training, and continuous professional development within school settings. Professional development is thus defined as activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher.

Since learner outcomes depend greatly on teacher quality, governments, local politicians and school managers need to foster teachers’ continuous professional development in order to cope effectively with ongoing changes and improve the quality of education. Strengthening internal school conditions to promote teachers’ professional development is considered an important prerequisite for addressing a continuous stream of changes in their environments (e.g. demographic changes, large-scale educational innovations, socio-cultural renewal), the multidimensional restructuring demands to which they must respond, and the considerable external pressures arising from the tighter “output” controls introduced by accountability policies. In South Africa accountability policies for teachers are policies encapsulated in the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED) which refers to the professional development of school-based
educators (Department of Education, 2008). As part of the professional development of school-based educators the Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) for educators has developed since 2002. Raven (2005) refers to the support the South African Council for Educators (SACE) has given to the continuous professional development of educators. Raven (2005) further mentions in her report that the Professional Development Section of SACE has introduced the Professional Development Portfolio with a twofold purpose. Firstly, and foremost the professional development portfolio is intended to engage educators in a process of ongoing professional development that enhances teaching and learning processes. Secondly, the professional development portfolio provides educators with an opportunity of collating a range of evidence that reflects their ongoing professional development.

We are all interested in quality in education. The future of South Africa and the world depends on our children receiving the best possible instruction. Steyn (2005) highlights the fact that in order to address quality education, many global reform initiatives have focused on the quality of classroom teaching, more specifically on teachers, as the key to improving learner performance. The effectiveness of reform initiatives depends on the quality of teachers, and the professional development of teachers has consequently become a major focal point of such initiatives. Professional development is a vital need and can no longer be viewed as an event that occurs on a particular day of the academic year; rather it must be embedded in the daily work routine of teachers. Teachers’ professional development should become a way of being, and teachers should be at the heart of the process (Carl, 2009).

The professional development of teachers in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, where this study was situated, has over the years been affected by high levels of poverty, backlogs in
providing schools and inefficiency by the Eastern Cape Education Department (ECED). The South African Constitution guarantees children’s right to education, but this does not ensure the quality of that education. Despite the significant amount spent on school improvement in the Eastern Cape since 1994, the combination of profound inequality coupled with persistent ECED bureaucratic incompetence means that the vastly different levels of school resourcing that still prevail could actually worsen the social divide for the majority of learners. The education department needs to provide minimum essentials, especially for children from socioeconomic milieus, such as decent properly furnished classrooms, sufficient up-to-date textbooks for each learner and supplemental food (Hendricks, 2008).

The focus of this study is on the continuous professional development of Foundation Phase teachers who plays an important role in shaping the future nationally and internationally. Teachers in the Foundation Phase have many different roles to play and duties to fulfil. Foundation Phase teachers in South Africa are learning mediators, leaders, administrators, scholars and researchers who have to be positive to cope in every situation of a child’s life in supporting and developing his or her wholeness (Department of Education, 2003). Teachers are hardly ever trained for these diverse roles nor do they have the ability to address the diverse needs of all their learners. According to Swart, Pettipher, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Oswald, Ackerman and Prozesky (2000), research has revealed that mainstream educators are of the opinion that they do not possess adequate training, skills, time and support to ensure quality education. Kriegler (1996) supports the idea that teachers should be empowered to work within a collaborative problem-solving culture, forming dyads, groups and networks. Such support must include an understanding of the complexities of teaching.
This research was conducted within a specific educational environment, namely the Manyano Community Schools Project. Manyano means ‘coming together’ in isiXhosa and symbolises a coming together of all stakeholders within the teaching and learning environment. The Manyano Network of Community Schools is part of the Centre for the Community School (CCS) at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa. The Manyano Network of Community Schools is part of a growing number of schools who are boldly responding to the educational and social challenges we face in South Africa. The project’s aim is to involve the community and other education stakeholders in combating the effects of poverty on children and their families, and supporting their social and academic development. These schools are regarded as community schools, and have not only become beacons of hope for children, but also serve as an effective model for school improvement in South Africa. Schools have a critical role to play in the education process and should be supported to serve as centers of both student learning and community revitalization, in which the societal assets of creative and critical thinking, collective problem-solving, hard work, discipline, and tenacity are nurtured (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, 2010)

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The professional development of teachers, new and established, has become a vital part of how teaching and learning take place at schools. With a transformational and developing curriculum, schools need to look at sustainable practices and programmes to capacitate teachers. Mestry, Hendricks and Bisschof (2009) contend that teacher development programmes should focus on school improvement and the professional growth of teachers.
Schools in South Africa need to look at practices that will enhance and sustain the culture of teaching and learning. Schools are faced with rapid change, renewed policy implementation, demands for high standards, and calls for improving quality. Teachers are under pressure to improve their teaching skills through professional development. The National Development Plan 2030 of South Africa refers to the need to improve education on various levels (National Planning Commission, 2011). The document states that approximately 80% of our schools are underperforming which translates into 200 000 schools.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Many a time the spotlight of the development of schools is on the proviso of knowledge at the expense of an emphasis on the attainment of skills and the establishment of a climate that augments the opportunity to learn. This implies an environment that allows for implementation. The understanding of the need for development of teachers is influenced by its attitudes and commitment to the process. However, an academic understanding of the subject does not constitute a bona fide commitment to the process of development. A change in experiences and perceptions is important for significant development. This change is encouraged when we create platforms where all role players can express their fears, experiences, aspirations, opinions and knowledge. The best laid teaching plans may go askew if the overall milieu of the school is not supportive, encouraging and stimulating to the staff (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002: vii) (see Chapter 4.2.1).

I would like to reiterate that the significance of this study lies in its attempt to explore the experiences and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers’ professional development at the sample school. Teachers need to be developed into a competent, confident, critical and well-informed corps. Whether they are highly qualified or novice teachers, they should be supported by government structures and others to professionally develop themselves.
continuously and if that fails, they ought to know that they are fully capable of succeeding on their own.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

Continuous complaints from newly qualified teachers, school administrators and parents about the ill-preparedness of qualified Foundation Phase teachers for the reality of everyday practice in schools have motivated me to ask the following question: *How do Foundation Phase teachers experience and perceive teacher professional development?* Northfield and Gunstone (1997) propose that teachers need to focus on how to learn from experience and on how to build professional knowledge.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

In engaging with the literature, I became cognizant of the fact that, although there was evidence of studies conducted on the professional development of teachers in other provinces of South Africa, very little has been researched about this phenomenon in the Foundation Phase in the Eastern Cape (Mestry, Hendricks, & Bisschof, 2009).

Herselman and Hay (2002) state that one of the biggest concerns in South Africa and especially in the Eastern Cape is the fact that teachers with excessive numbers of learners in especially the Foundation Phase cannot create an environment conducive to teaching and learning. Most classrooms are not built to accommodate more than 30 children. With the present teacher-learner ratios (which are between 40 and 60), classrooms are cluttered without much space to move around. The Foundation Phase teacher, can hardly give quality time to each learner in a large classroom, let alone provide quality education. If South Africa is serious about enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in schools and
if schooling in the Eastern Cape is viewed as being of great importance in ensuring a quality of life its citizens, urgent steps have to be taken to ensure that the culture of teaching is restored and a source that will support what you are saying here. Management (on all levels) and teachers (both experienced and novice) will have to be exposed to quality assurance mechanisms, procedures, and practices that are generally accepted and non-negotiable, as this is one way for planned and systematic actions that will hopefully restore confidence in the school system as well as a culture of accountability. Support with literature otherwise it sounds like assumptions you are making.

This led me to focus on the Manyano Community Schools in the Eastern Cape. This study will aim to explore Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences and perceptions of professional development within this context.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of a literature review is to acquire an understanding of the topic. This process allows one to reflect on what already has been done, how it was researched and what the key issues are. The literature studied revealed the main theories in professional development of Foundation Phase teachers.

Teaching in the Foundation Phase incorporates what the teacher brings into the classroom from pre-service learning and on-the-job learning. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) state that professional development incorporates two related concepts, namely expanding theory and improving practice, which are explained as follows: In the first place, professional development is seen as a process, spanning an individual’s career, in terms of which the educator continues to develop the knowledge and skills required for effective professional practice. Secondly, it is the notion that knowledge acquisition and skills
development should be more directly related, to a greater degree than in the past, to the substantive problems faced by educators.

Professional development is geared towards on-the-job learning in key areas of classroom teaching and continuous professional development (CPD) should contribute towards preparing teachers for the challenges of classroom teaching. According to the Government Gazette (2007), CPD needs to be enabling and empowering for teachers to benefit from it. Successful engagement in CPD activities should lead to greater professional confidence, enhanced knowledge, better understanding and improved teaching and class management skills. Similarly, a report compiled by the Department of Education (2008) emphasises that CPD is aimed at creating a community of educators who are competent and dedicated to providing education of high quality, with high levels of performance.

Traditional professional development generally refers to educational researchers who share information via trainers in workshops. This knowledge for practice presumes a level of correctness about specific teaching practices based on conventional scientific methods that yield a commonly accepted degree of significance, validity, generalisability and intersubjectivity (Fitchman & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). Teachers need to invest in professional development that will empower them personally and professionally. Teachers must empower themselves but will contribute to the broad social agenda of education for future citizens (Turnbull, 2007).

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

I used qualitative research methods. I believe that we are shaped by a large extent by our experiences and social realities, thus there is no single reality (Merriam, in Babbie &
Mouton, 2001:72). Teachers each have a different role to play within their worlds, they share their experiences and perspectives with others and this adds up to their realities.

According to Mouton (2001:150), qualitative methods are highly recommended to gain understanding and insight into the life world of research participants. Teachers operate in an individualistic environment where very little opportunities are created to express the challenges and uncertainties they face in their professional development. By utilizing a qualitative approach, an attempt will be made to appreciate participants’ experiences and perceptions on professional development, because the complexities, opulence and diversity of their lives can only be captured by describing what really goes on in their everyday lives, incorporating the environment in which they operate, as well as their frame of reference.

Kumar (2008) states that a research design is the planning towards the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine significance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. It is the conceptual structure within which the research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data.

The design will be discussed under the following headings: paradigm, approach and strategy. The research design will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

1.7.1 Paradigm: Interpretivism

Filstead (1979) defines a paradigm as a set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organised study of that world. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that the paradigm selected guides the researcher in philosophical assumptions about the research and in the selection of tools,
instruments, participants and method used in the study. There are two competing paradigms that exist namely the positivist and interpretive paradigm. For the sake of this study I will be using the interpretivist paradigm.

Ponterotto (2005) states that the interpretivist (or constructivist) paradigm can be perceived as an alternative to the traditional or positivist paradigm. Interpretivism adheres to a relativist position that assumes multiple, apprehendable and equally valid realities. Interpretivism or constructivism hold that reality is constructed in the mind of the individual. Van Wynsberghe & Khan (2007) agree that interpretivism focuses on meaningful social action where an in-depth understanding of meaning is created in everyday life and the real-world.

1.7.2 Approach: Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people’s lives. The research in this study was aimed at exploring the lived experiences of Foundation Phase teachers and how this had an effect on their professional development.

According to Polkinhorne (2005) qualitative research is an umbrella term under which a variety of research methods that use languaged data are clustered. Qualitative research uses data that are based on the participants own categories of meaning and is useful for studying a limited number of cases in depth. It is useful for describing complex phenomena and provides understanding and description of people’s personal experiences of phenomena. Johnson & Christensen (2012) state that qualitative research can describe, in rich detail, phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts. Qualitative research is concerned with finding the answers to questions which begin with: why? how? in what way? The purpose of these questions is to obtain data which includes images,
sounds, words and numbers. When data are grouped together into patterns, they become information. When information is put to use or applied, it becomes knowledge (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

For this study the local situations, conditions and participants’ needs, helped participants construct their reality as teachers.

1.7.3 Strategy: Phenomenology

When conducting a phenomenological research study, a researcher attempts to understand how one or more individuals experience a phenomenon. The key element of a phenomenological research study is that the researcher attempts to understand how people experience a phenomenon from the person’s own perspective (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The researcher has to enter the inner world of each participant to understand his or her perspectives and experiences. This study is focused on the perceptions and experiences of Foundation Phase teachers and how this relates to their professional development.

Phenomenological research returns to participants’ experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions of their lived experiences. These descriptions then provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis to portray the essences of the experience. First the original data is comprised of ‘naive’ descriptions obtained through photovoice and participants narratives. Then the researcher describes the structure of the experience based on interpretation of the research participant’s story. The aim is to determine what the experience means for the people who have lived the experience (see Figure 2).
1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology according to Crotty (2003) is the strategy or plan of action behind the choice and use of particular methods. Methods are the specific techniques and procedures used to collect and analyse data. Guba & Lincoln (1994) state that methodology asks the question: how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever they believe can be known? Research methods may be defined as all those methods/techniques that are used for conducting the research. Polit & Hungler (2004) define methodology as a way of obtaining, organising and analysing data. Methodology in research can be considered to be the theory of correct scientific decisions.

Subsequently, the following sub-sections will address the methodology of this study, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

1.9 PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING

Freedman (2005) explains that the basic idea in sampling is to estimate within a known range from the part to the whole, in other words from the sample to the population. A sample must be chosen to fairly represent the population. When taking a sample from a population, it is important how the sample will be drawn as to represent the whole population.

According to Struwig and Stead (2010), purposeful sampling is a common sampling strategy which groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question. When using purposeful sampling, the sample size is often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation and it is most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection.
The population group for this study was the schools in the Manyano Community School’s Network based in Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa. My sample was Foundation Phase teachers at the Alfonso Arries Primary School in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth. Alfonso Arries is a newly established school, having opened its doors in January 2012. The participants will be teachers in the Foundation from Grade R – 3.

1.10 DATA GENERATION STRATEGIES

Consistent with a phenomenological approach I chose methods that would generate rich data for this study: visual methodology, photovoice and focus group interviews.

1.10.1 Visual methodology: Photovoice

Qualitative research approaches refer to any information that the researcher gathers that is not expressed in numbers. Qualitative data include information such as photographs, pictures, drawings, paintings, films, videotapes, words, music and sound tracks (Struwig & Stead, 2010).

Grushka (2009) states that visual methodology, as inquiry method, researches current social and cultural phenomena and draws on the skill of visuality critically to decode and encode meaning using images.

Photovoice is a process in which people – usually those with limited power due to poverty, language barriers, race, class, ethnicity, gender, culture, or other circumstances – use video and/or photo images capture aspects of their environment and experiences and share them with others. The pictures can then be used, usually with captions composed by the photographers, to bring the realities of the photographers’ lives home to the public and policy makers and to spur change (Rabinowitz, 2012).
The concept has existed for many years, but much of the theoretical background of current programs comes from the work of Caroline Wang. In 1992, Wang and Mary Ann Burris developed Photovoice based on a combination of Paulo Freire’s notion of “critical consciousness” (a deep understanding of the way the world works and how society, politics, and power relationships affect one’s own situation); feminist theory, which emphasizes the importance of voice; and documentary photography, which is often used to help bring about social change (Wang, 1999).

1.10.2 Focus group interviews

According to Morgan (1993) focus groups are a method of group interviewing in which the interaction between the facilitator and the participants, as well as the interaction between participants, serves to elicit information and insights in response to carefully designed questions. The dynamic nature of the questions asked by the facilitator and the group process produces a level of insight that is rarely derived from ‘unidirectional’ information collection devises such as observation, surveys and less interactional interview techniques. Krueger (1994) states that methods of recording and analyzing information gathered during focus groups and strategies for collecting unbiased information have helped focus group research to gain credibility as an accurate and useful source of information collection. Barbour (2007) states that focus group interviews have participatory approaches which have influenced and fueled important debates related to the reseacher and participants.

1.11 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The meaning of data analysis and interpretation has been elucidated in literature by many authors. The following examples could help to clarify these concepts.
Bogdan and Knopp-Biklen (2003) explain that data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that researchers accumulate to enable them to come up with findings. Data interpretation refers to developing ideas about research findings and relating them to literature and broader concerns and concepts. Data analysis was conducted in two phases (see Chapter 4.2):

- Phase one: Participants shared their photographs and added meaning to their images.
- Phase two: Included Poster presentation and a focus group interview.

1.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Establishing trustworthiness ensures the quality of the findings. It increases the confidence of the reader that the findings are worthy of attention (Law, Stewart, Letts, Pollock, Bosch, & Westmorland, 1998). Creswell (2005:252) states that throughout the process of data collection and analysis, researchers need to ensure that their findings and interpretations are accurate, in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research.

1.12.1 Validity

Validity is the strength of our conclusions, inferences or propositions. Three approaches to validity in qualitative research are validation as investigation, as communication, and as action (Kvale, 1989). Researchers rely upon experience and literature to address the issue of validity. In qualitative research validity has to do with description and explanation, and whether or not the given explanation fits a given description. Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest that validity is affected by the researcher’s perception of validity in the study and his/her choice of paradigm assumption.
1.12.2 Reliability

Reliability is the consistency of your measurement, or the degree to which an instrument measures the same way each time it is used under the same condition with the same subjects. In short, it is the repeatability of your measurement. Stenbacka (2001) view reliability as “generating understanding” in a qualitative approach to research. The term ‘Reliability’ is a concept used for testing or evaluating quantitative research, the idea is most often used in all kinds of research. The idea of testing in a qualitative paradigm is viewed as a way of information elicitation. Therefore most important test of any qualitative study is its quality. A good qualitative study can help to understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing.

