

**MANAGING THE TRANSITION OF LEARNERS FROM FOUNDATION TO INTERMEDIATE
PHASES IN MASHISHING, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that **MANAGING THE TRANSITION OF LEARNERS FROM THE FOUNDATION TO THE INTERMEDIATE PHASES IN MASHISHING, MPUMALANGA** is my work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged employing complete references. This research has not been submitted to any other institution.

January, 2021

Ms F. Mangena

Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my sister Pauline and her husband Israel who raised me up to be the strong woman that I am today. I am truly grateful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success of this study could have not been possible without the contributions of the following people to whom I am greatly indebted to:

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4. My sister Josphene and my niece Sihle for their love and patience.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine how the transition process from the foundation to the intermediate phases could be properly managed to minimise challenges that are part of it, some of which disturb a smooth integration into the intermediate phase. This is a qualitative case study which employed interviews, document review and observation methods to collect data. Data were analysed through the thematic content analysis and the constant comparative methods. Findings of the study revealed amongst others that shifting of language of instruction from mother tongue in the foundation phase to English in the intermediate phase requires attention. In addition, changed teachers' handwritings from foundation to intermediate gave learners a problem. Finally, teachers who were not trained to teach a foundation phase were found to be complicating the transition from the foundation to the intermediate phases by learners. On the basis of the shared findings, the researcher recommends that English be made a language of instruction from the foundation phase, not from the intermediate phase as it is the currently the case in primary schools. The researcher further, recommends that it be made mandatory for teachers from the foundation and intermediate phases to use print method when writing inside the classroom with learners as a way of addressing the problem of different handwritings by teachers. Some of teachers' handwritings give learners a huge problem to see clearly. Hence the recommendation of the print method. Finally, the researcher strongly recommends that only well trained and qualified teachers be permitted to teach foundation and intermediate phases. This is likely to ascertain that a good educational foundation is laid at an early stage, when learners are still so young and cognitively highly receptive.

KEY CONCEPTS

The following are key concepts that were used in the study:

Transition, foundation phase, intermediate phase and managing

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
APPS	Application Software
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CPW	Community Personnel worker
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	Further Education Training
FP	Foundation Phase
HEI	Higher Education Institutes
HOD	Head of Department
LD	Learning Difficulty
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LP	Language Policy
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NGO	Non- Governmental Organisation
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SA SAMS	South African Schools and Administration Management System
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMT	School Management Team
SP	Senior Phase

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO STUDY

The South African education system in primary schools is divided into phases. Those phases are the foundation phase; grade R to 3, the intermediate phase, grade 4 to 6 and the senior phase which comprises grade 7. The title of this study is: Managing the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases in Mashishing, Mpumalanga. Learners transit from one phase to another. The Oxford Living dictionary (2014) explains the word transition as a scene of changing from one state or condition to another. There is an identifiable gap in performance between the foundation and the intermediate phase.

Learners receive performance awards in the foundation phase and yet portray a level of inability to perform in the intermediate phase. In the intermediate phase, learners are expected to apply the skills acquired in the foundation phase to access the curriculum. In reality, this is difficult to achieve (Naidoo and Reddy, 2012). This study seeks answers to the cause of such a gap and how best this problem could be managed. In the foundation phase, a class teacher is constantly with the learners. In the intermediate and senior phases, teachers change periods. Close monitoring and much care are given to the foundation phase learners; this includes escorting pupils to the bathrooms. A teacher gives lessons in all the subjects. The knock-off time for the foundation phase pupils in most schools is between 13:00 and 13:15 hours. This is due to their short concentration span.

Teachers in the intermediate phase experience difficulty in handling classes that are progressed to their phase from the foundation phase. As academic activities proceed, learners could exhibit a degree of difficulty in coping with the workload given to them (Mkhwananzi, 2014). Learners from the foundation phase encounter changes in the intermediate phase syllabus. The set-up of both phases differs substantially. For instance, in grade 4, a learner's workload increases, from four subjects to six. Teachers have expressed many concerns about the number of learning areas increasing in grade four classes which learners had to cope with (Phala and Hugo, 2016).

Learners meet an added number of teachers who are all teaching a particular subject and all use different methods. Learners are introduced to the time-table and new responsibilities e.g. taking care of textbooks and exercise books. The researcher aims to explain the cause of this performance gap. In which phase is the problem emanating from? Who is behind the problem? Teachers, learners, the school set up or the Department of Education?

Studies have been conducted on specific struggles that learners face in learning and attaining essential skills in the class. No study has been done on issues affecting the transition of learners from the foundation to intermediate phases in primary schools. The researcher will, therefore, go much deeper into determining the cause of the gap between the two phases and how it can be managed and addressed. This research endeavoured to expose the severity of the differences between the mentioned two primary school phases.