1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was conducted keeping the essential ethical criteria in mind. According to (McKernan, 1996) any researcher must take note of the following ethical criteria:

- All those affected by the research study have a right to be informed, consulted and advised about the object of the inquiry.
- The researcher should not proceed unless permission has been obtained from those concerned.
- The researcher is responsible for the confidentiality of the data.
- Researchers are obliged to keep efficient records of the research and make these available to participants and authorities on demand.
- The researcher will be accountable to the school community who impact on the research.
- The researcher has a right to report the research fairly.
- The researcher must make the ethical contractual criteria known to all involved.
1.14 PROPOSED OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

In Chapter One the background to the study was introduced and the problem was stated. The objective with this report and the research design were discussed briefly.

Chapter Two dealt with the literature review and the necessary information about the topic is given in details. Different authors and writers were quoted expressing their views and opinions on the subject under discussion.

Chapter Three focused on how the researcher decided to conduct his research, how he chose the method of research, and detailed information on the gathering of data is provided in this chapter. The researcher used photovoice and focus group interviews collect data.

In Chapter Four the researcher analysed and interpreted the collected data. In doing so, the researcher ensured that any evidence and facts provided become the solution of the problem at hand. The data and evidence will hopefully provide answers to the research question in order to support the purpose of the research.

In Chapter Five the researcher summarises important issues, draws conclusions and provides a sound basis for the implications of the study. It is assumed that this would be a coherent research report as it responds to basic conventions by comprising of a title, introduction, theoretical framework, intentions and literature review, design methods, ethical considerations, conclusion and bibliography.

1.15 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter highlights the need to investigate the professional development of Foundation Phase teachers at a primary school. The aim of this study was to allow Foundation Phase teachers to interact; to explore their experiences and perceptions in their professional
development, as teachers needed to share their own experiences and successes in the classroom and beyond.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Children in the Foundation Phase ... need teachers who they get to know who they can relate to, who care for them and who can give them more than instruction.”

Professor Richard Van Der Ross

2.1 INTRODUCTION

At the heart of education lies the concept of teaching and learning. Teaching in its development is challenged by the theoretical foundations and the practical implications it faces in the 21st century. The theories that newly qualified teachers are subject to during their training years are soon “washed out” by their school experiences (Korthagen, 2010:98, Le Cornu, 2005). Participants in my study found themselves asking the question: “How do we apply the theories we have learned to the challenges we are facing in the classroom?” Many newly qualified teachers battle to survive in the classroom and implement what they had learnt during their professional preparation (Korthagen, 2010:98). This problem can be referred to as the theory-practice gap. In this review my question: “How do Foundation Phase teachers experience and perceive teacher professional development?” points to what teachers experience in schools as opposed to their training.

The effectiveness of teacher training is under the microscope, and researchers are looking at this problem from an insider’s perspective (Lewin, 2004). Korthagen (2010) refers to the need to use qualitative methods to obtain a description of the life of a teacher. Research into teacher’s experiences and perceptions within school environments has tried to ascribe meaning to phenomena and establishing these as valuable indicators for teacher
development. The need for teacher development is becoming an increasingly important concern for education authorities around the world. Marais and Meier (2004) & Department of Education (2008) state that in a South African context student teachers’ training should be geared towards enhancing their general educational background; this includes increasing their knowledge of the subject they are to teach, understanding the pedagogy of children, and learning and developing their practical skills and competencies (Hollins, 2011).

Marais and Meier (2004) and Department of Basic Education (2011) state that this is a major challenge in South Africa as we are seeking to prepare the next level of teachers that will bring about high standards in learner achievements. High expectations are placed on teachers to prepare learners for a changing society. Teachers are required to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to work effectively with all learners. Marais and Meier (2004) and Waghorn and Stevens (1996) further highlight the observable fact that teachers place the theory that they are taught and their practical experience in the classroom into different compartments.

Risk factors for novice teachers include the typical stressors encountered in the first year of teaching, such as the expectations and scope of the job; disparity between teacher preparation and expectations; isolation and lack of support; and an emerging gap between novice teachers’ vision of teaching and the realities of the job. To shield teachers from the effect of these risk factors, (Benard, 2003) is of the opinion that they need resources, time, professional development opportunities, materials, caring collegial relationships, high expectations on the part of school leaders, and opportunities for shared decision-making and planning. New teachers enhance their own resilience by fostering productive relationships with people who understand the trials and tribulations of teaching, which reinforce the value of what teachers, do, and who offer insight into the various options
available for dealing with a variety of teaching situations. Bobek (2002) cites the rigid system of schooling and the geographical isolation of schools as factors that could soon demoralise teachers. To this effect, the development of newly qualified teachers has become a key initiative, both nationally and internationally.

In this review, I will focus on the concept of early childhood development, the role and importance of teachers in the Foundation Phase, teacher education and training, the professional development of teachers, and how this relates to their continuous professional development. Although it is easy to find literature on the experiences and perceptions of novice teachers in the Foundation Phase of schooling in other countries such as the United States of America and Great Britain, these sources have very limited use in the South African school context.

2.2 THEORETICAL LENS OF THIS STUDY

In this study, I use the social constructivist theory of Vygotsky. According to Graves (2010), Richardson (2003) this theory is based on the three major tenets which can be applied to teacher education. The tenets are (1) knowledge is constructed by learners; (2) learning involves social interaction; and (3) learning is situated. As part of this theory, Falk (2009) refers to Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, which learners use to move from what is known to what is not known, guided by an expert-other. Mcmillan, Walsh, Gray, Hanna, Carville and McCracken (2012) challenge those involved in the training of teachers based in early childhood education with a model based on the social constructive pedagogy. McMillan (2008) states that a ‘reflective competence’ model of training is more consistent with the social constructivist model of children’s learning within early years pedagogy as espoused by Vygotsky (1981).
Warford (2011) applies this theory to professional development, which Mcmillan, Walsh, Gray, Hanna, Carville and McCracken (2012) state is relevant for early childhood professional development. We are, however reminded by Richardson (2003) that constructivism is a theory of learning and not of teaching. Warford (2011) outlines four stages within this ‘reflective competence’ model of training and continuous professional development.

2.2.1 Self-assistance

Self-assistance refers to critical reflection on one’s own experiences and beliefs about teaching and learning. Critical reflection involves analysing your own learning and teaching practices that may contribute to effective pedagogies within key components of an effective curriculum. These key components are understanding children, building partnerships, establishing flexible learning environments, creating contexts for learning and exploring what children learn. Ferraro (2000) adds that reflective practice is used at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching. Coaching and peer involvement are two aspects of reflective practice seen most often at the pre-service level. The primary benefit of reflective practice for in-service teachers is a deeper understanding of their own teaching style and ultimately, greater effectiveness as a teacher (Ferraro, 2000).

2.2.2 Teacher-assistance

Teacher-assistance is when teachers experience and respond to demonstrations of innovative teaching techniques in actual settings. Rogers (2003:12) identifies an innovation as “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption”. In the case of innovative teaching practices, they are defined as instructional or assessment methods that are different from traditional methods, such as
lectures and exams, which may be the norm. Often they are not brand new but rather are
new applications of existing approaches and appear novel to others because they have
not yet been widely adopted. These practices may be used at the level of an individual
course, a collection of courses, or an entire program or institution. Innovative teaching
practices are often tried in an effort to make one’s teaching more effective or to tackle an
instructional problem or challenge – both of these reasons connect to an overall desire to
improve students’ learning.

2.2.3 Internalisations

Internalisations is when teachers demonstrate their capacity to practice the skills they have
learned. Internalisation is the process of learning something so that it can be used as the
basis for production. Generally, internalization is the process of consolidating and
embedding one's own beliefs, attitudes, and values when it comes to moral behavior. The
accomplishment of this may involve the deliberate use of innovative teaching techniques
and management styles by teachers. What is needed is an approach that helps teachers
learn how to choose, apply, evaluate and further develop different teaching strategies -
depending on their practice, their learners, the contexts they are in, and the nature of the
subject they teach. (Tee & Lee, 2011)

2.2.4 Recurrence

Recurrence refers to teachers abandoning past practices in favour of innovative techniques.
The manner in which teachers acquire their knowledge and skills—be it through pre-
service teacher education programs, formal professional development courses, learning in
informal groups with colleagues, or self-study—is not distinguished in this model. Teachers
need to have or acquire teacher competencies and other related pedagogical knowledge and skills to implement sustainable teaching innovations. Important to note is that teacher professional development should not necessarily be thought of in terms of formal courses because informal learning and learning on the job with peers can be equally if not more powerful (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). Throughout this process the reflective tools of ‘dynamic assessment’ (Warford, 2011:255), such as journaling, role-taking and autobiographical narratives, are used to assist professional development.

Research suggests that newly qualified teachers bring their own set of beliefs, values, and attitudes — thought to be influenced by their personal backgrounds and experiences — to teacher education programmes. These beliefs, values and attitudes serve as filters for subsequent learning. Social constructivism is based on the principle that learning is social. The construction of knowledge is viewed as a highly interactive process, which is socially mediated or influenced by others in social interaction. The interactions that occur between newly qualified teachers involve some form of dialogue, which is considered to be a catalyst for knowledge acquisition. Knowledge is context-bound; it is embedded in and connected to the situation in which learning occurs (Graves, (2010), Ash & Levitt,( 2003), Lessing & De Witt, (2007). Knowledge is constructed not only by observable phenomena, but also by descriptions of people’s intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning making and self-understanding (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004).

This study focused on Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences and perceptions of their professional development; their own views on this issue will be enormously important. For my study, I needed to respect the fact that knowledge was derived from everyday concepts and meanings within a specific context. I needed to capture participants’ frames of references in their context and situated practices in order to understand their
experiences and perceptions in the Foundation Phase. At the beginning of my study, I endeavoured to use photovoice and focus-group interviews as a means to capture these phenomena. This supports the idea that social constructivism occurs when individuals construct knowledge in transaction with the environment, and that in the process, both the individual and the environment are changed (Ismat, 1998). Social constructivism focuses on individual learning or construction, but maintains that learning is socially influenced. Jaffer (2010) refers to Vygotsky, who views language and culture as social phenomena that shape individual knowledge construction. Since learning is a social process for Vygotsky, he emphasises the importance of dialogue and the role of language as a mediator and principal tool for thinking. Educators’ experiences allow them to socially construct their learning and development.

The main focus of this study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers and how these relate to their professional development. The Department of Education (2008) states that Foundation Phase education is a critical area of education in South Africa, focusing on early learning and underpinning the fundamental skills and competencies children need for life-long learning. As I reviewed the literature, it became clear that Foundation Phase teaching was part of a framework in education and as such I endeavoured to provide clarity on concepts related to this process.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF FOUNDATION PHASE EDUCATION

South Africa’s democratic government inherited a divided and unequal system of education. Under apartheid, South Africa had nineteen different educational departments, separated by race, geography and ideology. This education system prepared children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under apartheid. Curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa started
immediately after the elections in 1994 when the National Education and Training Forum initiated a process of syllabus revision and subject rationalisation (Department of Education, 2005).

Chisholm (2004) states that the main initiative since 1994 has been the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005. At the heart of Curriculum 2005 was a set of values linked to social justice, human rights, equity and development as well as a learner-centred approach to learning. The intention of OBE was to improve the quality of the learning experience through methods emphasising activity-based rather than rote learning. Curriculum 2005 was introduced in 1997, but it had barely been introduced when criticisms began to surface that the Curriculum was excessively complex and that OBE could only work in well-resourced schools with highly qualified teachers; poorly-qualified teachers were overwhelmed when faced with the demands to create their own curricula and resources. Curriculum 2005 was accordingly reviewed and revised to address these criticisms. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for schools from Grades R – 9 (Department of Education, 2002) builds on Curriculum 2005, but was only implemented from 2004. This document was written for teachers who have to develop their own Learning Programmes. To improve implementation, the National Curriculum Statement was amended, with the amendments coming into effect in January 2012. A single comprehensive Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document was developed for each subject to replace Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines in Grades R-12. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (January 2012) represents a policy statement for learning and teaching in South African schools applicable to public and independent schools (Department of Basic Education, 2011).
Green, Parker, Deacon and Hall (2011) highlight the increasing interest by the South African public in early childhood development. They state that learning opportunities in the formative years impact significantly on subsequent learning development. Early childhood development (ECD) refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programs for children from birth to nine years of age, with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child’s rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. In education, this approach was developed to provide appropriate interventions in all early learning but especially for those living in poverty (Education White Paper 5, 2001). The formal educational structure for those children during these developmental years is based in the Foundation Phase of schooling which is Grade R (Reception year) to Grade 3.

Foundation Phase education focuses on literacy, numeracy and life skills, which provide the building blocks upon which a solid foundation for learning can be built, and as such are the key determinants of a child’s success (Department of Education, 2008). Foundation Phase within the RNCS encompasses Grades R – 3. The focus in the foundation phase is on the primary skills, knowledge and values to ensure the development of further learning (Department of Education, 2002).

2.4 A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

The Oxford Dictionary (2002) defines a teacher as a person who teaches others, especially in a school. This definition of teachers is inadequate; it should reflect the dynamic and multi-dimensional function of such individuals. Hollins (2011) contends that a definition of teachers should include other attributes, such as patience, serving as role models, as well as understanding the changing dynamics in the world outside the classroom.
In South Africa, teachers’ roles and functions include being mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of Learning Programmes and materials, leaders, managers, administrators, scholars, researchers, lifelong learners, community members and citizens, assessors and Learning Area or Phase specialists (“Revised National Curriculum Statement, Grade R-9” DoE, 2002). Douglas (2005:17) cites Fullan (1993), who points out that teachers must deal with “poverty, especially among women and children, racism, drug abuse and horrendous social and personal problems”.

Wilmot (2004) states that South African education has undergone phenomenal changes since its transition to democracy in 1994. Teacher training has, like many aspects of our society undergone transformation. Central to this transformation is the development of critically reflective practitioners who have the capacity and will to act as agents of change in a democratic South Africa. Wilmot (2004) further mentions that state-initiated transformation imperatives, together with the enormous backlog of under qualified teachers trained during the apartheid era have resulted in an increase of in-service teacher training courses being offered by university education department.

Lessing and De Witt (2007), however state that these changes have not always been welcomed by teachers. Teachers have been exposed to rapid change, in terms of which they had to move from a traditional teaching approach to OBE. Many teachers in South Africa are not equipped to deal with these rapid changes in the education system. Lessing and De Witt (2007) point out that it has become necessary to help teachers update their knowledge and skills and to deal with changes in the education system.

The early learning foundations of a child direct all future learning, especially those in the Foundation Phase. We all entrust our children to the care and the instruction of teachers; yet in South African society; Foundation Phase teachers are afforded very little status.
There is currently a drive to improve childhood education by drawing top candidates to teacher-education programmes (Henning, 2011).

Since 1994, teachers in South Africa have been expected to prepare learners for a changing society. Teachers are trained to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will equip them to work effectively with all learners, regardless of their life experiences, gender, language backgrounds, race or socio-economic status (Marais & Meier, 2004). Steyn, Harris and Hartell (2011) point to the fact that there is a serious shortage of well-trained, qualified teachers for early childhood and Foundation Phases.

2.5 PARTNERSHIPS THAT STRENGTHEN FOUNDATION PHASE EDUCATION

Foundation Phase education in South Africa have since 1996 been supported by social partners, such as the European Union. The European Union’s Sector Policy Support Programme “Strengthening Foundation Phase Teacher Education” (EU SPSP FP), under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), consists of nine projects involving 16 universities throughout South Africa. The overall goal of the programme is to strengthen the capacity of the higher education system to provide more and better Foundation Phase teachers (SAIDE, 2012).

Social partner General Motors’ South Africa Foundation initiated a programme in the Foundation Phase at some primary schools in the Nelson Mandela Bay area. The Building Solid Foundation was initiated in response to the recognition that urgent work needed to be done in South African schools at Foundation Phase level to ensure that learners developed solid literacy and numeracy foundations to enable them to succeed at a higher level. This initiative dovetails with the National Department of Education’s Foundations for Learning Campaign, which has the primary focus of improving the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children. It also complements the Department of
Basic Education’s Action Plan to 2014: towards the realisation of Schooling 2025 outputs and related actions reference. The GM South Africa Foundation has partnered with the Port Elizabeth District Office Foundation Phase Curriculum Unit and the Port Elizabeth District Office Management, Governance and Development Unit to investigate the teaching and learning needs of Foundation Phase teachers and learners and to explore ways of addressing these (GM South Africa, 2011).

Other partners to the Foundation Phase are:

- PRAESA (The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa) has embarked on a nationwide Reading Initiative in collaboration with AVUSA Media and the DG Murray Trust. This initiative is called “Nal’ibali” which means “here is the story” in isiXhosa. Nal’ibali works with a range of partners in Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Limpopo, Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. They are inspiring, supporting and resourcing reading clubs; as well as offering a series of workshops to mentor individuals and organisations on various aspects of storytelling, reading and writing with children. The Foundation is currently running a club in the Missionvale Care Centre in Missionvale situated in Nelson Mandela Bay and has over 100 children attending sessions every week (GM South Africa, 2011).

- Philani, a community-based non-governmental organization (NGO) committed to the protection of the rights of every child to proper nutrition and healthcare in communities where malnourished children and destitute mothers are most vulnerable (Nal’ibali, 2013).

- The Centre for Education Rights and Transformation (CERT), seeks to make a positive contribution to knowledge creation and social transformation. It combines academic research with action learning, fostering educational change at the
grassroots. The Centre’s work is anchored in the ideals of social, political and economic democracy; racial, class, gender and language equity; diversity in knowledge creation, discovery and dissemination. It defends education and human rights and promotes transformative teaching and learning (Nal'ibali, 2013).

Education in South Africa is complex, as several challenges are encountered across contexts by both teachers and learners. The poor performance of learners in South Africa can often be attributed to the fact that 40% of children in South Africa come from extremely impoverished backgrounds with limited access to learner support materials in their homes (Wium, 2011). Corporate and community-based partnerships give teachers and learners access to learning experiences that strengthens teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase.

2.6 UNDERSTANDING TEACHING, TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHER IDENTITY

2.6.1 Teaching

The concept of teaching is the core task that teachers must execute to help pupils learn. Professional classroom teaching is specialised work, which includes managing discussions in and outside the classroom, probing students’ answers, listening, explaining and interpreting, planning as well as creating and maintaining an orderly and supportive environment for learning (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009). Darling-Hammond (2006) highlights three distinct levels of development in teaching. These levels can be illustrated as follows:
TABLE 1  Adapted from Darling-Hammond (2006:5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching as a Profession</th>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of learners &amp; their development in social contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of subject matter &amp; Curriculum goals</td>
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<td>Knowledge of teaching</td>
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Darling-Hammond (2006) states that teaching is primarily in the service of students. Teaching, she states, entails more than running from one lesson to another, but incorporates subject matter goals, knowledge of learning, as well as an appreciation for children’s development and needs.

Douglas (2005) cites Page and Thomas (1977), who portray teaching as one of the most prestigious occupations, founded on systematic knowledge, lengthy academic and practical training, high autonomy and a code of ethics. Ethics for teachers were more implicit than formalised, and teachers possessed far greater autonomy then in what and how they taught, than they do today. In fact, teacher autonomy was expected, but teachers were also expected to possess a sense of vocation similar to that of priests, nurses, social workers or other occupations regarded as professional, but characterised by low salaries, moderate status and high expectations of service.
Villegas-Reimers (2003) links the professional standing of teachers to the knowledge base required to fulfil their role, which encompasses content knowledge, as well as pedagogical know-how. It is generally accepted today that content knowledge alone is insufficient for effective teaching; an overemphasis on technique and classroom management at the expense of content could equally impoverish teaching. Teachers require balanced training in content and teaching methods.

2.6.2 Teacher Education

Teacher education is primarily focused on preparing the teacher to meet the demands of a classroom filled with diverse learners. Teachers need to build a repertoire of knowledge, attitudes, mindsets, belief systems and skills for success throughout their teaching career. Teachers develop the cognitive and analytic skills to continue learning through processes of improving their work. Teaching is a complex profession and demands much more than simply learning or knowing a particular content or subject matter (Milner, 2009).

Hollins (2011) agrees that teaching is a complex and multidimensional process that requires deep knowledge and understanding in a wide range of areas. Teachers need to synthesise, integrate and apply their knowledge in different situations, under varying conditions, and with a wide diversity of learners. Hollins (2011) states that an holistic approach is needed, which will integrate academic knowledge of theory, pedagogy, and curriculum. These elements need to be focused in authentic contexts, directed observation and guided practice.

Darling-Hammond (2006) states that a new approach is needed in terms of how educator trainers offer the curriculum for pre-service teachers. Consequently, it has become essential for universities and teaching colleges to transform the kinds of settings in which pre-service teachers learn to teach and later become teachers. Darling-Hammond (2006)
further states that places for teacher education and training need to design programmes that help prospective teachers to understand the complexities of teaching and learning.

2.6.3 Teacher Identity

Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) define teacher identity as the personal and cultural characteristics and experiences of teachers. They cite Goodson and Cole (1994), who state that teachers are persons and professionals whose lives and work are influenced and made meaningful by factors and conditions inside and outside the classroom and school. Vygotsky (1978) frames identity as a situated, dynamic process of individuals developing conceptions of themselves as rational beings over time. Teachers are diverse men and women with varied experiences that brought them to teaching. Teachers have their own priority needs, desires and expectations. The psychologist Erikson (1968) focused on identity formation in social contexts and on the stages people pass through: owing to biological and psychological maturation, each stage has its own characteristics regarding the individual’s interaction with his or her environment. Teacher identity is a useful research frame, because it treats teachers as whole persons in and across social contexts who continually reconstruct their views of themselves in relation to others, workplace characteristics, professional purposes, and cultures of teaching reference. It is also a pedagogical tool that can be used by teacher educators and professional development specialists to make visible various holistic, situated framings of teacher development in practice (Smit & Fritz, 2008; Le Cornu, 2005). Recent educational research reminds us that teaching is not merely a cognitive or technical procedure but a complex, personal, social, often elusive, set of embedded processes and practices that concern the whole person. Many researchers emphasise critical examinations of race, culture, power and history in teacher education. Aligned with these perspectives and
practices, teacher identity as analytic frame draws attention to the holistic, dynamic, situated nature of teacher development (Olsen, 2008; DoE, 2011).

2.7 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

The professional development of teachers refers to the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically. It includes formal experiences such as workshops, meetings and mentoring, but also informal experiences such as enriching one’s knowledge through reading and viewing educational material (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Shawer (2010) agrees that the professional development of teachers is the ongoing improvement of professional knowledge and skills during one’s career. It includes all types of professional learning undertaken by teachers beyond the point of initial training.

The professional development of teachers includes all the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career that is designed to enhance their practice. Any professional development of teachers should help develop the intellectual and emotional wellbeing of any teacher in order to maintain a high quality of teaching and learning in schools (Day & Sachs, 2004).

Bolam and McMahon (2004) points to the changes that teachers undergo during their development. These levels can be presented as follows:
Steyn (2005) and Mestry, Hendricks and Bisschoff (2009) agree that professional development is seen as a process, spanning an individual’s career, in terms of which teachers continue to develop the knowledge and skills required for effective professional practice. It is the notion that knowledge acquisition and skills development should be more directly related, to a greater degree than in the past, to the substantive problems faced by teachers.

Dissatisfaction with conventional approaches to professional development and the realisation that teacher learning is central to any serious efforts to redefine teaching, professionalise teachers, and transform schools have led to new images and forms of professional development. The professional development of teachers should be built into the ongoing work of teaching and relate to teachers’ questions and concerns (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; DoE, 2005).
Professional development as a phenomenon can be grounded in the developmental theory of Vygotsky (1978), which is “an attempt to better understand the mechanism underlying teacher development”. There are several key concepts in Vygotsky’s theories of development that are relevant to professional development practices. The social origins of higher mental functions are regarded as the most fundamental concept in Vygotsky’s theories. Higher mental functions are formed via social interactions and are ultimately internalised by the individual. Conceptual growth does not take place in isolation, but comes from sharing various perspectives and the simultaneous changing of internal representations as a response to those perspectives, as well as through collective experience (Steyn, 2010, McMillan, Walsh, Gray, Hanna, Carville & McCracken, 2012; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999).

2.8 THEORY VERSUS PRACTICE DEBATE

Korthagen (2011) and Schoonmaker (2002) state that traditional teacher education is based on a training model in terms of which the university provides the theory, methods and skills. Schools, on the other hand, provide the setting in which that knowledge is practised. It can therefore be understood that universities invent new knowledge in the form of theory, and that practical life goes on elsewhere. It has become clear that simply transmitting important pedagogical knowledge to teachers does not really work. Milner (2009) agrees that an academic degree is insufficient for the complex work of teaching because teaching requires more than learning or knowing theory. Loewenberg Ball and Forzani (2009) highlight that the special knowledge, skill and orientations that underlie and enable the work of teaching are not simply the by-products of theory acquired during teacher training.
Teacher education programs in South Africa have undergone reform based on what teachers actually do in the classroom. There has been a significant shift from a focus on what teachers know and believe to a greater focus on what teachers do (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009; Graves, 2010). To this extent, the practical component of teacher training in South Africa is done by the university-based tutor, in collaboration with the school-based mentor teacher during the teaching practice block (Wilmot, 2004).

In one study, the debate between theory and practice in South Africa has drawn some positive and negative conclusions during the teaching practice block of student teachers. Marais and Meier (2004) confirm in their study that student experiences of educational practice in schools largely relate to the theoretical foundations they have learned. The knowledge and skills, such as teaching methods and how to create a stimulating classroom can be traced back to the contents of the theories to which they were exposed to. There were however some who could not relate what they have learned as theory to the teaching practice they had learned in the schools.

Fichtman Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008:3) propose that knowledge for practice or theory is often reflected in the traditional professional development efforts by teacher trainers. They state that knowledge for practice or theory presumes a level of correctness about specific teaching practices, based on conventional scientific methods. This approach, however, does not assist teachers in understanding and addressing the dilemmas that emerge as they implement new practices within their classrooms. Bolam and McMahon (2004) ad that in addition to this approach trainers involved with the professional development of teachers must also cultivate knowledge in practice. In support, McMillan, Walsh, Gray, Hanna, Carville, & McCracken (2012:396) state that many writers in the field of early years education and care have turned away from an 'external
recognition’ approach to the concept of professionalism in favour of an alternative ‘internalised’ approach.

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I showed that the concept of Foundation Phase teachers is part of a framework within early childhood development. I explored the different concepts related to this phase and framework and placed this review in terms of the professional development Foundation Phase teachers experience and perceive through a model that is based on social constructivism. In the next chapter, the research methodology used in this study will be discussed.
3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will describe my research design and methodology. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smith (2004) state that a theoretical framework is a constant process of reflection and consideration of the bigger picture, as well as the structure of the entire research enterprise. Mouton (2001) views a research design as a plan or blueprint of how a researcher intends conducting the research.

The research design will be discussed under the following headings: paradigm, approach and strategy. This will be followed by my methodology in terms of which my study proceeded. I will describe the research context and the participants of my study. The data collection methods will be described and the ethical actions will be explained.

3.2 PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVISM

A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimates or principles. It represents a world view that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world”, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A paradigm is therefore a comprehensive belief system, world view or framework that guides research and practice in a field. Today, in the social sciences, there are several competing paradigms (Willis, 2007). The two dominant
paradigms that underlie social science research is the positivist paradigm and the interpretive paradigm. The paradigm that underlies qualitative research and that inform my study, is the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm places emphasis on experience and interpretation. The interpretive paradigm focuses on the meaning and interpretations that we give to behaviour, events or objects (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smith, 2004). The interpretive paradigm seeks to produce a descriptive analysis that emphasizes a deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena. These social phenomena can be understood in terms of the meanings that people assign to them. This research focused on individual participants’ experience and perceptions of their professional development, as experienced in their day-to-day environment. This was done from their unique contexts and backgrounds. Interpretivism highlights the inherent subjectivity of humans, both as study participants and researchers (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011).

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to explore Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences and perceptions of their own professional development. As the researcher, I interacted with specific educators at the school that formed part of my study, and in so doing, I endeavoured to interpret how these educators gave meaning to their experiences and perceptions of professional development. A researcher working in this paradigm wants to establish what people are perceiving and experiencing, while taking into account the conditions in which the people being studied, live (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). In doing this, the researcher confronts the social world through questions about this world. I did this in order to discover relations between categories, by formulating propositions about these relations, by organising these propositions into analytical schemes, and by substantiating the questions, data, relations, propositions and analysis through a renewed examination of the social world (Goodman, 1992).
The participants were requested to narrate how they perceived and experienced teacher professional development within the Foundation Phase. Consequently, these narrations shed light on the processes through which their sense-making took place. The narrations also provided insight into the various perceptions and experiences of participants. However, as stipulated by the key research question, the task was to explore teachers' experiences and perceptions of professional development.

3.3 APPROACH: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This study made use of qualitative research in an attempt to explore Foundation Phase teachers' experiences and perceptions in their own professional development. The motivation for this choice was underpinned by the definitions and elements of qualitative research found in literature.

According to Struwig and Stead (2010) qualitative research can be viewed as interdisciplinary, multi-paradigmatic and multi-method. Qualitative research employs research methods such as participant observation, archival source analysis, interviews, focus groups, and content analysis. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) agree that qualitative research is a broad umbrella term that covers a wide range of techniques and philosophies. They also point to methods such as visual methods and life histories or biographies. Qualitative research, however, involves much more than just the application of qualitative methods; it allows the researcher to identify issues from the perspective of participants and understand the meanings and interpretations that they give to behaviour, events or objects. In this regard, Golafshani (2003) points to a constructivist paradigm in qualitative research, which views knowledge as socially constructed and may change, depending on the circumstances. Golafshani (2003:603) cites Crotty (1998), who defines constructivism from a social perspective as "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all
meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context”.

Several writers have identified what they consider to be the prominent characteristics of qualitative, or naturalistic, research. The following represents a synthesis of the authors: Bogdan and Knopp-Biklen (2003); Guba and Lincoln (1994); Patton (2001) and Punch (2009). Qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a ‘field’ or life situation. Qualitative research uses the natural setting as the source of data. The school, newly established became the natural setting for this research. The school became a hive of activity to ensure the establishment of new grades and teachers at the school. The researcher attempts to observe, describe and interpret settings as they are. Using a phenomenological strategy for my study I attempted to describe and interpret the experiences and perceptions of teachers. The researcher’s role is to gain a ‘holistic’ overview of the context under study: its logic, its arrangements, and its explicit and implicit rules. The researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors ‘from the inside’, through a process of deep attentiveness, empathetic understanding, and of suspending or ‘bracketing’ preconceptions about the topics under discussion.

The aim of this study was to identify how teachers’ experiences and perceptions play a role in their continuous professional development. Qualitative research has an interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them and the interpretations of those meanings by the researcher. The researcher may isolate certain themes and expressions that can be reviewed with informants, but that should be maintained in their original forms throughout the study. A main task is to explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations.
Qualitative research has an emergent (as opposed to predetermined) design, and researchers focus on this emerging process, as well as the outcomes or product of the research. Qualitative research is judged using special criteria for trustworthiness. During this study concepts such as validity and reliability were used to ensure that the process and findings of the research was trustworthy.

Our interpretations of the world construct our reality and are shaped by events, encounters and our experiences therein. Teachers have a different role to play within their worlds; they share experiences and perspectives with others, and this all adds up to their realities.

### 3.4 STRATEGY: PHENOMENOLOGY

This study focused on Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences and perceptions of their professional development; subsequently, their own views were enormously important. From the following definitions of what a phenomenological study entails, it became clear that this strategy would be best suited for this study. De Vos, Strydom and Delport (2005) state that the product of a phenomenological study is a description of the essence of the experience being studied. Leedy and Omrod (2003) affirm that a phenomenological study attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) are of the opinion that in a phenomenological study, subjectivity is paramount, as the researcher deals with how social objects are made meaningful. In addition, O’Leary (2004) sees phenomenology as premised in a world that is firstly, constructed; meaning that people are creative agents in building a social world and, secondly, intersubjectivity, in that we experience the world with and through others. Groenewald (2004) states that the operative word in phenomenological research is ‘describe’. The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but
remaining true to the facts. Groenewald (2004:5) cites Welman and Kruger (1999) “the phenomenologist are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved”.

Based on the definitions given above, the use of a phenomenology research strategy for this investigation was deemed appropriate, as it allowed me as the researcher to play a subjective role, whilst experiencing the natural setting of the participants with them and also through them.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Schwandt (2007), methodology is the theory of how an inquiry should proceed. It involves an analysis of assumptions, principles and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (which in turn governs the use of particular methods). In addition, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) maintain that the use of qualitative methods will be heavily influenced by the aims of the research and the specific questions that need to be answered. Likewise, De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2002:120) summarise research methodology as including “information on the population and the sample of the study, giving a description of the specific techniques to be employed, the specific measuring instruments to be utilized and the specific series of activities to be conducted in making measure and a discussion on validity and reliability, whilst also detailing the ethical considerations employed during the investigation”.

Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) state that a research design explains the qualitative approach being used and why the researcher chose it to investigate the problem. Therefore, it is evident that whilst the research design explains the qualitative approach used, the methodology entails the methods used in collecting evidence during the
investigation and the steps followed to analyse the data collected in order to present the research findings.

When we talk of research methodology we not only talk of the research methods, but also refer to the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and explain why we are using a particular method or technique so that research results are capable of being evaluated, either by the researcher himself or by others. The following sub-sections will address the methodology followed in this study.

3.5.1 Purposeful Sampling

In qualitative research, only a sample (that is, a subset) of a population is selected for any given study. According to Struwig and Stead (2010), the study’s research objectives and the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity) determine which and how many people to select. The population for this study was a school in the Manyano Community School’s Network, based in Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa. This study was conducted at a newly established primary school, which opened its doors in 2012. The school was situated in the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay in the Eastern Cape. The medium of instruction was English. A considerable number of learners (90%) were isiXhosa speaking, with the rest Afrikaans speaking. The demographics of the learners were also reflected in the teacher population, with 24 out of the 26 teachers isiXhosa-speaking; the remaining two were Afrikaans speaking. The school opened its doors to Grade R-7 and had about 791 learners at the time of this study. There were 11 teachers in Foundation Phase, comprising eight newly qualified and three experienced teachers. The newly qualified teachers had undergone an induction workshop in December 2011, of which I was part of as an observer. The school has a semi-permanent structure and catered for learners from multicultural backgrounds within a working class/poor
community. The school also catered for learners from neighbouring informal settlements, which were poorly developed.