1.2 AIM

It is inconceivable that a research study could be conducted without an aim (Modiba, 2019). In the light of this context, this study aims to examine how the transition process from the foundation to Intermediate phases could be properly managed to minimise challenges that are part of it, some of which disturb a smooth integration into the intermediate phase.

1.2.1 Objectives

Broad as the aim is, it can be clarified through the following objectives;

- to determine how the harmony of the foundation and the intermediate phases is understood,
- to determine what led to the gap between the foundation and the intermediate phases and
- to establish the gain in relation to harmonising the foundation and the Intermediate phases.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A research problem is a summarised explanation of a matter to be presented or a situation to be worked on. It reveals the difference between the aimed goal and the existing problem, state or process (Harman, 1998). This study grappled with the problem of disharmony between the foundation and the intermediate phases and how best to create harmony between the two phases for the benefit of the affected learners. This was more visible when learners reach the intermediate phase. The challenge seemed to have been around for a while undetected and to date had not been researched on. That is why this research study was conducted around this problem, to learn more about this problem and to suggest solutions for the benefit of primary school learners (Modiba, 2019).

1.4 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Thembi and Hugo (2016) define a theory as a research model that gives the direction of influence to the research. The researcher adopted Lewin's model because it matches with the study undertaken. It was likely to help alleviate the gap in performance between the two phases being addressed. Kurt (1996) in his Change Management Model, listed three stages of bringing about change. These stages were freeze, change and unfreeze. For change to take place successfully, an understanding of the importance of change is essential and necessary.

When all stakeholders in the education system can recognise the need for change, then the journey to change can begin without any conflict. Lewin states that motivation for change must be generated before change can occur. One must be helped to re-examine many cherished assumptions about oneself and one's relations with others. This stage is termed the unfreezing stage- this is where change begins. Lewin in his theory defines change by giving a picture of melting an iced shape, for instance, a cone and then refreezing it again into the required shape-which could be a square. He called this process- Refreeze. In light of this study, old procedures and norms have to be revised to make smooth the transition process. From the foundation to the intermediate phase leaders should motivate change using the three stages of change suggested by Lewin.

In this study, Lewin's theory points out the need to let go of old behaviours and customs and to implement new strategies that will promote good management of the transition process from the foundation to the intermediate phases. Kotter (2012), in his book *Leading Change*, elaborates that preparing the organisation i.e. the school, to embrace that change is critical, and entails dismantling the existing way of doing things before building up a new operational method. This is the first stage of change. The most effective way is developing a convincing message that elaborates why the old system of doing things should stop. This theory is crucial to this study as it addresses the necessity of change in order to experience a well-managed transition between the two discussed phases. These changes could be the communication system that exists in the school and the prescribed language of instruction used.

1.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Merriam Dictionary (2006) defines ethics as a category of study that embarks on ideas about what is and not acceptable behaviour. It is a branch of philosophy dealing with what is morally correct or wrong, a belief that something is very crucial. Shamoo (2009) defines ethics as a standard of conduct that differentiates between good and bad, right and wrong. Kapucu (2014) states that ethical consideration is one thing that one should be concerned about in research. Sensitivity should be applied to ethical concerns. In this regard, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the ethics committee of the University of Limpopo as part of abiding by ethical standards when conducting this study. The following ethical considerations were adhered to;

1.5.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

In this study, the researcher used fake names for the schools and participants. Kapucu (2014) adds that confidentiality and anonymity are very important. To keep the information contributed by the participants confidential, fake names can be used. With anonymity participants can remain anonymous meaning there is no way of identifying them. In this research, participants were named X, Y, and Z and so were the research sites.

1.5.2 Ethical Clearance

Taber (2014) suggested that members of the academic community are not exempted from conflicts of interest and commitment which have and continue to cause significant ethical problems that affect colleagues, students, and one's responsibilities to the profession. To avoid unnecessary conflict, the researcher commenced with the research application to the ethics committee in the University of Limpopo for clearance before conducting the research. Application for permission was also sought from the Mpumalanga Department of Education to conduct research in Mashishing circuit. The circuit office of Mashishing was requested for permission to conduct research in schools, a letter from the district office was attached. Permission to involve participants in the research was requested from them in writing. The school principals were requested permit to interact with staff members and learners at their institutions.

1.5.3 Voluntary Participation

Participation should be voluntary; no one should be paid to take part in the research. Yip, Han and Sng (2016) explain that potential participants need to be made alert of the right to withdraw from participation any time without reprisal and without affecting the relationship between the participant and the researcher. The researcher, therefore, allowed participants to decide whether they were willing to participate or not without threatening them in any way.

1.5.4 Safety of Participants

The safety of participants rested entirely on the researcher, meaning that safety was to be the researcher's priority. It is mandatory that researchers ensured that no harm, either physically or emotionally befell participants (Yip et al, 2016). Their safety was greatly dependant on the researcher's confidentiality and willingness to adhere to research ethics.

1.5.5 Honesty and clarity

Keliso (2016) states that participants must never be embarrassed by the researcher and the researcher should explain to the participants in detail what the research is all about so that they know what they are getting into. The researcher must never use

deception to accumulate data for any particular study. Maree (2012) lists honesty and integrity amongst other considerations as part of ethics.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

De Vaus (2016) defines research design as the strategy used by a researcher to intellectually and frequently combine different aspects of study. Methodology refers to amongst others the methods applied to a study. These methods are systematic and theoretical. Methodology alludes to the approach used towards problems and how the researcher seeks answers to solve those problems. It is how the research would be conducted. The researcher's interests, assumptions, and purpose shape which methodology one actually selects (Taylor, 2015).

1.6.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a naturalistic process that seeks a more profound comprehension of a social phenomenon in its original setting. It aims to answer the question of 'why' instead of the 'what' of social phenomena (Ferrer, 2002). This is a case study that depended on the direct and meaningful daily experiences of humans. Systems of inquiry for the study of human phenomena include the biography, discourse analysis, grounded theory, and phenomenology.

1.6.2 Research design

Research design is a strategy used by a researcher to marry the different categories of study logically and consistently (De Vaus, 2016). The researcher chose a qualitative research design. This is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data; It answers the question of why and how a certain phenomenon may occur rather than how often. Gaston-Gayles (2005) states that one of the characteristics of qualitative design is that interpretation depends on the researcher's perspective and accumulated data. Patton (1990) states that part of being a scholar is to make a follow up on the impact of one's work and to establish if one is making the required difference.

1.6.3 Population and Sampling

Hawkins, Sanson-Fisher, Shakeshaft, D'Este and Green (2007) define population as a complete set of elements, persons or objects that have common characteristic defined by the sampling criteria qualified by the researcher. Sampling is obtaining a group of people, objects, or items from a larger population for measurement. Generalisation can be based on such representatives. Bless (2013) states that convenient sampling is based on the availability of the units of the target population. The researcher's neighbouring schools are more convenient as they will save time and expenditure.

Out of the population of 11 urban primary schools in Mashishing, only 3 primary schools were conveniently sampled. Three primary schools were able to provide sufficient data that the researcher and the study needed. Amongst those schools, my school and two others were conveniently selected due to their proximity. In each primary school, 3 research participants were part of the study, namely the HOD, the teacher and a parent of a grade 4 learner. The total number of research participants amounted to 9. These participants were conveniently selected as they were likely to share more accurate information. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) consider convenience and cost-effectiveness as being important factors to consider when choosing research sites and when involved in research sampling.

1.7 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that typical methods of data generation in the qualitative case study approach include interviews, observation and document review. Qualitative research uses a variety of data generation tools to achieve trustworthiness (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010; Mutch, 2005). The researcher used the following data collection tools:

1.7.1 Interviews

Interviews were the first and major method of data collection in this study. it was priority because of its nature of providing the researcher with better understanding of the participants' behaviour, experience and opinions. ALE (1983) defines the qualitative

research interview as an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee concerning the interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. Collecting these descriptions can be done in several ways such as face-to-face interviews which are the most common way. Shannon (2016) attests that in non-verbal language, displayed mannerisms, including dress, body language and cues can give much information in the face-to-face interview. Such aspects can give researchers adequate information that can be added to the verbal answers of the research participants (Maree (2008). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with heads of departments, teachers and parents of grade 4 learners. This data collection tool is most convenient to use as it aligns with the research design of this study and was likely to play its purpose of gathering adequate data for the study. A template was designed to record feedback for each participant.

1.7.2 Document Review

The second method of data collection is document review. This form of data collection supplemented interviews in that documents provided evidence based guidelines which are essential for this case study. Document review is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and comprehension around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). Documents reviewed comprised mark schedules of grades 3 and 4. Data were compared between the foundation and intermediate phases. Mark schedules on learner performance were reviewed. The second documents reviewed were the Annual Teaching Plans (ATP) to examine its content and quarterly allocation of work. Language Policy Document (LPD) was the third document to be reviewed. The language policy document stipulates legalities on the adaptation of a language in an academic institution and phase. Fourthly staff allocation documents were reviewed. These documents list the employed educators together with their level of qualification. They were to give a clearer picture of the teacher's capacity to work with the grade or phase.

1.7.3 Observation

The third and final method of data collection was observation. Observation is defined by Maree (2012) as a systematic way of capturing the behavioural patterns of objects, occurrences and participants - without questioning or making contact with them. This is a daily activity where one not only engages five senses but also intuition to collect more data. The type of observation used was – Observer as a participant. This form of observation allowed the researcher to be part of the situation but get to focus on the researcher's role as an observer without influencing the dynamics of the setting. Observations were recorded by designing an observation schedule where findings were recorded. The participants observed were grade 3 and 4 teachers during the contact time. This observation stretched for more than five years before the researcher started working at the school as a foundation phase teacher and before being transferred to the intermediate phase where she met most of the discussed current challenges.