I chose to conduct the research at this school, as my research was aimed at the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers and how they related this to their professional development. My sample was therefore Foundation Phase teachers at the Alfonso Arries Primary School in the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay. The participants were teachers in the Foundation Phase, from Grade R – 3. For this reason, I used purposeful sampling, which groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question (Struwig & Stead, 2010). When using purposeful sampling, the sample size is often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation and it is most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection. The main indicator of sample size in qualitative research is often the point at which redundancy, or theoretical saturation of the data, is achieved. The researcher should indicate how and when the decision was reached that there was sufficient depth of information and redundancy of data to meet the purposes of the study. The sampling process should be flexible, evolving as the study progresses, until the point of redundancy in emerging themes is reached (Law, Stewart, Letts, Pollock, Bosch & Westmorland, 1998).

The Foundation Phase teachers in my study were mostly newly qualified, while some had approximately, 20 years experience. The fundamental question in this research evolved around the professional development of Foundation Phase teachers and how their experiences and perceptions has an influence on this phenomena.
3.6 DATA GENERATION STRATEGIES

Data in this study was produced through photovoice and focus group interviews. I will use qualitative research in this study and employed data generating methods consistent with the qualitative research approach.

3.6.1 Visual methodology: Photovoice

Qualitative methods are directly connected with development in the field of text-interpretation. It is only recently that this methodological status has been given to pictures. Visual methodologies have become relevant for empirical research in social sciences (Bohnsack, 2008).

According to Rose (2007), the construction of scientific knowledge about the world has become increasingly based on images rather than on written texts. She further states that there is a move from examining existing images to creating and analysing new images that reflect our cultural experiences. Researchers are increasingly using the analytical power of visual materials when they are produced as part of a research project.

As the researcher, I used qualitative research in this study. I used data collection methods consistent with the qualitative research approach such as photovoice. Wang and Burris (1997) state that photovoice is a process through which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people, to enable them to act as recorders and potential catalysts for change in their own communities. One of the goals of photovoice during this research was to achieve positive change in their own communities. However, this can be viewed as a process that takes time to achieve.
- **Educator Female 1 (EF1)**

  A Grade 1 teacher, newly qualified and referred to as Educator Female 1, identified with the socio-economic condition of the schooling community portrayed during the photovoice process. “I soon realized to adapt my themes in my lessons to allow my learners to grasp the nature of their circumstances.”

Photovoice uses the immediacy of the visual image to furnish evidence and to promote an effective, participatory means of sharing expertise and knowledge. Poster photograph presentation clearly and effectively communicates the results of the research in a format that will stimulate interaction and discussion. Participants’ discussions of their photographs provide narratives of their lived experiences.

- **Educator Male 1 (EM1)**

  A Grade 2 teacher, referred to as Educator Male 2, responded as follows: “At first I thought this would be an easy exercise, however I was compelled to think critically about each photograph I took and why I took it. I soon realized the responsibility to capture photographs that represent the schooling community in which I work.”

Feedback at a poster presentation often leads to new and better ideas for additional research. Methods that typically represent posters include bullet points, figures, photographs and diagrams that help explain one’s research (Shelledy, 2004). This research focused on participants’ exposure, increased awareness of participant experiences and perceptions, engagement and social change.
3.6.1.1 Phase One

The first phase of participants’ exposure refers to strategies to capture the attention of participants regarding photovoice.

Stages 1 included strategies such as promotional posters and invitations sent via email to the participants. The participants were informed of the time and the place to view the work. Promotional posters of the participants’ images gave them an understanding of their world through photographs. Bohnsack (2008) refers to pictures or images for practical action, their quality and capacity to provide orientation for our action and our everyday practice.

Stage 2 in the process involved increase awareness of participants regarding issues presented by their photovoice. The photographs and captions provided participants with insight into their perceptions and experiences. This process contextualized the photographs taken by participants. It gave participants understanding of how their photographs fit into the larger set of circumstances. In photovoice, contextualising takes place as photovoice participants tell stories about the photographs and discuss what the photographs mean (Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock & Havelock, 2009).

The third stage of engagement involved impacting members of the sample on a deeper level, beyond having only superficial awareness of their experiences and perceptions. Hurworth (2003) refers to the three goals of photovoice, namely:

- enable people to record and reflect their community’s (school) strengths and concerns;
- promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs;
- reach policy makers.
Participants highlighted the following strengths and weaknesses/concerns within the school system, as recorded in the following table:

**TABLE 2  Strengths and weaknesses/concerns as highlighted by participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses/Concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity in challenging conditions.</td>
<td>Underdeveloped infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvisation and innovation.</td>
<td>Lack of educational resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of growing community.</td>
<td>Diversity in community creates tension (racial, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from all role players.</td>
<td>A lack of vocational training in community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative teaching community.</td>
<td>Conditions for teachers can become extreme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong school leadership.</td>
<td>Minimal support from Educational officials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last stage involved taking action in the school community in response to the experiences and perceptions that were identified.

- **Educator Female 3 (EF3)**

  A Grade R teacher, referred to as Educator Female 3, suggested the following action: “The technique of photovoice has given me a tool to highlight the conditions under which learners have to be educated. This includes their living conditions and the challenges they may face every day. Inviting the district office, the social work department and other private institutions concerned with education to view such conditions will bring about awareness and hopefully be a catalyst for change in this schooling community.”
Pre-Group preparation

A good accessible space was identified in which everyone felt comfortable. Three persons facilitated the process; myself as the researcher, and two trained facilitators who understood the philosophy of photovoice, participants chosen for the research, consent forms, process forms and explanatory handouts. Cameras were provided for each participant to take pictures.

During the first few sessions and during photovoice meetings, discussions were held around the ethical issues that might arise. Using methods such as photovoice also raised more specific ethical questions to consider. Photovoice is grounded in the fundamental principles that underlie the code of ethics for the health education profession: respect for autonomy, promotion of social justice, active promotion of good and the avoidance of harm (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). In this study, it was therefore vital that the organisers, facilitators and participants understood the ethics involved in photovoice.

According to Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) there are four distinct but important areas of privacy that must taken into consideration when participants take photographs during their photovoice experience:

- Taking someone’s photo without his or her permission is a violation of privacy. Asking for someone for permission to take a photograph is a way to build trust.
- Researchers must be aware not to disclose embarrassing facts about individuals or place individuals in a false light by images.
- There should be a clear intent not to use a person’s image for profit, and issues of recruitment, representation, participation and advocacy must be stated explicitly.
- Researchers must also anticipate the possibility of disturbing or controversial images and the powerful emotional responses evoked by photography.
The photovoice groups ran for eight sessions. The duration of each session was flexible and depended on the time needed by participants to share their ideas.

**Sessions 1-2: Training**

These sessions were designed to ensure that participants were sensitised to the process of photovoice as stated in the first phase of the photovoice technique of generating data. The following programme was followed:

- Introduction and ice-breaker
- Establishing group norms such as attendance and the issue of confidentiality
- Educate participants on using a camera
- Discussion of ethical issues
- Discussion of issues be important to the group; their experiences and perceptions on which they would be focusing during the photovoice
- Review of safety concerns
- Review of the rights and responsibilities of the participants while using a camera

It was important to start the sessions as stated above, because it helped the participants to reflect on what mattered to them, what changes they would like to see, and how to show it through photographs.

**Session 3-5: Photo sharing**

Participants took photographs of what made them feel strong as Foundation Phase teachers and what made the feel less strong. They were then expected to share their photos and the messages and meanings within the image with the group.
Session 6-8: Working on commentary

The last session focused on plans for social change and how best to accomplish these actions through the display of the photographs. In this regard, I again refer to the third stage of engagement, which involved impacting on members of the sample on a deeper level. This included the narratives as indicated in Table 1, which highlighted their strengths and weaknesses/concerns.

3.6.1.2 Phase Two

A poster presentation was facilitated in terms of which the participants added narratives to explain their experiences and perceptions. The photographs with their captions were displayed and the participants were encouraged to discuss these presentations and add narratives to the photographs. The workshop was also the platform for a focus group interview to allow participants to collaborate in a discussion to create meaning among themselves.

3.6.2 Focus group interviews

Using a focus group session as part of my data gathering process appealed to me, because it would create an opportunity for people to get together and create meaning amongst themselves, instead of on their own. A major advantage of this approach lies in the ability of focus group interviews to volunteer express suggestions of the similarities and deviations in the educators’ views and experiences (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006). The researcher was able to get a much deeper understanding of the problem after a careful recording of the discussions between the participants. Bogdan and Knopp-Biklen
(2003) suggest that a focus group can be used so that participants can articulate their views on a topic or even begin to realise what their views are.

Focus group interviews use group interaction to generate data. These are carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The discussions between the researcher and participants are sometimes used to generate hypotheses about how they perceive a certain topic (Struwig & Stead, 2010). Gay and Airasian (2000) and Bogdan and Knopp-Biklen (2003) state that interviews generate data that cannot be obtained from observation and produce rich data, filled with words revealing the participants’ perspectives and views. Based on the identified advantages, I intended to use interviews as a data collection method for this study.

Focus group interviews are helpful in exploring a variety of areas. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) have summarised the more common uses of focus groups as follows:

- Obtaining general background information about a topic of interest;
- Generating research hypotheses that can be submitted for further research and testing;
- Stimulating new ideas and creative concepts.
- Diagnosing the potential for problems with a new programme, service or product.
- Generating impressions of product, programmes, services, institutions, or other objects;
- Learning how respondents talk about the phenomenon of interest that they may facilitate;
- Interpreting previously obtained qualitative results.
Focus Group Interview Questions:

a. What makes you feel strong in your teaching and learning environment? Why does it make you feel strong?

b. What makes you feel less strong in your teaching and learning environment? Why does it make you feel less strong?

c. What are your experiences and perceptions of your day-to-day practice as a Foundation Phase teacher?

In my study, the focus group interview helped to bring together all teachers that taught in the common phase. This helped me to probe their ideas and gain further insight. They were also encouraged to ask their own questions or volunteer information not related to the questions I asked.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

De Vos, Strydom and Delport (2005) describe data analysis as a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Likewise, McMillan and Schumacher (2001) state that qualitative analysis is a relatively systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest.

The steps I followed were as follows:

Firstly, I organised the data into manageable pieces/chunks of information by using files/folders and having the interviews transcribed. Secondly, I familiarised myself with the data by reading through it whilst writing memo’s in an effort to make data manageable. Next, I identified definite, recurring categories, themes and/or patterns that emerge from the data collected. I then applied a coding scheme to these categories and themes and
marked passages in the data using these codes. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), coding refers to the name or phrase used to provide meaning to segments. In the next step, I evaluated my own understanding of the phenomenon and determined how useful the data was in highlighting the research question of this study. Subsequently, I looked critically at the patterns that seemed obvious and searched for other, acceptable explanations for these data. The final step was to present the findings in written form, namely the experiences and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers in their professional development, as reflected by the data collected and analysed.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF STUDY

Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that a fundamental concern in any research is to incorporate appropriate mechanisms that will assure the researcher and reader of the quality of the research, its process and findings.

3.8.1 Validity

Struwig and Stead (2010) propose that in qualitative research, validity is synonymous with credibility or trustworthiness. The validity of the data will be ensured by considering the following, as highlighted by Struwig and Stead (2010):

- My background as a researcher.
- Checking the use of terminology and the interpretation of data. My choice and assortment of data collection techniques, in my view, apposite the issue under study as I consider them to be fit for the purpose of this study.
- Triangulating data to support the validity of the findings. Triangulation and respondent validation were incorporated through: The range of data collection matters; and the use of focus group interviews with all FP teachers.
• Verifying the validity of the data by returning the information to the participant for comment.

3.8.2 Reliability

Stenbacka (2001: 551) is of the opinion that reliability refers to good quality research in quantitative studies for the “purpose of explaining”, while a qualitative study has the purpose of “generating understanding”. Patton (2001) supports the idea of the researcher's involvement and immersion into the research by acknowledging that the real world is subject to change and that therefore, a qualitative researcher should be present during the changes to record an event after and before the change occurs. With regards to the researcher's ability and skill in any qualitative research, Patton (2001) also states that reliability is a consequence of the validity of a study.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) emphasise the importance of providing knowledge that is valid and reliable and that this information is presented in an ethical and objective manner. One of the ways in which they suggest one achieve this, is by leaving an audit trail. This view is supported by Guba and Lincoln (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), who suggest that an audit trail include all recorded material (audiotapes). I kept verbatim transcripts of my participants' interviews, the narratives participants wrote, a copy of the interview schedule and examples of data analysis practices. They also suggest the use of peer debriefing, which is a process in which the researcher shares ideas with a colleague or supervisor outside the context of the research process. During this process, I attempted to strengthen validity of the data collected, as well as the reliability of the study.
3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers have a moral obligation to search for the truth in their quest to gain insight and knowledge. Mouton (2001) warns that this quest should not be at the expense of the rights of individuals in society. In keeping with the accepted professional ethics of research, the aims of this study, as well as the research design and methodologies, were communicated and discussed with the principals and teachers of the Manyano network. In this regard, refer to the following:

- Permission letter to conduct research in the Department of Education, Port Elizabeth District (see Appendix A).
- Ethical approval, as granted by the Ethical Research Committee of the NMMU (see Appendix B).
- Informed consent to establish a relationship and trust with participants (see Appendix C).

Informed consent as explained in the appendix was used to allay all fears and questions that participants might have and to persuade all participants to sign consent form (see Teacher Consent Form – Appendix D) explaining the following:

- Voluntary participation.
- Disclosing of information would not be obligatory.
- The option to walk away (opt out) at any stage of the research.
- Information would be treated confidentially.
- Strict anonymity would apply.
- All possible risks would be minimised or avoided.
- Findings of the research would be made available on request.
• All queries would be addressed by the researchers.
• Appreciation for willingness to participate in the study.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I detailed my research design and methodology. I argued that since I was working from the interpretive paradigm, I needed a research approach that was supportive of people’s meaning making. I chose the qualitative research approach, which was sensitive to the teachers’ subjectivity in the context of their teaching experience and perceptions. I used multiple data collection methods to be able to make sense of my research question. Photovoice and focus group interviews were used. I obtained ethical clearance from the University and the Department of Education. The principal and teachers were asked for permission for the study after full disclosure of the nature and aims of the study. The data was analysed through indentifying themes and sub-themes related to answering the research questions. The next chapter will present the research findings and discussions.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

“The simplest solutions and adjustments to our individual lifestyles can have the biggest
effect on anything that sounds and appears mountainous.”

Lucky Mazibuko

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Data interpretation refers to developing ideas about research findings and relating them to
literature and broader concerns and concepts. The findings of this study were based on
the photovoice method, as well as on the focus group interviews in which the participants
participated.

In this chapter I will present the data related to the experiences and perceptions of
Foundation Phase teachers. My discussion will highlight how this related to their
professional development. Literature has already confirmed that the professional
development of teachers should be built into the ongoing work of teaching and relate to
teachers’ questions and concerns (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). With regard to the questions
and concerns that teachers have, it is pertinent to look at the theory of Vygotsky (1978),
which argues that professional development as a phenomenon ‘is an attempt to better
understand the mechanisms underlying teacher development’. In support, Loewenber
Ball and Forzani (2009) emphasises that the special knowledge, skills, and orientations
that underlie and enable the work of teaching are not simply the by-products of theory
acquired during teacher training: our interpretations of the world construct our reality and
are shaped by events, encounters and our experiences therein. Teachers have a different
role to play within their worlds; they share experiences and perspectives with others, and
this all adds up to create their realities.
The sample for this study was Foundation Phase teachers at a newly established (2012) school in the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay. The sample consisted of eleven Foundation Phase teachers, of which eight were newly qualified. The qualified teachers each had more than 20 years experience in the profession. In this chapter, I will present the experiences and perceptions of the participants. During the photo sharing session of Phase 1, participants shared their photographs and added meanings to their images. Phase two of the data generating process included the poster presentation and a focus group interview.

4.2 RESULTS AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The themes that emerged, addressed the research question, as formulated in Chapter One, namely: How do Foundation Phase teachers experience and perceive teacher professional development?

4.2.1 Results of Phase One

The first phase of the data collection yielded the following results. The eleven teachers in this study shared a total of 37 photographs that reflected their experiences and perceptions as Foundation Phase teachers. Of the 37 photographs, the teachers identified 15 photographs depicted things that made them feel strong, while 22 photographs depicted things that made them feel less strong as Foundation Phase teachers. Many of the teachers took similar photographs. The photographs were grouped into categories that represented the two major questions: What makes you feel strong and what makes you feel less strong as a foundation phase teacher? The frequencies for each photograph the teachers identified as making them feel strong or less strong as Foundation Phase teachers are presented in Table 4.
A selection of photographs with captions was made by the teachers to represent their experiences and perceptions as Foundation Phase teachers. These photographs were then placed into themes. Wang and Burris (1997) state that photovoice has various goals: enables people to record and reflect their community's strengths and problems; and promotes dialogue about important issues through group discussion and photographs. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) explains that what experts think is important may not necessarily match what people on grassroots level may think is important.
Picture A  Collage presentation from Photovoice as identified by participants

PHOTO (graph) + VOICE (voicing our individual and collective experience)

Parents/Community members sweeping the court yard after school.

Situated within a newly established school, the teaching and learning environment is still very new and requires innovation, patience and understanding.

The community wherein the school was situated, was still very new and lacked infrastructure such as roads and other recreational facilities, such as libraries or play parks.

Despite the lack of resources, Foundation Phase teachers need to be creative to ensure that the learning environment is both exciting and challenging for learners.

The flag in this picture represents the pride and hope teachers have for their school; the institution, leaders and stakeholders.
4.2.2 Results of phase two

The second phase of the data collection included the poster presentation of photographs and a focus group interview which yielded the results detailed below.

The participants were in agreement that the process highlighted the conditions that they were facing and experienced a sense of responsibility for capturing images that best reflected the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching environment.

The focus group interview then proceeded, during which the following questions were asked of the participants:

a. What makes you feel strong in your teaching and learning environment? Why does it make you feel strong?

b. What makes you feel less strong in your teaching and learning environment? Why does it make you feel less strong?

c. What are your experiences and perceptions of your day-to-day practice as a Foundation Phase teacher?

The following table depicts the main themes and sub-themes that emanated from the group discussion.
FIGURE 2  Themes and sub-themes from focus group interview

Focus Group Themes

Beginning of the road
  - Infrastructure of the school community
  - School structure
  - Limited resources
  - Parents and community members

Stakeholders
  - Learners
  - Leadership

Development of teachers
  - Teaching and learning
  - Teacher collaboration
  - Pride and hope
4.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Three main themes emerged from the photovoice process and focus group discussion. The poster presentation, in conjunction with the focus group discussion, generated the emerging themes which created many other sub-themes. The summary and discussion were based on the key findings in the photovoice and transcript of the focus group discussion. The main themes that emerged were: Beginning of the Road; Stakeholders; and Development of Teachers. The identified themes, the subthemes, appropriate quotations from the group discussion and reflection of the photovoice will now be presented in order to substantiate the findings. The quotations (in italics) that were used, may not be grammatically correct, because the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The main themes of the findings and discussion can be formulated as follow:

4.3.1 Beginning of the road

From the focus group interview the participants in this study identified with the concept of starting at a new school in a community faced with many challenges. They referred to this process as a ‘journey’ of opening a new school. The participants expressed that their own primary and secondary schooling had been completed in conditions that had resources and a developed environment for teaching and learning. The many challenges that the participants faced as teachers at the new school ranged from the underdevelopment of the infrastructure, challenges with the structure of the school building, to a lack of resources. The participants were newly qualified, which made these experiences even more unacceptable. This view is supported by Veenman (1984), mentioned in Chapter One, who refers to this phenomenon as the “reality shock” faced by newly qualified teachers who face severe problems during their first period in the profession (see Figure 1).
4.3.1.1 **Infrastructure of the school community**

It became evident from the photographs shared by the participants that they felt strongly about the impact that the negative infrastructure of the community had on their teaching and learning. This represents the major sub-theme that challenges teachers and represents to a large extent a response to the question: “*What makes you feel less strong as a Foundation Phase teacher?*”

**Picture B**

![Picture B: School Community](image)

The community wherein the school is situated is still very new and lacks infrastructure such as roads and other recreational facilities such as libraries or play parks.

This community was still in its development stage, and dirt roads were laid out in the residential area. The community was situated on the edge of the Northern Areas, and represents the growing population in the greater Nelson Mandela Bay area. In fact, the school was situated in one of the fastest developing housing projects in Nelson Mandela Bay. The teachers identified photographs that related to the surrounding community of the school who had informal housing as well as low cost housing.
A big challenge for many learners are proper housing, because with the weather conditions it is really bad for them to attend school because they will not have slept most of the night or have dry clothing to wear to school. People had to move out of their wet shacks. (EF3)

The school in this study was established out of the growing need of these Northern Areas communities to have schools in their immediate area. Teachers identified the challenges that the schooling community faced through their photographs and discussions during the focus group interview. Participants recounted the many problems faced by the learners, such as that roads leading to the school and into the area became inaccessible during heavy rain falls.

At the beginning, it was very difficult to see the conditions under which the kids were staying. The road that they have to take to come to school, especially on rainy days, calls for the usage of a canoe. Kind of like what you use to move through a river. And it is very dangerous for the kids to pass. (EF4)

During the heavy summer rains, they have further difficulties as the informal dwellings are unstable and leak. Lack of sleep at night, dirty clothing and anxiety about safety hamper their ability to participate meaningfully in their school activities. (EF2)

Access limitations to the school during these periods had a direct impact on teaching and learning at the school. Teachers found it difficult to reach the school with their vehicles, and the situation was even more challenging for teachers, learners, parents and other community members who walked to the school. For learners, the most obvious result of poverty, often caused by unemployment and other economic inequalities, was the inability of their families to meet their basic needs such as nutrition and shelter. Pretorius (2009) states that the problems and tensions between children and their environment can be explained on
the basis of materially poor conditions. Learners living under such conditions are subject to increased emotional stress, which adversely affects learning and development (Department of Education, 2007). The physical infrastructure surrounding the school has very little to no development. Learners, teachers and other stakeholders have to walk through bushy areas *en route* to the school. This poses a risk, as crime is rife in developing communities. The school is the first formal structure, other than houses, that has been developed in this area. This said, no other amenities such as clinics, libraries, recreational facilities or community halls had been built in this area. In essence, the school was truly a beacon of hope in this community. Prinsloo (2004) postulates that schooling in poverty-stricken communities in South Africa is hampered by a lack of services, unsafe environments and an unstimulating environment, which give learners a negative academic self-concept, lower their level of motivation and accumulate academic backlogs. Teachers, on the other hand, construct knowledge in transaction with these environments, which in the process changes both the environment and the teachers (Ismat, 1998).

### 4.3.1.2 School Structure

The first of its kind in this area, the school was established in January 2012 with a learner population of 791, with 22 classes from grade R-7. The school was a no fee school, which ensures that no child was excluded from teaching and learning. As the school was surrounded by a low-cost housing project, data shows that 80% of the learners enrolled rely on a social grant from government. This, however, created great excitement in the community, because this was the first social structure, other than houses, opened in the area. This was evident in the fact that over 300 people have signed up to volunteer at the school. This process is supported by the report on quality education for all by the Department of Education (2007). Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching and Eloff (2005) support the view that the active involvement of parents and the broader community in the
teaching and learning process is central to effective learning and development. They state that such involvement includes recognition for parents as the primary caregivers of their children and, as such, that they are a key resource to the education system. More specifically, they are critical components for the effective governance of centres of learning and for facilitating community ownership of these facilities.

Participants during the focus group discussion identified with the barriers facing learners to receiving quality education. Poverty-stricken communities are also poorly resourced communities, which are frequently characterised by limited educational facilities, large classes with high pupil/teacher ratios, inadequately trained staff and inadequate teaching and learning materials. Such factors raise the likelihood of learning breakdown and the inability of the system to sustain effective teaching and learning (Department of Education, 2007).

*There are different things that influence how the kids come to school as well but they are progressing in learning, it’s a whole lot of things that you start to see that a small child ... seven year old have to face.* (EF1)

Part of the school structure is management. The participating school was started with a caretaker principal deployed by the Provincial Department of Education. The principal and SMT (School Management Team), all with more than 20 years experience, had to steer the school with new learners and newly qualified teachers towards getting to function as a unit.

### 4.3.1.3 Limited Resources

Ten point eight percent of the teachers shared photographs related to limited resources within the school community. Teachers identified the importance of colour and crafts for
children focusing and developing their choices and giving them the freedom to express themselves.

**Picture C**

Despite the lack of resources, Foundation Phase teachers need to be creative to ensure that the learning environment is both exciting and challenging for learners.

Learners learn about shapes and the use of different materials, which gives them an understanding of things in a fun and exciting way (Department of Education, 2005). These creative activities could be helpful for learners to express themselves in a social way, such as drawing what their concept of a family is or any other phenomena that they may experience in their lives. Creative expression is also used to teach and learn the curriculum in the Foundation Phase. The participants in this study discovered when the school was opened, that there were no resources at the school.

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*The two days before the school opened, because we saw that there was (nothing), even (the principal) showed us around, we saw there was really nothing. So we went to the neighbouring schools, we begged, we asked and ... we collected some of the stuff*
teachers at these schools threw away to clear their classes as they await their kids to join them for the new school year with new stationery. We had nothing. (EF4)

We asked for newsprint for paper to re-use. So when we got here that day when the school opened there was something for our learners, because we need to keep them busy, they are small ones, otherwise you will be ‘deurmekaar’ (unorganised). (EF3)

The Grade R teachers identified with the need to have resources to stimulate learning in their classrooms:

At the beginning they, had nothing, there was nothing nothing, it was only these white walls. And for grade R’s they need colour, they needed stimulation. Without colour, there won’t be stimulation for them. (EF3)

4.3.2 Stakeholders

According to Harvey (2004), a stakeholder is a person (or group) that has an interest in the activities of an institution or organisation. Several stakeholders are involved in the development of a school. These stakeholders include educational stakeholders (the district office), the principal, teachers, learners, social partners and parents. The participants in this study identified with parents, community members and learners as key figures in the development of the school.

4.3.2.1 Parents and Community Members

Sixteen point two percent of the teachers shared photographs related to parents and community members involved at the school. Learners from families where one or more of the breadwinners are unemployed or poorly paid are more likely to leave school prematurely to go out to work to supplement the family income. This perpetuates the cycle of limited skills
with fewer work opportunities, the increased likelihood of unemployment or poorly paid work and, thus, ongoing poverty and exclusion. Brandon (1997) supports these views by the Department of Education (2007) stating that a child who grows up in the unsupportive, unsympathetic milieu of a poverty-stricken family and subcommunity, is handicapped by an environment that lacks opportunities for stimulation and fails to provide a healthy start in life. With the high unemployment rate in the community my findings indicate that parents in this community tried every effort to support the school by volunteering in the many areas identified by the school.

**Picture D**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture D: Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents/Community members sweeping the courtyard after school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Volunteer projects included feeding schemes, protection against vandalism, a planting project to beautify the school grounds and vegetables planted used as part of the nutrition plan at the school. Parents and community members also assisted in the teaching and learning environment. In its efforts to functions on all levels the school invited assistance from parents and community members. On a daily basis, approximately 84 volunteers
assisted the school. These individuals supported the school on various levels. They include unemployed teachers in the classroom, unemployed Grade R teachers, day and night security personnel, toilet managers, classroom cleaners, office administrators and ground cleaners. The following areas were also identified by the school for assistance from parents and community members: vegetable gardens, health workers, teacher assistants, feeding scheme volunteers and maintenance.

The motto of the school is focused on striving for excellence. Towards this goal, the school placed volunteers in classrooms to act as teacher assistants (TAs). The TAs supported teachers to create an effective teaching and learning environment. The vision of the school was to create an environment in which teachers, parents and the community can care, learn and teach the children in this community. The TAs assist the teachers in creating conditions that reflect the school’s motto, which was to strive for excellence.

4.3.2.2 Learners

The learner enrolment at the school was 791 of which 578 (73.1%) were allocated in the Foundation Phase. Four hundred and fourteen of these learners are based in Grade R to Grade 1, which means that 52.3% percent of the learners were six and seven year olds. These learners were in their Reception year and in Grade one were in their first years of formal schooling. This creates a challenging time for both learners and teachers, as most of the teachers were newly qualified. Learners were mostly isiXhosa-speaking and yet they came from diverse backgrounds.

The other thing is the communication, the language; there is a big gap, because there are Afrikaans learners and Xhosa speaking learners. It was very difficult at the beginning, learners come from diverse backgrounds, so we have to find a way to put yourself on the kids’ level ... you must know how to teach in a multilingual classroom. (EF4)
Most of these learners were exposed to high levels of unemployment, high incidents of HIV and AIDS, hunger and many other social challenges. The learners were however, exposed to a loving and caring environment at the school.

... the social-economic conditions like unemployment that we find in the community plays a role on our learners in the classroom. (EF1)

Children in this community don’t get opportunities and this is where we (teachers) come in. My colleague was sharing with me about giving yoghurt to a child and she witness the child opening it and thinking that the child was going to eat it. The child opened the yoghurt put it on her hands rubbing it together and putting it on her face and arms, like it is lotion. We were laughing at the story at that time, but I later realized that the children in this community don’t have opportunities. They don’t have what others have, it’s not that they must have what others have, but the experiences they are involved in. (EF3)

4.3.2.3 Leadership

Another key element in the experiences and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers is leadership. Leadership was experienced on many levels at the school. Teachers identified the principal, the SMT (School Management Team), the head of departments and the grade heads. The principal played a major role in mentoring and guiding the newly qualified teachers during their induction at the school. The principal held a workshop early in January 2012 to develop a vision for the new school, but also to introduce the teachers to the dynamics of teaching. During the focus group interview, participants identified with the lack of leadership outside the school, especially those in authority at the different levels of government. This reflected on the focus group question: What made them feel less strong about their teaching and learning environment?
There is no leadership outside; the failure of the province and the district to assist the school is evident in the collaborations that proof to be fruitless. They really can’t help you with your problem, they don’t have solutions, they are just pointing fingers. National say its province, province say it’s the district... I have been in many meetings with state officials, but they cannot give you any concrete answers. You ask them about books, they don’t know; they refer you to unknown persons I think who must still be born. Sometimes I think they just don’t understand or they just don’t care. (EM1)

Participants did, however, identify with the need to have effective leadership within the institution and saw this as a vital element in starting off as newly qualified teachers, especially at a newly established school. Everyone involved at the school was seen as a leader or as a potential leader. All teachers at the school occupied leadership positions in committees and other structures developing the institution.

I think everyone has a leadership quality. You can get something from many other people – If you don’t get some answers from the principal, you can go to other people. That is how I think the school operates under the leadership of the principal; we are all leaders, chairpersons of committees, kind of capacitating each other to be leaders. (EM1)

4.3.4 Development of teachers

Eighteen point nine percent of the teachers shared photographs related to the development of teachers. Structuring teacher education in terms of how teachers learn, requires organising the curriculum in a scope and sequence that capitalise on teacher development - moving from a focus on self to a focus on student learning and from the foundations of learning theories to their implications for teaching (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007).
The photographs and focus group discussion identified their development in terms of their teaching and learning, teacher collaboration as well as values such as pride and hope.

4.3.4.1 Teaching and learning

The core function of any school is teaching and learning and at this school, teaching and learning was identified by teachers as a core function of this particular school.

Picture E

![Teaching and Learning](image)

Situated within a newly established school, the teaching and learning environment was still very new and required innovation, patience and understanding.

Coming from diverse educational backgrounds the newly qualified teachers were exposed to an environment that was growing daily in complexity. The teachers were constantly on an upward learning curve and had to learn many aspects of the teaching and learning process that were rarely acquired by way of theory.

*It has been exciting and interesting. When you come out of school you have at least taught children how to count and you have taught them how to read. But, sometimes, I have a problem with the people who write those theories; they write from a certain perspective*
and then when you come to these conditions, those theories, most of them don’t apply. You have to think now, because when in the classroom you are only armed with these theories and then they don’t work and you are forced to come up with your own theories. (EM1)

Teachers had many challenges with their appointment and status as teachers during this year. Some of the teachers received their first remuneration only in June 2012, while others had received no remuneration from the Department of Education throughout the year 2012. This undoubtedly had a negative effect on the teaching and learning at this school, as it affected not only the teachers but also the learners.

... looking at the province, district, circuits ... it’s ‘deurmekaar’ (chaotic) and it’s giving us uncertainty as a teacher. Sometimes it influences you as a teacher towards your work, but you have to steer yourself. You say to yourself ‘ok, don’t lose it’. Sometimes you have to be your own advisor, to some extent because they are not giving us any direction. But what we are trying, is to stay focused here at school and it’s kind of unrealistic when someone else is experiencing something else different from what you are experiencing. Like I am being paid and they are not being paid. (EF1)

Having to work with learners that were mostly six and seven year olds, teachers had to develop their innovation, creativity, understanding (context of learners) and patience.

Sometimes it’s about being flexible, because you come up with your lesson plans, ‘strictly’ (all organised) like excited you know that you have ... you feel like your lesson is prepared, but when you in ... during the course of the lesson you find that you must change your teaching style to accommodate the learners’ experiential worlds and stages of development. Many of our learners never attended the Reception Year programme nor Early Child Development programmes. They were left in the care of someone, whilst the
mother was out working. The beauty of teaching here is that you find that the kids teach you as well. They are so street wise on how to survive in this community that many of them can train us as teachers on many skills. (EF1)

Faced with a lack of educational resources, teachers had to design their own educative materials infusing skill development into meaningful and purposeful content (Falk, 2009). Teachers also had to harness the diversity of the learners as a resource by building on learners’ interest and offering them diverse platforms for learning. These elements are not exclusive and teachers were involved in a vibrant, dynamic and growing teaching and learning environment. Moyles, Adams and Musgrove (2002) refer to pedagogy in the early years which operates from a shared frame of reference, a kind of mutual learning encounter between the practitioner and the young child.

I did my practice teaching at one of the private schools. Children are so advantaged there, I am tempted to say they are very intelligent but when I look at these children I can say (maybe it was) because they were resourced, they know lots of stuff. You go there with your lesson thinking that you are going to teach and you end up listening to children teaching you. (EM1)

Uniquely within the Foundation Phase of this school was a male teacher in Grade 2, which challenges the traditional role of caring for and mothering learners during the initial years of their schooling.

I tell the learners there are mothers at the school; there are so many teachers (that) are females that can assist them in this role. I will do the fathering ... It was tough. I had to explain it to the kids. It was an issue that came up, but I was assisted by my colleagues. Now they treat me as a mother and a father, there are no more those barriers or lines anymore. (EM1)
4.3.4.2 Teacher collaboration

In referring to quality teaching, Killen (2009) state that it involves teachers who are willing to share and collaborate. They tend to work together with others to achieve goals. Spady (2001) refers to these teachers as constructive people who freely and selflessly share to enhance the well-being of others. Participants during the focus group interview highlighted teacher collaboration, which will be discussed on two levels. Firstly, there was the sharing of teaching and learning materials.