The following areas were observed; the teaching environment for grades 3 and 4, the assessment of learners in both phases, the teaching methods used in both phases and the dedication of both the teacher and the learners to their work. The researcher observed the teaching environment to check whether it was an obstacle or it enabled the smooth transition from grade 3 to 4. Teaching methods were observed to determine whether teachers were careful that when learners begin grade 4 they were not having too much work. The researcher checked on whether the manner of assessment in grade 3 was preparing learners for transitioning from grade 3 to 4. Finally, the researcher observed whether the teacher and learner's dedication in grades 3 and 4 were harmonised or otherwise. These observations were backed up by the document review that agreed with the findings. During interviews participants gave strength to gathered data by attesting to the findings.

1.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Mayan (2001) explains analysis of data as the inspection of patterns in the data, analysing those patterns, developing opinions and conclusions formed based on incomplete information. It also involved purposefully gathering data from carefully selected individuals, accepting or refuting the opinions. Analysis continued by

arranging, questioning, thinking, designing and putting those opinions to the test. In this study, the researcher used thematic content analysis and the constant comparative method to analyse data. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic constant analysis as a popular form of data analysis in qualitative research. It emphasises recording patterns or "themes" within the data, examining and pinpointing those themes.

Mayan (2001) believes that thematic analysis is a good approach to research where you're trying to find out something about people's views, opinions, knowledge, experiences or values from a set of qualitative data, for example, interview transcripts. With the data that was collected from interviews, the researcher employed thematic constant analysis by analysing interview schedules and then categorised them into themes. This form of data analysis was also applied in document review and the observation schedules. The schedules were analysed and categorised into themes. Patterns identified in data were referred to as 'themes'. Those themes were sets of data that were important to the description of a phenomenon and are linked to a particular research question.

Thematic content analysis was conducted through the process of coding in six phases to create established, sensible patterns. These phases are familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, scouting for patterns among codes, revising themes, defining and terming themes, and presenting an ultimate report. With constant comparative method the researcher looked at the themes that emerged from interviews, document review and observation. Themes that were similar were compared then clustered together. This was done to enable the researcher to analyse data as required.

1.9 QUALITY CRITERIA

Quality criteria are a tool for assessing the quality of findings in research (Oltmann, 2016). The following are the quality criteria in which findings were analysed;

1.9.1 Credibility

The researcher ensured that the data was correctly recorded to give credibility. To ensure verification, results were drawn from the data. This is credibility (Frankel,

2003). Triangulation was applied to ensure that there were no discrepancies in the findings, which were to be believable and convincing. Validity entails Credibility, internal validity: in this regard, the researcher had the interview questions and observation schedules viewed by the University of Limpopo to verify if they were able to collect the data that was needed. There was a need for the researcher to facilitate quality assurance namely data verification.

1.9.2 Trustworthiness

Two aspects are addressed in this area: Trustworthiness and Validity. Lincoln and Guba, (2003) in Johnson and Turner (2009) describe '*trustworthiness*' as the ability of the researcher to convince the audience that the results of a study are worth paying attention to and that the research is of high quality. The researcher, therefore, made accurate recordings of the data collected. Interviews were recorded and then appropriately transcribed. Documents that were reviewed together with the observation schedules were completed and filed and were part of ensuring quality of the study.

1.9.3 Transferability

Durrheim and Wassenar (2002) state that transferability in qualitative research is synonymous with generalisability, or external validity. Transferability is established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could apply to other contexts, situations, times, and populations. The researcher cannot prove that the research study's findings will be applicable. Instead, the researcher's job is to provide evidence that it could be applicable. It is the researcher's responsibility to provide the database that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of other potential researchers (Creswell, 2003 and Mayan, 2000).

1.9.4 Dependability

Durrheim and Wiassenaar (2002:64) explain dependability as the extent to which the audience is certain that the findings are true as the researcher professes them to be. This means that the findings should be reliable. Can the same results be obtained if the study was repeated? Therefore, the researcher noted any change experienced within the research. The corrections that were done by the participants were noted.

Dependability emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs.

1.9.5 Confirmability

Frankel (2003) assumes that each researcher has a unique perspective on the study. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. To promote confirmability in this study the researcher recorded the procedure of checking and re-checking data throughout the study. Data collected from the interviews, observations and document review were constantly re-checked.