I have learned a lot from these ladies, because I could go to (my colleague) who assisted me with rhymes and paintings, how to paint, how to do this thing, and then you learn a lot. (EM1)

Secondly the participants also highlighted a collaborative language environment. Pretorius (2009) points to social interactions during which learners and teachers experience a simultaneous interpersonal exchange of feelings, attitudes and moods. This environment created a platform for both learners and teachers to develop the different languages they encountered at the school. IsiXhosa, English and Afrikaans are the languages spoken at the school with the languages of learning and teaching (LOLT) being English and Afrikaans.

Teamwork also played a role a major role in our development in addressing challenges of teaching the LOLT, which differs from the child’s home language. (EM1)

For many learners, teaching and learning took place in a language that was not their first language. This not only placed these learners at a disadvantage, but also led to linguistic difficulties, which contribute to learning breakdown. According to Mwamwanda (1995), communication in the classroom is based on the exchanges of words between teachers and learners, and unless they understand each other, education will be fruitless. Second
language learners are often subjected to low expectations, discrimination and lack of cultural peers. Educators furthermore often experience difficulties in developing appropriate support mechanisms for second language learners (UNESCO, 2003).

4.3.4.3 Pride and Hope

Eight point one percent of the teachers shared photographs related to pride and hope within the school. Participants shared their experiences of developing pride and hope during the focus group discussions despite having challenges relating to lack of resources, difficult personal and professional circumstances as well as underdeveloped conditions in the community. The discussion on pride and hope created an emotional atmosphere, as participants was trying to express what made them come to the school every day despite the difficulties they were facing.

Picture F

The flag in this picture represents the pride and hope teachers had for their school, the institution, leaders and stakeholders.
We are proud of our school; we know we don’t have resources that facilitate learning but we have human resources that encourage us to come back to school every day, irrespective of conditions and circumstances that might limit us. (EM1)

You have that pride and that hope and seeing that we are going far. We are going far. (EF1)

Hope and faith has kept us together. We know that one day things will get better. But now we have to work to get to that place. So it’s hope, always hope, something good is going to come with faith not because we don’t have resources, not because we are not getting paid. We can see now that the hope and faith is starting to pay off. (EM1)

Participants during the focus group interview expressed these sentiments of pride and hope as a coping mechanism in order to survive their abject conditions. These newly qualified teachers had not been exposed to such infrastructural conditions before and had to struggle with the geographical isolation of the area (Bobek, 2002). To add to these conditions, the lack of resources also made it difficult to engage in the teaching and learning environment. Participants displayed positive attitudes towards the teaching profession and expressed values such as commitment and dedication.

Croswell (2006) supports this view, stating that commitment occurs at the intersection of the organisation’s systemic needs and human experiences and needs. Commitment is seen as the process through which people become willing to give their loyalty and energy to a particular social system, because that particular system is expressing the needs and nature of the person. These teachers expressed a passion for teaching in the Foundation Phase and qualities such as caring and love were clearly evident in their voices. Goldstein (1998) has explored teaching with love and the implications for education. She argues that each educational decision that teachers make, from searching for educational resources to collaborating professionally, is made with love for children as the guiding principle. As
teachers, we have two primary duties: to educate and to supervise those whom we educate. Since we are professionals, there is an implied standard of care that must be followed, in addition to the school’s *in loco parentis* obligations. Think of this in terms of what you teach and the knowledge you must have to teach those things safely and effectively (Dana, 2011).

### 4.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This study looked at how teachers in the Foundation Phase perceived and experienced their development as teachers. In this chapter, the findings and discussion show that Foundation Phase teachers have multiple conceptions of their professional development as teachers. Their perceptions and experiences were largely been influenced by the physical environment in which the school was situated. Other elements that influenced their voices during the study were the socio-economic conditions of the community. Teachers were also challenged on professional and personal levels. Their passion for teaching was however undiminished and they expressed hope for the future. In the next chapter, I will outline the issues and implications of the study. I will then discuss the limitations and future research.
CHAPTER FIVE
ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

“Experience is the teacher of all things”.

Julius Caesar

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the final chapter of this study. I investigated Foundation Phase teachers’ perceptions and experiences within their continuous professional development. In this chapter, I will present the summary of each chapter and the implications, strengths and limitations of this study as well as suggestions for future research and reflections.

5.2 SUMMARY OF EACH CHAPTER

In Chapter One I introduced my study. I presented the context of teachers, new and established, engaged in their professional development. I then presented current literature highlighting the realities of teachers’ professional development. I looked at international and national frameworks in order to show the discourse within teacher development and especially the training of new teachers. In the rationale, I explained that teacher development programmes should focus on school improvement and the professional growth of teachers. The latter aspect was the focus of this study. The rest of the chapter focused on the aims, research questions, paradigms, theory and research design.

In Chapter Two, I presented the theory used in this study. The social constructivist theory of Vygotsky was considered to be suitable for my study, as it focuses on teachers’ experiences. This theory is based on social constructivism, which is based on the principle that learning is a social activity. This approach respects the fact that knowledge is derived from everyday concepts and meanings within a specific context. In the review, I presented
teacher development in terms of Foundation Phase education in South Africa, understanding teaching, teacher education and teacher identity. I also focused on the dynamics of the professional development of teachers as vital in terms of their emotional, intellectual and career development.

In Chapter Three, I presented my research design and methodology. I saw the qualitative approach to be relevant to my study. More specifically, my strategy, phenomenology, was important, as I intended to understand teachers’ perceptions and perspectives and understanding of their particular situation. The context of my study was a newly established school with learners from Grades R to 7. The sample of my study was situated in the Foundation Phase, and I used eleven teachers to participate in this research. I used photovoice and focus group interviews to generate data for this study. I followed the ethical procedures required. I explained how I generated my data as well as how the data was analysed and interpreted.

In Chapter Four, the findings and discussion of the study were presented. The findings show that Foundation Phase teachers at this particular newly established school experienced their professional development as challenging. This experience was influenced by the context in which they worked and the frames of references they had to such conditions. One major theme that emerged was the context of the school and especially the infrastructure of the schooling community. Other themes that emerged, included the importance of teaching and learning, creativity, pride and hope which the teachers experienced as vital elements in order to persist in the teaching profession. Teachers’ experiences during the photovoice exercise were constructive and they viewed their teaching and learning environment from new perspectives. During the focus group interview participants expressed themselves in terms of their experiences as newly qualified teachers at a newly established school. Challenging conditions prevailed at the
school, and the teachers had to develop their own strategies to cope within this context. Strategies such as collaboration, creating a caring environment, self-confidence and self-worth allowed the continuous development of the teachers into a positive direction. The teachers expressed disappointment and disillusionment at how education officials were managing their human capital. Despite the many obstacles that these teachers experienced, they displayed enthusiasm for the teaching profession and remained hopeful for the future.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

I believe that one of the main implications of my study is that more emphasis should be placed on the professional development of teachers within their practice. Contextual factors such as poverty, milieu deprivation within the school community and the lack of support from the Department of Basic Education play an important role in how teachers develop professionally. When teachers are engaged in their professional development, they are naturally focused on teaching and learning. However, they soon discover that the context of the school, its learners, parents and other stakeholders have an effect on their development that they cannot ignore. The needs of the schooling community soon become the focus of teachers’ emotional, intellectual and career development.

Places of higher education have an increasing responsibility to develop curricula that focus not only on theory for practice, but also on theory in practice. The perceptions of individuals that become professional teachers are soon challenged when they enter schools. For this reason, it has become vital for these institutions to focus on the following:

- Students should learn about themselves and about the communities in which they will be integrated as teachers.
• Teachers should be trained to understand that learning is relational, interdependent, emerging and context-bound.

• Students should be exposed to critical theories that relate to our existence as human beings in the twenty-first century.

• The values, knowledge and skills that students learn, should be related to ambiguity, diversity and paradox.

• Student learning should focus not only on cognitive development, but should include whole-person education.

Whole-person learning is an essential part of lifelong and life-wide learning. In such an approach, the fragmentation between theory and practice is broken. Theory and practice meet in praxis – where the teacher and the learner are engaged in a reflective, continuing process of re-attribution, redefining, constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing competencies (Prinsloo & Louw, 2006).

Principals at schools need to understand the increasing priority of the professional development of teachers. In this regard teacher mentoring programmes are perceived as an effective staff development approach for beginning teachers. Mentoring is seen as a sustained developmental relationship between an experienced teacher with long service and an inexperienced (newly qualified) teacher: one has already acquired the required knowledge and skills, while the other has not. The mentor provides guidance and support to a mentee in respect of a wide range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. In many cases, the mentor is also a role model for the mentee (Department of Education, 2008). By establishing teacher mentoring programmes, novice teachers are given a strong start at the beginning of their careers, and experienced classroom teachers serving as mentors should receive recognition and incentives from the Department of Education. Supporting beginning teachers at the outset contributes to the retention of new teachers in the school
system. Formalising the mentor role for experienced teachers creates another niche in the career ladder for teachers and contributes to the professionalism of education.

Foundation Phase teachers in South Africa are entrusted with the early learning of a child which impacts on all future learning. For this reason, more status should be given to Foundation Phase teachers, as they need to facilitate the initial learning of literacy, numeracy and life skills. These are highly specialised areas, and yet there are many obstacles facing teachers, as indicated in this study. For this reason, academically achieving learners are encouraged to study education at tertiary level. Currently, there are initiatives to promote Early Childhood Education such as the European Union (EU) which, together with the South African Research Association, co-ordinates research and advocacy in this field.

Another implication that emerged from this study is the concept of teacher leadership in South African education. Teacher leadership is an important part of the process to transform South African schools into becoming learning organisations. Leadership must be understood to extend beyond ‘headship’ or occupying a formal position. In this way leadership in schools will no longer be equated with headship; there are now opportunities and space for more than one person to be involved in the leadership and management of schools. In other words, leadership within schools becomes distributed amongst all stakeholders, particularly amongst teachers (Grant, 2006).

5.4 STRENGTHS AND POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The strength of this study was evident in the enthusiasm and cooperation of the participants. The participants, all newly qualified teachers, displayed an understanding of theory and practice and how it affected their professional development. The participants were challenged both professionally and personally during the research, but they still
showed resilience, which made this study so much richer. Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000:543) defines resiliency as a “dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity”. Resiliency is concerned with the processes involved in individuals overcoming significant life challenges. To this extent the participants in this study displayed elements of a strength-based approach in their learning as teachers. The strength-based approach connects to what these newly qualified teachers already had inside of them. It became clear that the teachers in this study build on their prior experiences and successes. Despite challenging conditions the effects of a strength-based approach created positive emotions and emphasised a relational context and interdependence with their colleagues and other stakeholders. It fostered a sense of competence and confidence within the participants which was displayed during this study. This study revealed that newly qualified teachers have hope and a sense of calling.

The strengths perspective, when implemented by principals and educators, has the potential to increase the experience for learners and their families. The strength-based approach transforms the way teachers think of their profession and the ways in which they interact with students. The intervention changes the way that students perceive themselves, and the potential that they see in themselves. The strengths model recognizes strengths in everyone, which means that learners are not singled out for needing extra support and learners whose challenges that might have escaped particular notice also receive positive intervention. By working on transferring strengths between various contexts, the learners and teachers learn life skills that can increase their resilience in many contexts throughout their lives (Brownlee, Rawana, & MacArthur, 2012).
As far as limitations were concerned, there were contextual and time factors. The contextual limitations can be summarised in the geographical context, as this study was confined to one school in Nelson Mandela Bay. The school was situated on the periphery of the Metro and the distance and physical infrastructure of the schooling community made it challenging to visit the site on regular intervals. Time also placed a constraint on this study and the contact with participants could only be arranged at the end of the teaching and learning time for Foundation Phase.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study can be generalised and made applicable to all Foundation Phase teachers, within the Manyano Schooling Network. The research results from the participating teachers came over very strongly and have indications for many other schools in South Africa.

5.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

For future research I would suggest that a larger sample be used to investigate the effects of Foundation Phase teachers’ continuous professional development. Such a study could include more schools (new and established) to develop a comparative study of the professional development of novice teachers.

The implications of this study for Programme Design: A module that focuses on:

- The role of different stakeholders for quality education and development.
- Supporting principles that enable teachers to work collaboratively with their school community.
- How to utilizing structures in the community to the benefit of the school.

The implications of this study for Materials Development:
• A support guide to teacher educators that highlights the relationship between theory and practice

• A manual with Case studies to support mentorship programmes.

5.6 REFLECTIONS

This study commenced at the beginning of 2012, the same year in which I graduated with my Honours degree in education. I approached a wonderful supervisor by the name of Dr D.C. Geduld, without whom I would not have been able to reach this final point in my study. Dr. Geduld was truly heaven-sent, as she put me through my paces to produce work of quality. Her constant encouragement and assistance during the past year was truly inspirational both as an academic mentor and friend. When I look back at the initial phases of the production, the research proposal underwent many constructive changes as recommended by Dr. M. Khau, who was instrumental in focusing my study. I am thankful to my study partners for their constant support, encouragement, academic guidance and, most importantly, their friendship over the last three years.

5.7 CONCLUSION

I see my study as an important tool to get role players engaged in teacher education talking about the professional development of teachers. When teachers, especially in the Foundation Phase are held in greater esteem, educational transformation in South Africa would be enhanced. Training for teachers, especially in the Foundation Phase, need to consider the context and circumstances of the majority of South Africa. Poverty is still the most challenging struggle that we as South Africans need to overcome. Teaching needs to return to the noble profession it once was in South Africa. Foundation Phase teaching is a key that can unlock many possibilities for young children who grow up in vulnerable
circumstances. Support for Foundation Phase teachers in their continuous professional development is critical if we are to map brighter futures for children in early childhood education.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Department of Basic Education. (2011). *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Grades R-3*. Cape Town: Department of Basic Education.


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Lewin, K. M. (2004). *The Pre-service Training of Teachers - Does it meet its objectives and how can it be improved*. UNESCO.


# APPENDIX A

## APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL

**NMMU RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HUMAN)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO BE FILLED IN BY A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE FACULTY RTI COMMITTEE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application reference code:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution of FRTI Committee:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty RTI representative signature:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1. GENERAL PARTICULARS

### TITLE OF STUDY

a) Concise descriptive title of study (must contain key words that best describe the study):

**Foundation phase teachers’ continuous professional development.**

### PRIMARY RESPONSIBLE PERSON (PRP)

b) Name of PRP (must be member of permanent staff. Usually the supervisor in the case of students):

Dr. D.C. Geduld  
Faculty of Education Room 020 Building 6 NMMU South Campus

c) Contact number/s of PRP: 041 504 2375

d) Affiliation of PRP: Faculty **Education**  
Department (or equivalent): School for Initial Teacher Education

### PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATORS AND CO-WORKERS

e) Name and affiliation of principal investigator (PI) / researcher (may be same as PRP):

Reinhold J. Gallant  
Gender: Male

f) Name(s) and affiliation(s) of all co workers (e.g. co-investigator/assistant researchers/supervisor/co-supervisor/promoter/co-promoter). If names are not yet known, state the affiliations of the groups they will be drawn from, e.g. Interns/M-students, etc. and the number of persons involved:

Supervisor: Dr. D.C. Geduld

### STUDY DETAILS

g) Scope of study: Local  
h) If for degree purposes: Master's

i) Funding: **NMMU Research Grant**  
Additional information (e.g. source of funds or how combined funding is split) **Internal Research Bursary**

j) Are there any restrictions or conditions attached to publication and/or presentation of the study results? No  
If YES, elaborate (Any restrictions or conditions contained in contracts must be made available to the Committee):

Not applicable

k) Date of commencement of data collection: 2012/08/21
Anticipated date of completion of study: **January 2013**

**l) Objectives of the study (the major objective(s) / Grand Tour questions are to be stated briefly and clearly):**

To explore Foundation Phase teachers’ experience and perceptions of professional development.

**m) Rationale for this study: briefly (300 words or less) describe the background to this study i.e. why are you doing this particular piece of work. A few (no more than 5) key scientific references may be included:**

Foundation phase teachers play an important role in shaping the future. They work daily to help educate and prepare the young child towards the opportunities of tomorrow. Foundation phase teachers have many roles to play and duties to fulfill. Professional development is the need of the hour and can no longer be viewed as an event that occurs on a particular day of the academic year, it must rather be embedded in the daily work routine of the teachers. Teacher professional development should become a teacher’s way of being and they should be at the heart of this process (Carl, 2009:3). Foundation phase teachers in South Africa, leaders, administrators, scholars and researchers have to be positive in everyday situations in a child’s life in supporting and developing his wholeness (DoE, 2003:58). Teachers were hardly trained for these roles nor do they have the ability to address the diverse needs of their learners. According to Swart, Pettipher, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Oswald, Ackerman and Prozesky (2000:20), research has revealed that mainstream educators are of the opinion that they do not possess the adequate training, skills, time and support to ensure quality education. Teachers should be empowered to work within a collaborative problem-solving culture, forming dyads, groups and networks. The support for professional development includes an understanding of the complexities of the abilities of the teachers and the need to study, practise and develop professional development of teachers within the school context (Kriegler, 1996:41).

**METHODOLOGY**

**n) Briefly state the methodology (specifically the procedure in which human subjects will be participating) (the full protocol is to be included as Appendix 1):**

The study will be using Photovoice. In phase 1 of the study, data will be collected through focus group interviews and visual methodology – photovoice will be used where participants will take photographs of the teaching and learning environment with the prompt question: What makes you feel strong and what makes you feel less strong as a foundation phase teacher. Phase 2 will be to conduct a poster presentation workshop for participants.