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Hugo (2008) explains the significance of a study as an answer to the question of why the research is essential. What implications result from doing it would have in life? How does it link to other knowledge? How does it inform policy-making? Mkhwananzi (2015) points out that the significance of the study indicates the contribution that the study will make to the broader set of educational problems or literature upon completion. The significance of this study can be described as follows:

- The study is likely to identify the cause of the gap in performance between the foundation phase and the intermediate learners.
- The study is likely to highlight benefits obtained from harmonising the foundation and intermediate phases for learners.
- The study is likely to detect the cause of the gap in performance between the foundation phase and intermediate phase teachers.
- The findings in the study could serve as a base for further investigations on similar topics adding to the lit base on the distinction between the two phases.

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) define limitations as possible constraints in the study and that they are beyond the control of the researcher. In this case the study is limited to Grade 3 and 4 in the foundation and intermediate phase of primary schools. It also focuses only on participants that are involved in those grades. The study is limited to

Mpumalanga province in Mashishing Township. This implies that findings may not necessarily apply to other primary schools in other provinces.

1.12 CHAPTER OUTLINE

A chapter outline shares the contents of each chapter in the study. There are a total of five chapters that were outlined.

1.12.1 Chapter one: This chapter is called an introduction and background to the study. It included aims and objectives and the problem statement. The theoretical framework was highlighted so were the ethical implications that guided the proceedings of the study. What followed was the research methodology and data analysis. Thereafter other topics were included such as quality assurance, the significance of the study and limitations to the study.

1.12.2 Chapter two: This chapter is called literature review. The purpose of this chapter was to consult literature that was related to the topic of study. Previous scholars were cited. It is from this source that definitions and theories were also provided.

1.12.3 Chapter three: This chapter is referred to as the research design and methodology. It is comprised the method that the researcher has used to conduct the research. Methods of data collection were discussed together with the manner of sampling method. The methods of analysing data were also briefly discussed. The name of the research design, namely qualitative was divulged.

1.12.4 Chapter four: This chapter is called data presentation, interpretation and analysis. Data were analysed and findings were presented and interpreted.

1.12.5 Chapter five: This chapter is called summary, conclusion and recommendations. It provided the conclusion of the study and helps to enhance other future studies.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided the introduction and background to the study. The aim of the study was stated together with its objectives of which one of them was to determine how harmony of the foundation and intermediate phases could be understood. This chapter entails the problem statement and adopted Lewin's Change management model as a theoretical framework. Ethical considerations such as safety of participation and their voluntary to participate were discussed amongst others as they were crucial procedures for the study. The research design and methodology were expressed explicitly as well as the population and sampling. Data collection tools such as interviews, document review and observation were elaborated. The two data analysis methods were mentioned which are: thematic content analysis and constant comparative analysis. A quality criterion which entails credibility and trustworthiness was amongst others was discussed. The significant of the study and its limitation was clarified. Finally, the chapter outline introduced all the other chapters that followed in the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the orientation of the study was discussed. The purpose of the study was to review literature. The researcher's point of the study is focused on the management of the transitioning of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase. A principal of a primary school in 2009 in a Gauteng township pleaded for help in assisting the children. The initial language of teaching and learning at this particular school was Zulu (Pretorius 2005). The language of learning and teaching then changed from Zulu to English which was a challenge especially for learners who were to proceed to the intermediate phase. In the foundation phase, learners are taught to read and in the intermediate phase, they read to learn, meaning they should read with understanding in order to answer questions or carry out instructions. In this situation, a drop in performance was experienced as learners tried to adapt to the new language.

After a close analysis, the researcher realised that awarded learners or well-performing learners in the foundation phase seemed to struggle to make ends meet in the intermediate phase. This concern led to this study. Learners need to maintain their good performance without faltering due to the changing of phases. Grade 4 is a transitional grade in which most learners in South Africa move from learning in their home languages to English as the medium of instruction. Schoolwork becomes more formal and grade 4 learners are expected to write formal tests and examinations. In this light, research such as this one plays a crucial role in the education system. It will assist in harmonising the good performance of a learner from the foundation to the intermediate phases. Jacobs (2018) agrees that related research allows other scholars and investigators to elaborate on the frontiers of their field. Literature were reviewed under the guidance of the following sub-headings.

2.2 MOTHER TONGUE VERSUS FOREIGN TONGUE

Scholars have defined the word 'Language' differently based on their study field and research nature. The fact that learners come from different language backgrounds, language can be a useful tool that draws them closer. This is much applicable in diverse lingual classrooms and societies as they are in a country like South Africa. Pretorius (2005) views language shift as a barrier to scholars, Kosonen (2005) agrees

that learners should be left alone to learn in their comfortable mother language without shifting to any other foreign language. He believes that a learner will perform well when allowed to continue in their mother tongue. Language is an issue that should not be taken lightly in the process of learning. This could be detrimental to learners, Kosonen believes that when children are given a chance to learn in their mother language, they can probably enrol and succeed academically. Using a language that learners comprehend, for example, can bring good results in the process of learning while using only a foreign language can harm their mental growth and cause problems for their progress in life. This is evident with the foundation phase pupils when in the intermediate phase learning in English and no longer in their mother tongue.