**o) State the minimum and maximum number of participants involved (Minimum number should reflect the number of participants necessary to make the study viable)**

Min: 6  Max: 18

**2. RISKS AND BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY**

**a) Is there any risk of harm, embarrassment or offence, however slight or temporary, to the participant, third parties or to the community at large?** No

If YES, state each risk, and for each risk state i) whether the risk is reversible, ii) whether there are alternative procedures available and iii) whether there are remedial measures available.

**Not applicable**

**b) Has the person administering the project previous experience with the particular risk factors involved?** No

If YES, please specify: **Not applicable**

**c) Are any benefits expected to accrue to the participant (e.g. improved health, mental state, financial etc.)?** No

If YES, please specify the benefits: **Not applicable**

**d) Will you be using equipment of any sort?** Yes

If YES, please specify: **My methodology will include photovoice and participants will be using cameras to capture images during the research.**

**e) Will any article of property, personal or cultural be collected in the course of the project?** No

If YES, please specify: **Not applicable**
3. TARGET PARTICIPANT GROUP

a) If particular characteristics of any kind are required in the target group (e.g. age, cultural derivation, background, physical characteristics, disease status etc.) please specify: **Participants’s age, gender and cultural background will be required in this study.**

b) Are participants drawn from NMMU students? **No**

c) If participants are drawn from specific groups of NMMU students, please specify: **Not applicable**

d) Are participants drawn from a school population? **Yes**
   If YES, please specify: **The participants in this study are qualified teachers and are drawn from the Foundation Phase of a primary school in the Manyano Schools Network in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. These teachers are all at a newly established school and offers opportunities for my research as most of them are newly qualified teachers.**

e) If participants are drawn from an institutional population (e.g. hospital, prison, mental institution), please specify: **Alfonso Arries Primary School in the Manyano Schools Network.**

f) If any records will be consulted for information, please specify the source of records: **Not applicable**

g) Will each individual participant know his/her records are being consulted? **Not applicable**
   If YES, state how these records will be obtained: **Not applicable**

h) Are all participants over 18 years of age? **Yes**
   If NO, state justification for inclusion of minors in study: **Not applicable**

4. CONSENT OF PARTICIPANTS

a) Is consent to be given in writing? **Yes**
   If YES, include the consent form with this application [Appendix 2].
   If NO, state reasons why written consent is not appropriate in this study.

b) Are any participant(s) subject to legal restrictions preventing them from giving effective informed consent? **No**
   If YES, please justify: **Not applicable**

c) Do any participant(s) operate in an institutional environment, which may cast doubt on the voluntary aspect of consent? **No**
   If YES, state what special precautions will be taken to obtain a legally effective informed consent: **Not applicable**

d) Will participants receive remuneration for their participation? **No**
   If YES, justify and state on what basis the remuneration is calculated, and how the veracity of the information can be guaranteed. **Not applicable**

e) Which gatekeeper will be approached for initial permission to gain access to the target group? (e.g. principal, nursing manager, chairperson of school governing body) **School Principal/Department of Basic Education**

f) Do you require consent of an institutional authority for this study? (e.g. Department of Education, Department of Health) **Yes**
   If YES, specify: **Department of Education – Port Elizabeth District**

5. INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

a) What information will be offered to the participant before he/she consents to participate? (Attach written information given as [Appendix 3- Consent form for research study Foundation Phase Teachers] and any oral information given as [Appendix 4 – Information and Informed Consent Form]) both forms are to be signed.

b) Who will provide this information to the participant? (Give name and role)
   **Reinhold J. Gallant**  Researcher
c) Will the information provided be complete and accurate? Yes
If NO, describe the nature and extent of the deception involved and explain the rationale for the necessity of this deception: Not applicable

### 6. PRIVACY, ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Will the participant be identified by name in your research?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Are provisions made to protect participant’s rights to privacy and anonymity and to preserve confidentiality with respect to data?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) If mechanical methods of observation be are to be used (e.g. one-way mirrors, recordings, videos etc.), will participant’s consent to such methods be obtained?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Will data collected be stored in any way?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Will stored data be made available for re-use?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Will any part of the project be conducted on private property (including shopping centres)?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Are there any contractual secrecy or confidentiality constraints on this data?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7. FEEDBACK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Will feedback be given to participants?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) If you are working in a school or other institutional setting, will you be providing teachers, school authorities or equivalent a copy of your results?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8. ETHICAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS

The Declaration of Helsinki (2000) or the Belmont Report will be included in the references: Yes
If NO, motivate: Not applicable

a) I would like the REC-H to take note of the following additional information: “None”

### 9. DECLARATION

If any changes are made to the above arrangements or procedures, I will bring these to the attention of the Research Ethics Committee (Human). I have read, understood and will comply with the [Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Research and Education at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University](http://www.sahealthinfo.org/ethics/) and have taken cognisance of the availability (on-line) of the Medical Research Council Guidelines on Ethics for Research. All participants are aware of any potential health hazards or risks associated with this study.

I am not aware of potential conflict(s) of interest which should be considered by the Committee. If affirmative, specify: Not applicable

---

**SIGNATURE:** Dr. D.C. Geduld  (Primary Responsible Person)  
**Date:** 19 March 2013

**SIGNATURE:** Mr. R.J. Gallant  (Principal Investigator/Researcher)  
**Date:** 19 March 2013

### 10. SCRUTINY BY FACULTY AND INTRA-FACULTY ACADEMIC UNIT

This study has been discussed, and is supported, at Faculty and Departmental (or equivalent) level. This is attested to by the signature below of a Faculty (e.g. RTI) and Departmental (e.g. HoD) representative, neither of whom may be a previous signator.

---

**NAME** and **CAPACITY** (e.g. HoD)  
**SIGNATURE**  
**Date**

**NAME** and **CAPACITY** (e.g. Chair: FacRTI)  
**SIGNATURE**  
**Date**

### 11. APPENDICES

In order to expedite the processing of this application, please ensure that all the required information, as specified below, is attached to your application. Examples of some of these documents can be found on the Research Ethics webpage ([http://www.nmmu.ac.za/default.asp?id=4619&bhcp=1](http://www.nmmu.ac.za/default.asp?id=4619&bhcp=1)). You are not compelled to use the documents which have been provided as examples – they are made available as a convenience to those who do not already have them available.

**APPENDIX 1: Research methodology**

Attach the full protocol and methodology to this application, as "Appendix 1” and include the data collection instrument e.g. questionnaire if applicable.

**APPENDIX 2: Informed consent form**

If no written consent is required, motivate at 4a). The intention is that you make sure you have covered all the aspects of informed consent as applicable to your work.

**APPENDIX 3: Written information given to participant prior to participation**

Attach as "Appendix 3". The intention is that you make sure you have covered all the aspects of written information
to be supplied to participants, as applicable to your work.

**APPENDIX 4: Oral information given to participant prior to participation**

If applicable, attach the required information to your application, as "Appendix 4".

**APPENDIX 5, 6, 7: Institutional permissions**

Attach any institutional permissions required to carry out the research e.g. Department of Education permission for research carried out in schools.
APPENDIX A - 1

Research Methodology
According to Schwandt (2007:133), methodology is the theory of how an inquiry should proceed. It involves an analysis of assumptions, principles and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (which in turn governs the use of particular methods). In addition, Ritchie and Lewis (2003:34) maintain that the use of qualitative methods will be heavily influenced by the aims of the research and the specific questions that need to be answered.

Data Generation Strategies
As the researcher I will make use of qualitative research in this study, I will employ data collection methods consistent with the qualitative research approach such as photovoice. One of the goals of photovoice is to achieve positive change in the school community. However, this can be viewed as a process that takes time to achieve.

This research will focus on; participants’ exposure, increased awareness of participant experiences and perceptions, engagement and social change.

The first phase of participants’ exposure refers to strategies to capture the attention of participants regarding photovoice. Strategies will include promotional posters and invitations sent via email to the participants. The participants’ will be informed of the time and the place to view the work.

The next stage in the process involves increase awareness of participants regarding issues presented by their photovoice. The photographs and captions will provide participants with insight into their perceptions and experiences.

The third stage of engagement involves impacting members of the sample on a deeper level, beyond having only superficial awareness of their experiences and perceptions.

The last stage will involve taking action in the school community in response to the experiences and perceptions that will be identified.

Pre-Group preparation
A good accessible space will be identified where everyone will feel comfortable, three persons will facilitate the process; myself as the researcher and two trained facilitators who understand the philosophy of photovoice, participants chosen for the research, consent forms, process forms and explanatory hand outs and enough cameras for each participant to take pictures.

The photovoice groups will run for 8 sessions. The duration of each session is flexible and will depend on the time needed by participants to share their ideas.

Sessions 1-2: Training

- Introduction and ice-breaker
- Establishing group norms such as attendance and the issue of confidentiality
- Educate participants how to use the camera
- Discussion of ethical issues
- Discussion of issues that will be important to the group; Their experiences and perceptions that they will be focussing on during the photovoice
- Reviewing of safety concerns
- Review the rights and responsibilities of the participants while using the camera

It is important to start with the session as stated above because it will help the participants to think about what matters to them, what changes they would like to see and how to show it through photographs.

Session 3-5: Photo sharing

Participants will take photographs of what make them feel strong in their foundation phase classroom and what make them feel less strong. They will then be expected to share with the group their photos and the messages and meanings within the images.
Session 6-8: Working on the commentary

Finally, the last is intended on making plans for social change and how best to accomplish these actions through the display of the photos.

Ethics

During the first few sessions and during photovoice meetings discussions will be held around ethical issues that may arise. The following issues will be highlighted:

Taking someone’s photo without his or her permission is a violation of privacy. Asking for someone for permission to take a photograph is a way to build trust.

Researchers must be aware not to disclose embarrassing facts about individuals or place individuals in a false light by images.

There should be a clear intent not to use a person’s image for profit and issues on recruitment, representation, participation and advocacy must be stated explicitly.

Researchers must also anticipate the possibility of disturbing or controversial images and the powerful emotional responses evoked by photography.
APPENDIX B

LETTER TO FOUNDATION PHASE PARTICIPANTS AND CONSENT FORM

**Research Project:** Foundation phase teachers’ continuous professional development

Dear Teacher
You are invited to take part in a research study which aims to investigate the experience and perceptions of foundation phase teachers and how it can facilitate their professional development. This study will meet the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee (Human) of the NMMU. I invite you to consider taking part in this research. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important to understand why this research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

- Foundation phase teachers play an important role in shaping the future.
- Foundation phase teachers have many roles to play and duties to fulfil.
- Professional development is the need of the hour and can no longer be viewed as an event that occurs on a particular day of the academic year, it must rather be embedded in the daily work routine of the teachers.
- Teacher professional development should become a teacher’s way of being and they should be at the heart of this process (Carl, 2009:3).
- According to Swart, Pettipher, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Oswald, Ackerman and Prozesky (2000:20), research has revealed that mainstream educators are of the opinion that they do not possess the adequate training, skills, time and support to ensure quality education.
1.1 Main Question

To explore foundation phase teachers’ experiences and perceptions of professional development?

Benefits of the Research to Schools

The study will:
1. Enable Foundation Phase teachers to develop professionally and collegially and more specifically in their teaching.
2. Promote best practices of foundation phase teachers’ teaching and learning
3. Benefit foundation phase learner’s achievements in the classroom due to their reflective approach.
4. Improve their motivation, commitment and work ethic.

1.2 Considerations

As a possible participant in the study, you need to consider the following:

- Participation is voluntary
- Disclosing information is not obligatory
- The option to walk away (opt out) at any stage of the research
- Information would be treated confidentially
- Strict anonymity applies
- All possible risks will be minimised or avoided by creating awareness of the ethical issues regarding the research that will take place.
- Findings of the research will be made available on request
- All queries will be addressed by the researchers
- My appreciation of your willingness to participate.

(from Struwig and Stead: Planning, designing and reporting research - 2001:68)

If you decide to take part you are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.
All questions and enquiries should be directed to:
Reinhold Gallant
041 456 1267 or 084 815 6506
CONSENT FORM

Research Project: Foundation phase teachers’ continuous professional development

Researcher: Reinhold Gallant

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

4. I agree to the interview being audio/video recorded.

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.

Name of Participant: Reinhold Gallant
Date: [ ]
Signature: [ ]

Name of Researcher: Reinhold Gallant
Date: [ ]
Signature: [ ]
APPENDIX C

LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND CONSENT FORM

06 May 2012

Research Project: Foundation phase teachers’ continuous professional development.

Letter of Invitation to School Principals

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Reinhold Gallant, and I am an Educator at Hillside Senior Secondary School in Port Elizabeth. I am conducting research on how Foundation Phase teachers experience and perceive teacher professional development? I invite you to consider taking part in this research. This study will meet the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee (Human) of the NMMU.

Aims of the Research

Primary Aim

This study will aim to explore foundation phase teachers’ experiences and perceptions of professional development.

Benefits of the Research to Schools

The study will:

5. Enable Foundation Phase teachers to develop professionally and collegially and more specifically in their teaching through an awareness of their teaching and learning environment through strategies such as photovoice.
Research Plan and Method

The study will:

1. Interrogate available literature on foundation phase teachers in the National Policy Framework as well as the National Vision 2030 policy document.

2. Have a group interview to determine what teacher’s experiences and perceptions are as foundation phase teachers.

3. Facilitate the photo voice process whereby participants will take photographs of practices that make them feel strong and those that make them feel less strong as foundation phase teachers.

4. Facilitate narrative writing of the images participants took during the study.

5. Explore relevant literature on teacher professional development and how this relates to foundation phase teachers.

School Involvement

Once I have received your consent, I will

- Arrange a time with your school to meet the Foundation Phase Teachers.
- Arrange times for a workshop and interviews with the teachers.
- Equip the teachers with information and equipment.

Further information

Attached for your information is a copy of the Consent Form.

Invitation to Participate

If you would like your school to participate in this research, please complete and return the attached form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Reinhold J. Gallant                  Dr. Deidre C. Geduld
NMMU                  Researcher               Supervisor

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Research Project: Foundation phase teachers’ continuous professional development.

School Principal Consent Form

I, the undersigned, give consent for you to conduct research with the Foundation Phase teacher(s) at my school in respect of the abovementioned study.

I have read the Project Information Statement explaining the purpose of the research project and understand that:

- The role of the school is voluntary
- I may decide to withdraw the school’s participation at any time without penalty
- Teachers will be invited to participate in the study.
- Only teachers who wish to participate will form part of the study.
- All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.
- The teacher’s names will not be used and individual learners will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- The school will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- A report of the findings will be made available to the school.
- I may seek further information on the project from Reinhold Gallant 084 815 6506 or e-mail: reinholdgallant@gmail.com

_______________________                    ___________________________     ___________
Principal    Signature          Date

Please return to: Reinhold Gallant, Hillside Secondary School, Third Avenue, Windvogel,
or   Fax: 041 – 456 1444   or    e-mail: reinholdgallant@gmail.com
Thursday, 29 March 2012

Dr Ntsiko
Acting District Director
Ethel Valentine
Sutton Road, North End
Fax: (041) 451 0193
For attention: Dr Jansen

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Dear Dr Ntsiko

My name is Reinhold Justin Gallant, and I am a Masters in Education student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth. The research I wish to conduct for my Master’s dissertation involves Foundation phase teachers’ continuous professional development. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Deidre Chanté Geduld (NMMU, South Africa).

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach 1 school in the Port Elizabeth District. The school is Alfonso Arries Primary School.

I have provided you with a copy of my thesis proposal which includes copies of the measure and consent and assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the NMMU Research Ethics Committee (Human).

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Department of Education with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 084 815 6506, reinholdgallant@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

RJ Gallant
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
APPENDIX E
RESPONSE FROM DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Mr R. Gallant
Researcher
c/o Dr Deidre Geduld
Faculty: Education – Foundation Phase Department
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
E-mail: deidre.geduld@nmmu.ac.za

Dear Mr Gallant,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN DEPARTMENTAL SCHOOLS: PORT ELIZABETH

I refer to your letter dated 29 March 2012 and received 02 April 2012.

Permission is hereby granted for you to conduct your research on the following conditions:

1. Your research must be conducted on a voluntary basis.
2. All ethical issues relating to research must be honoured.
3. Your research is subject to the internal rules of the school, including its curricular programme and its code of conduct and must not interfere in the day-to-day routine of the school.

Kindly present a copy of this letter to the principal as proof of permission.

I wish you good luck in your research.

Yours faithfully,

DR NYATHI NTSIKO
DISTRICT DIRECTOR: PORT ELIZABETH

04 April 2012
27 August 2012
Mr RJ Gallant / Dr DC Geduld
Education Faculty
NMMU

Dear Mr Gallant / Dr Geduld

FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS’ CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Your above-entitled application for ethics approval was approved by the Faculty Research, Technology and Innovation Committee of Education (ERTIC) meeting on 16 August 2012.

We take pleasure in informing you that the application was approved by the Committee. The ethics clearance reference number is **H12-EDU-ITE-018**.

We wish you well with the project. Please inform your co-investigators of the outcome, and convey our best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Ms J Elliott-Gentry
Secretary: ERTIC
Guide to Conduct Focus Group Interview

Date: 01 November 2012

Conducting the session

✓ Brief Introduction

✓ Purpose and scope of study

  o Remind participants of the study
    ▪ Foundation Phase teachers’ continuous professional development
    ▪ Key question: How do foundation phase teachers experience and perceive their professional development?

✓ Please give your name and short background

✓ Indicate that discussion will be around the themes that they will identify from the photographs taken by them.