Botes and Mji (2010) researched Mathematics teaching and they reveal the need to use two languages at the same time to accommodate learners whose competency of the second language, namely, English is uncertain. They maintain that when teaching Mathematics or Mathematics Education, the second language could be introduced. The researcher agrees with this school of thought simply because educational research has proven that most learners tend to struggle with learning a new language from scratch in the 4th grade. Introducing a second language at an early age could alleviate the challenges that are experienced in the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases.

2.3 ENGLISH AS A STATUS BOOSTER

Balfour (2010) believes that parents contribute to the struggle of their children's academic performance. He points out to those parents who consciously select English as the language of teaching and learning. This is to maintain their children's middle-class status or advancement from working class to middle class. The growing misunderstanding that taking children to English-medium schools seems to be a common belief with many parents. They believe it could lessen the level of anxiety in children since they won't struggle with English as a second language. However, there are other reasons, Wright (2012) comments that conscious choices are made by parents for the obvious socio-economic benefit and higher social status. Therefore, parents opt for English for their children for other reasons apart from education.

2.4 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

Grade 4 is a challenging grade for most learners since they are expected to have well-developed reading abilities to be in a position to learn (Phala and Hugo, 2016). In the intermediate phase, learners have different teachers for the first time in their school careers. They also have to study additional new subjects. In all these subjects, reading skills apply whilst reading with understanding is fundamental. Brummer (2014) included a story of a retired teacher who wrote an article portraying the adventure of a 'Crying Robin' a boy who struggled with the transition to a big grade 4 class. The article depicts Robin and other learners who struggled with transitioning to big schools. The teacher was deemed to step in to aid the situation. The role of a teacher is thought to be both human and divine as the teacher's eye should go beyond the physical appearance of a child as stated in the bible in the book of John chapter 13 verses 13. Sumner (2018) explains that the role of a teacher amounts to knowing, understanding, and building relationships with learners, to finally guide and support them better, to succeed academically.

Sumner (2018) asks the question in her journal ...How can teachers help with this transition? How can we assist the children to overcome transitional barriers? In her book '*Inclusive education South Africa*' she also mentions Trevor's transition. Trevor tended to be a slow reader and writer though his literacy skills developed above average in the foundation phase. The teacher ensured that ample time was given to him to finish his tasks because Trevor was nervous and confused when pressured to complete his work. Sheila, the teacher, was concerned that Trevor would find it difficult to cope with the faster pace in grade 4. Sheila, however, believed that she should not bother the grade 4 teacher with all her concerns. Every morning before school, Trevor complained of tummy aches and headaches. This was an indication that he struggled in the new class, namely grade 4. This was brought to Sheila's attention by the parents and it dawned on her that she had made a big mistake by not alerting the grade 4 teacher about Trevor. The situation led to a discussion on how she could prepare both learners and parents for a smooth transition. Some of the suggestions were to devise a standardised form to alert the new grade 4 teachers on the learner's challenges such as time management, writing barriers and peer rejection.

A questionnaire can be used to help the learner to communicate positive and negative feelings about the transition. It might entail questions such as... I am looking forward to I am nervous about.... Things I will miss are... This would alert senior teachers on the condition at home that needs to be considered, e.g. poverty, drugs, strife, alcohol and abuse. Teachers can also access a learner's profile for health conditions, e.g. ear problems etc. The new teacher would also access the intervention strategies to be tried in assisting learners. The researcher believes that this is valuable advice that could help to bridge the gap in performance between the foundation and intermediate learners. The mistake that Sheila made must not become common practice. Teachers need to know about learners under their tutelage, to know how to handle them (Brummer, 2013). In light of this topic, it shows that communication between the foundation and intermediate teachers and scholars is very crucial for the transition process to be smooth and lead to adaptation of all learners in the intermediate phase.

2.5 THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Learners begin education from home. Their first teachers are parents and they have a responsibility of shaping up their character. A balance of education at home and school makes up a pupil's actual learning. Parents must be inspirational and travel with their kids throughout their educational journey. Most successful learners can be traced back to good parental encouragement. Parents' role is not only limited to the home environment but extends to school activities too. Parents play an important role in their children's life (Balbuena and Caballes, 2019). Since learners are easily inspired by what their parents do, it may be good to be a role model in their learning phase. Parents may emphasise how exciting and meaningful life can be if learners are sufficiently devoted to their studies.

Revising lessons together is another best way to be close to the child's learning at school. Doing things together with parents gives them a sense of support and confidence. This not only improves their vocabulary but invokes interest in them to read more. Parents need not skip parent-teacher meetings and interactive sessions. Shah and Mandal (2020) believe that a good relationship between teachers and parents is beneficial to the child's academic performance. Parents need to be inquisitive requesting to learn from the teacher about the child's activities in school.

Parents need to make learning a fun-filled activity. Parents can be creative and devise in interesting ways. The use of games can assist in teaching abstract concepts. Parents can take advantage of travelling and playing time to help learners memorize and revise the difficult subject areas with some fun tricks. Parents can perform fun quizzes and friendly debates at home that cover pupils' lessons or include flashcard activities to revise their subjects with fun is needed (Darling- Hammond, 2015). Parents need to contribute to a smooth transitioning process, between the foundation and the intermediate learners.

2.6 THE EFFECTS OF OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS

Herselman and Fourie (2000), state that there's a continuous debate on the practicality of this educational curriculum. This however does not contribute in terms of ensuring that quality teaching and effective learning is taking place in schools. One of the biggest concerns about the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is that facilities with a high total number of learners, especially the foundation phase struggle to create a suitable environment of teaching and learning. Not more than 30 learners can be accommodated in a standard class. In most classrooms, learner ratios are between 40 and 60 and classrooms are overcrowded without much room to move around. The foundation phase educator, who functions as a mother, can barely provide quality education let alone give quality time to each learner in a congested classroom. It is evident that the effects of overcrowded classrooms cause much harm to the transitioning process of learners from foundation to intermediate phase.

2.7 THE CHALLENGE OF READING

Pretorius and Ribbens (2005:140) state that learners begin by being taught to read in the first grades and then advance to the intermediate phase where they need to read with comprehension to learn. Therefore, learners have to be able to read fluently, to perform well academically. Learners should master information text and explicitly analyse different types of texts. They need to display comprehension skills to academically excel in the new grade. The DBE (2007:10) stipulates that Grade 4 learners need to, *inter alia*, display several characteristics of being fluent readers. They should *inter alia* be in a position to recognise most familiar words on sight, read more complex sentence structures, understand implied meaning and be able to read fluently

60 words per minute. This could imply that the ability for a child to use a narrative framework has an impact on performance in the classroom, in reading with understanding, or in story writing (Drago, 2018). For those grade 4 teachers who receive learners who cannot read they find themselves in dire stress as they struggle to help the child who at this level should be able to read and understand texts themselves.

Place (2016:52) aptly states about the grade 4 classroom: He contends that the teachers of learners in these classes need to play their role in providing the challenge and support these children require to advance their skills in language learning and their ability to read. Mkhwananzi (2015) stresses that the transitioning process from phase to phase can be a nightmare especially for learners moving from the 3rd grade to the 4th. Many parents will testify that the transition from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase can be a mammoth task. The child's workload increases substantially in grade 4. Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is to be followed and this curriculum encourages a child to be independent, as explained by Madi Mbambo, a grade 5 teacher in Petermaritzburg who is quoted in (Mkhwananzi, 2015). She adds that CAPS requires children to work and think on their own. It encourages critical thinking. Learners need to learn to research information on their own. This however poses a problem because if one has been assisting the child, it's time to let go.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2001: 130) states that there is a manifesto on value, education and democracy whose aim is to provide the opportunity for every South African to be able to read, write, count and think. In line with this, the Department of Basic Education has pressed for all learners to be taught to read from an early age. Pretorius and Ribbens (2005:140) advise that learners move from learning to read during the foundation phase to reading to learn in the intermediate phase. It is therefore, important for teachers to prioritise learning to read during the foundation phase so as to alleviate the challenge of reading and make smooth the transition process of learners. It is thus expected that on entering grade 4, learners would have received adequate training to be able to read English and their home language fluently and with understanding. It is also stated in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in Language Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing that, the learner will be able

to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts (DBE 2004:5).

However, various research reports, among which are the reports on the Annual National Assessment (ANA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), show that many grade 4 learners fail to master reading. This has far-reaching implications for their ability to read and study during the years they spend at school and for their eventual success at school and future employment. The reason for grade 4 learners' poor performance in reading deserves attention. A review of literature unveils that grade 4 teachers, during the observation of reading lessons, struggled to help learners with sounds. Although the study was done on a small scale, the researcher trusted that it could help to understand why there were many learners in grade 4 with reading problems and to find solutions to deal with the problem.

2.7.1 Importance of reading

Reading is a very difficult task that every human is expected to perform. It is also complex to learn and to teach (Smith, 2009:15). Smith and Read (2005) agree that the reader's experience and the text tally to make sense. Prater (2007) explains that the task of reading is a taxing cognitive process. It requires concentration, understanding, remembrance and retrieval process so that the reader spontaneously decodes words. Recognising and analysing words are the most crucial components in reading (Landsberg, Kruger and Nel 2005). Learning to read is not an inborn process and it calls for well structured and informed instruction (DBE, 2007). As challenging as it is, reading plays a crucial part in the transitioning process of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase. It equips learners to understand themselves, accumulate information throughout the intermediate, senior phases and for the rest of their lives. They also learn to appreciate language (Joubert, Bester and Meyer 2008).