Participants:

➢ Encourage participants to talk to one another

➢ Researcher is facilitator

➢ Facilitator use in-depth probing where necessary
Objectives:

1. Draw participants to photographs they have taken.
2. Draw up a list of themes that they identify.
3. Arrange themes into order of significance
4. Start discussion

Focus Group interview Questions:

From the themes identified highlight what is positive (makes you feel strong) and what themes are negative (makes you feel less strong) as a foundation phase teacher.

a. What makes you feel strong in your teaching and learning environment? Why does it make you feel strong?

b. What makes you feel less strong in your teaching and learning environment? Why does it make you feel less strong?

c. What are your experiences and perceptions of your day-to-day practice as a foundation phase teacher?

• Probing questions
  
  o Let’s talk about the school community. What things have you identified during this year in the community (infrastructure and schooling)
  o What type of stakeholders play a role at the school. What are your experiences and perceptions of them?
  o What conditions assist/do not assist you in your teaching and learning environment?
  o As a foundation phase teacher, how does creativity as a teacher and a method to illicit learning assist in the teaching and learning environment?
  o What are your experiences and perceptions of leadership on different levels at your school?
Transcription: Focus Group Interview

Title: Foundation Phase teachers’ continues professional development.

Key Question: How do Foundation Phase teacher experience and perceive their professional development?

Conducted: 01 November 2012

Time: 13h00 – 14h00

For the sake of anonymity I will be using the following codes to protect my participants.

The researcher will be referred to as RM1 (Researcher Male).

Educator Female will be coded is EF1 to EF4 and Educator Male EM1.

RM: “Good afternoon, Welcome at this focus group discussion. Everything will be recorded. This afternoon we are first going to have a look at the pictures you have taken. You have had a look at it earlier on, just to form some ideas on the themes that we will start to identify soon. I have arranged it in some order that you have taken it. You all know I am a language teacher teaching grade 8 – 12. I am also an M student at NMMU and my thesis is on Foundation Phase teachers and their continuous professional development. My key question was: How do you experience and perceive, as you going along in this profession that you are finding yourselves in, how are you developing and what are the things that you are experiencing.

RM1: “How did you find the photovoice experience?”

EF4: “Ok. At the beginning it was very difficult to see what the conditions where the kids were staying. The road that they have to take to come to school, especially on rainy days. Yes. Kind of like a river. And it is very dangerous for the kids to pass. Especially that road that I referred to earlier (during the viewing of the photographs). That is also one of the things.
RM: “You are talking about the main road that is now completed?”

EF4: “Ja. But before that, it wasn’t nice to see how the kids come to school and their lives are not safe, you see.”

EF3: “For me, this photo thing was an eye opener. Because every day we come to school, we see but we don’t see. So when we had to take the pictures we look at it with like more eyes especially with the housing. I experienced that the people are experiencing housing problems. We see that side near the community hall, there is still people waiting on houses. And they all must come this side so there is still more houses that need to be build (in the community) for them. But in the meantime there are it’s a big challenge for them because they don’t have proper housing and with the weather conditions it is really bad. People had to move out of their shacks wet, but we are hoping for the best.”

EM1: “Also for me taking those pictures was an opener. I was kind of forced to view things in a different perspective, because when you look you sometimes just look and you don’t pay any attention. Taking the photos you start to pay attention to what exactly you are looking at. So I sometimes I saw things differently when I was taking the photos.”

EF2: “I strongly agree with my colleagues. It actually broadened my horizons coming to school every day you can get so narrow minded. You just focusing on the things that you are busy doing. But really to us maybe it’s a small thing not having water or proper housing, but to someone else these are the issues people are facing every day. So yes it was really an eye opener.”

EF1: “Just to add on. The kind of effect those challenges the parents are having effects towards the school. So we are facing a situation whereby we are losing some learners because of the housing. (Noise in the background) There are different things that influence how the kids come to school as well and but they are progressing in learning, it’s a whole lot of things that you start to see that a small child ... seven year old face that. The child, him or her have to face small setbacks.”

RM: “Let’s now focus on the photographs. Let us identify the categories from what we see.”

EF1: “Learning.”
EM2: “Food.”
EF2: “Limited resources.”
EF1: “Community School.”
EM1: “Housing.”
EF4: “Sponsors.”
EM1: “Infrastructure.”
EF1: “Safety.”
EF3: “Dedication.”
EM1: “Hunger.”

RM1: “Looking at these broad categories how do these impact on your experiences and perceptions as a Foundation Phase teachers and can we place them into themes.”

EF1: “The first that I can identify is the beginning of the road. Where you start. How do you start the journey of opening the school. New things are coming out. Challenges faced to start a new school, the help of the sponsors. The beginning of the road.”

EM1: “Our development as teachers. I can say the psycho-social development really, you don’t really develop professionally but looking at this kind of conditions you are aware of so many things that influence your classroom.”

EF1: “Also coming from that psycho-social development, is the social-economic conditions like unemployment that we find in the community plays a role on our learners in the classroom.”

RM1: “How did you experience the new school apart from being challenged. Let’s talk about your perceptions of what should be taking place but also your experiences to what is actually taking place at the school.”

EM1: “It has been exciting and interesting. When you come out of school you have at least taught children how to count and you have taught them how to read. But sometimes I have a problem with the people who write those theories, they write from a certain perspective and then when you come to these conditions here, those theories, most of them don’t apply. You have to think now, because
when in the classroom you are only armed with this theories and then they don’t work and you are forced to come up with your own theories. Most of the time they work you find that if you teach them to read this way they don’t know how to read but at the end of the day children have to read and they have to count. So you have to come up with your own styles of teaching them how to read, teaching them how to count, dealing with discipline issues. Sometimes you hear that you have to discipline children in order from them to listen you have to talk quietly, or do these things. You find that they don’t work here. If you talk quietly they just go over but you have to find your own thing you have to find your own strategies. It’s like the strategies that you learn from the university.”

EF1: “Sometimes it’s about being flexible, because you come up with your lesson plans, strictly like excited you know that you have ... you feel like your lesson is prepared, but when you in ... during the course of the lesson you find that you must work according to where they (learners) are. Especially our learners, some of them didn’t even go to school ... some of them even and at the same time even some of them are older for the grade. You are bound to come to their own minds, while you are teaching them and it grows you as a teacher that don’t perceive them as empty vessels. You find that they teach you as well. You find that they know nothing you know that they will go from not knowing to knowing something.”

RM1: Anything else on resources and teaching and learning as grade R teachers and how you experienced the lack thereof in your teaching.”

EF3: “At the beginning they had nothing, there was nothing nothing, it was only these white walls. And for grade R’s they need colour, they needed stimulation. Without colour there won’t be stimulation for them. I thought to myself, what am I going to do. Me and - referring to (EF4) - we went to the neighbourhood schools, grade R classes. The two days before the schools opened because we saw that there was, even the principal showed us around we saw there was really nothing. So we went to the neighbour schools we begged, we asked and we ... one of the teachers, it was the end of the year, so they throw the old stuff in the bin. We went scratching for the old crayons, those small pieces (EF4 echoes the same sentiment) and we throw it in a packet. We asked
for newsprint for paper to reuse. So when we got here that day when the school opened there was something for them, because we need to keep them busy, they are small ones, otherwise you will be ‘deurmekaar’ (unorganised). So we had those small pieces of crayons, we had 2 paint brushes for 40 kids, but we made use of that so that we could keep their minds stimulated and busy and they enjoy being a child doing something colouring or playing. So that was my experiences, and from then till now really we can see there was improvement.”

EM1: “I was going to add to what my colleague has been saying about teaching and learning. You know when you ... I did my practice teaching at one of the private schools. Children are so advantaged there, I am tempted to say they are very intelligent but when I look at these children I can say because they were resourced, because they know lots of stuff. You go there with your lesson thinking that you are going to teach and you end up listening to children teaching you and your lecturer watching you and everything it’s as if your lesson was weak. Then when you come this side you also experience the same thing. It’s like when you are looking at these kids you realize they want to meet the same standards as those in the private schools. You have your perspective that these children are poor and everything they come from disadvantaged schools and even some of them was not even at a school. But when you are with them during the years that they develop, they teach you something you find that they are also very intelligent. You just need to capacitate them you need to encourage them you need to believe in them, they just need someone who believes in them. They have potential you just encourage and they will show you stuff they will show you that they are also very intelligent they just need a few things. They need guidance and everything, because sometimes we look at poor people and we think that they cannot think. These children has shown me that they can think, just give them an opportunity and they can do stuff.”

RM1: “As part of the teaching and learning we have been referring to creativity. Any other responses as to your experiences in the classroom?
EF4: “The other thing is the communication, the language, there is a big gap, because there are Afrikaans learners and Xhosa speaking learners. It was very difficult at the beginning, so we have to find a way how to put yourself in the kids level, you know how to teach.”

RM1: “Was this because of the language barriers that there were? Or was it because they came from different backgrounds?”

EF4: “Ja. They came from different backgrounds. Now you have to put yourself at that level.”

EF2: “Even with the languages as well, because when I started here I didn’t understand Xhosa properly. But now I can really understand I can even communicate to them in Xhosa. At the beginning we didn’t have TA’s (Teacher Assistants). So the child is new, you are new at the school and you had to communicate with that child so what language are using. Are you using English? You are struggling with Xhosa. I am Afrikaans speaking, and there are some learners who will understand me but then the others won’t understand me. So that was also a challenge for us at the beginning and for the kids, but I think we are getting there now.”

EM1: “Teamwork also played a role. We have Afrikaans speaking teachers and we have also Xhosa speaking teachers. So even with us we could only communicate in English. But at least now, because I can speak a bit of Afrikaans. They even laugh (laughter from rest of the group) at me sometimes, they can also speak a bit of isiXhosa so now it helps with the learners. The few words that you have learned Afrikaans speaking teachers you can go to your class. Whether the words are irrelevant sometimes, you just grab their attention. You say ‘wag ‘n bietjie’ [wait a minute] (more laughter), they look at you and know you want to say something.”

EF2: “Even with the language it helps us to listen to the child, because normally when the child speaks Afrikaans we would just answer, but now when a child speaks in Xhosa to you, you would ask what is the child saying to you and the child is feeling good about himself, because out of all the 35 teachers looking at you, you asking the child what he is saying. So that also help the positive thing was the language, if I can say that.”
EF3: “There is one child in my grade R class. She ... Up until now everyone started to say something in English, she only wants to speak her language. It’s as if she is afraid to speak English. So I said to her my goal for you is that before she goes to grade one she must say something for me in English even though it’s just one sentence. When I talk to her I would explain something to her in English and she would respond in Xhosa and then other kids will explain to me what she has said. So I just want learners to speak and I even encourage the parents also to speak to them in English. We don’t want them to forget their own language but they need to speak in English as well.”

EM1: “On this collaboration. And also because I am a male in the Foundation Phase. I have learned a lot from these ladies, because I could go to miss. Joseph who assisted me with rhymes and paintings, how to paint, how to do this thing and then you learn alot. Mrs. Kayser ... The only thing I knew was to teach them how to count how to add, but lucky mrs. Kayser came to me and gave me some posters. Those posters did help because I had a lack of resources, but now I had something to point at. Now it helped a lot because now I could point, this is how you add this is how you multiply. It helped so now I could come to my colleagues for help. It helps to have colleagues that you can collaborate with.”

EF4: “And what about miss – referring to herself. (laughter).”

EM1: “My colleague helped me a lot with phonics. She borrowed me a chart to teach phonics in English (more laughter). I didn’t have anything, when you teach A for apple and E for egg they need to see those things. So I borrowed a chart from my colleague and then she came and took it back (laughter).”

RM1: “There is a concept in Foundation Phase teaching that refers to the mothering role that these teachers have to portray. (Addressing EM1) What are your perceptions and experience regarding this aspect in your teaching?”

EM1: “I tell the learners there are mothers at the school there are so many teachers are females that can assist them in this role. I will do the fathering ... I cannot do the mothering and the fathering. It
was tough I had to explain it to the kids. It was an issue that came up, but I was assisted by my colleagues. There are some things that I can explain to the boys and other things that is difficult when dealing with the girls, but there are those sharp learners who also assist you in dealing with these issues that I can only do the fathering. They know I can only tell them so much ... I can relate to the boys, but it was difficult dealing with the girls on certain stuff. Now they treat me as a mother and a father, there is no more those barriers or lines anymore.”

EM1: “The other aspect for me, looking at those pictures would be pride. We are proud of our school, we know we don’t have resources. There is this culture that if we have all the resources we will be proud of our school, but although we are a disadvantaged school we turned that disadvantage. We learned new stuff we learned how to share everything. We learned to turn that small thing into something bigger. We are very proud of our school. Proudly South African (echoed by other educators).”

EF1: “At the end of the day teaching and learning is happening every day, even if you are outside with other learners it’s like they see us as their role models. Even if you teach grade 1 you can relate to a grade 7 learner. It’s full of energy; you get excited even when you are sleeping you are thinking aahh ... Alfonso Arries. You have that pride and that hope and seeing that we are going far. We are going far.”

EM1: “For its also hope. Hope and faith. It was what has kept us together. We know that one day things will get better. But now we have to work to get to that place. So its hope always hope something good is going to come with faith not because we don’t have resources not because we are not getting paid. We can see now that the hope and faith is starting to pay off.”

EF2: “Teamwork is another aspect.”

EF3: “I just like to mention, Jo, at the beginning we had nothing to work with and coming to school seeing the roads and things that happen. But since that time up until now as I have said there is improvement, we can see that there is small changes happening, so we are getting there. So that’s
why I feel strongly what my colleague said, there is hope, there is really really hope and I think even after say from after next year it will just get better and better.”

EF4: “I feel strongly what my colleague said. You know in the morning it didn’t feel like you didn’t get paid. There is no, I don’t know how to say it or express myself, you don’t even think on it. You just think you have something to do there, you think you must be there, you have that responsibility. It’s not all about money, it’s for the love of the kids that you are here and I hope that everyone that is here is not here for money but for the love of the kids.”

EF2: “I was in the taxi once, someone said something like ‘Kids are not kids anymore.’ I went home and I was thinking about this for a couple of weeks. I said to myself that I can go with that or I can try to change and let kids be kids. Kids love to have fun. You sometimes come here with your problems but then you think that you are the one that must bring hope to these kids. You look at the kids see them playing running around, playing on the mat and you think wish you could just play with them, it’s like they are fulfilling something inside of you. You feel like you can just live on because you are dealing with something much bigger.”

EF3: “Children in this community don’t get opportunities and this is where we (teachers) come in. My colleague was sharing with me about giving a yoghurt to a child and she sees the child opening it and thinking that the child was going to eat it. The child opened the yoghurt put it on her hands rubbing it together and putting it on her face like it is lotion. We were laughing at the story at that time, but I later realized that the children in this community don’t have opportunities. They don’t have what others have, it’s not that they must have what others have, but the experiences they are involved in.”

EF1: “To me it’s like getting up in the morning, you know we are lazy to get up and come to work. But during the course of the day there is something exciting there is something new, you end up going to sleep feeling happy. That’s the most important thing to me knowing that you have done your best today you are going to do even better tomorrow and the day after.”
EM1: “For me it’s like the first day I come here as a Foundation Phase teacher, expected to have this mothering. You know the first time I clicked with my learners .... You know at school there is school politics, sometimes you get frustrated you get angry. So the other day I went to my class feeling very frustrated and angry. When I entered the class all the girls came running to me giving me a hug, I didn’t know why they were giving me the hug, they went to go and sit and one of the girls asked me ... Are you fine? Is everything OK? And she gave me a hug again and they just left and did their work. I was touched that day this connection that we have. They understand this connection that we have that I didn’t even think of.”

ER1: “Let’s speak about the leadership at the school, the different levels.”

EM1: “This other time when meeting with the principal and the Dean from the education faculty, we were just having a discussion educationally. I was relating in the conversation whenever I speak to someone I look at them like they have something to say or something to offer and the dean said that is humanism. That is what we wish everyone should have. Looking at leadership from the principal to others you might not always get what you were looking for. I think everyone has a leadership quality. You can get something from many other people – If you don’t get something answers from the principal you can go to other people. That is how I think the school operates under the leadership of the principal, we are all leaders, chairpersons of committees, kind of capacitating each other to be leaders.”

EF1: “I agree with my colleague to some extend because in our school yes, but looking at the province, district, circuits ... its ‘deurmekaar’ (chaotic) and its giving us uncertainty as a teacher. Sometimes it influences you as a teacher towards your work, but you have to steer yourself. You say to yourself ‘ok, dont lose it’. Sometimes you have to be your own advisor, to some extend because they are not giving us any direction. But what we are trying is to stay focused here at school and it’s kind of unrealistic when someone else is experiencing something else different from what you are experiencing. Like I am being paid and they are not being paid. So it’s really a challenge going into deep levels of leadership.”
EM1: “There is no leadership outside. The failure of the province and the district you really dont find leadership. They really can’t help you with your problem, they dont have solutions, they are just pointing fingers. National say its province, province say it’s the district ... It is chaotic outside but what keeps us sane is this collective we have inside otherwise things are just ‘deurmekaar’ outside. I have been in may meetings with state official, but they cannot give you any concrete answers. You ask them about books they dont know, you must ask this certain person. Sometimes I think they dont understand they dont care about this type of schools. Because sometimes their kids are at these well private schools these well resourced schools. They dont really care what is going on in our schools as long as they are getting paid it is fine with them. So if you can also adopt that mentality then it will be the end of education in South Africa. We are forced to stay positive; we have to find strategies to do things differently from them otherwise it will be over for us.”

RM1: “Thank you all for your contributions!”