In the foundation phase, the comprehension of the text is very important. Learners are taught how to read and this involves the ability to recognise words and to decode them, with understanding. The foundation phase teachers need to maximise on training learners this skill. In the higher grades, comprehending text is of more importance, although word recognition is still involved (Dednam, 2005). When primary school scholars reach grade four without the skill of recognising words, they struggle to read

and make the transitioning process from foundation to intermediate phases a struggle. Teachers use phonics to teach reading or the look-and-say approach. However, a combination of the two approaches is the most appropriate (Joubert, 2013:112-116). The bottom-up model elaborates the phonic approach to reading. This model aligns with the school of thought of behaviourism, which believes that reading is a process that moves from parts to the whole (Joubert, Bester and Meyer 2008:84). Letter-sound relations are taught first followed by sounding and saying words.

In the foundation phase, reading is taught in the learners' home language. From grade 4 onwards learners are taught in either English or Afrikaans. With regard to the grade 4 learners whose teachers were interviewed in the research project, English was their second language which was used as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). Reading is also important for learning and studying because it gives readers access to knowledge in an information-driven society. It is therefore, one of the responsibilities of foundation phase teachers to instil well-developed reading skills and abilities in learners so that they can read and progress in school from grade 4 onwards and eventually in their careers.

Stanovich, as cited in (Gillet and Crawford, 2004) argues that teaching young learners to read is the school's single most important task because reading can open up an imaginative world to learners, offering them concepts for naming and understanding experiences, which will help them to learn many subjects and boost their power of reflection. But if learners do not master the art of reading at an early stage, it could have far-reaching consequences. Jennings, Caldwell and Lerner (2006:3) reason that reading difficulties are not only problematic for learners as individuals when they fail to master the skill of reading with comprehension which could influence their academic progress but also impacts a nation and society as a whole. Low reading levels could result in poor performance, high rates of school dropouts, unemployment and increase crime.

Grade 4 is a transitional grade in which the majority of learners in South Africa move from teaching and learning in their home languages to English as the medium of instruction. School-work becomes more formal and the grade 4 learners are expected to write formal tests and examinations. Pretorius and Ribbens (2005:140) emphasise that learners move from learning to read during the foundation phase to reading to

learn in grade 4, and as a result, learners have to be in a position to be able to read fluently to be successful in school. Learners are expected to be able to read expository text and critically analyse a variety of texts. They are now expected to read, write and comprehend what they have read to cope with the academic demands of grade 4.

DBE (2007) stipulates that grade 4 learners may, amongst others, display the following characteristics as fluent readers. They are expected to be able to

- use different 'cueing' systems,
- recognise words on sight that are familiar,
- read fluently 60 words per minute,
- understand intended meaning,
- read sentences with complex structures,
- demonstrate a developing knowledge of story elements, and
- familiarise themselves with the use of reference materials with guidance.

The above characteristics are set out by the Department of Basic Education and are evident that grade 4 and all intermediate phase learners should have well-developed reading skills which will enable them to use their reading skills. For learners who were trained in reading in a home language other than English, this could pose a concern as it might take them a while to transfer their reading skills to English which in grade 4 becomes their language of learning and teaching. In this regard, Place (2016:52-53) states that the level of difficulty in speaking English and reading it is unequal throughout the classrooms. Some children excel in both their mother tongue and in a first additional language. However, not all learners are as gifted as expected.

2.7.2 Reading performance of grade 4 learners

The percentages of learners who underperform in South Africa are unacceptably high. Other developing and relatively wealthy countries face identical problems (DBE, 2011:34). Department of Basic Education has been measuring performance in literacy and numeracy in grade 3 and 6 (DBE, 2011). The evaluation revealed poor performance in those areas. DBE further conducted the Annual National Assessment (ANA) in literacy and numeracy for learners in grades 2 to 7 from 2011 to 2014. In

2015 learners did not do the ANA tests due to unfavourable circumstances. This is the reason why only the results for up to the end of 2014 are available. In 2014 there was an increase in the overall scores of language results.

Certain learners read below their grade level and also a group of learners could not read at all. From the data, it was noted that learners were unable to read as a result of a lack of a proper foundation in reading in the lower grades. They were therefore battling with the demands of grade 4. Learners were not taught how to read but were expected to use reading to understand other learning areas in Grade 4. This posed an impediment as reading was not taught in grade 4.

Rault-Smith (2009:35) asserts that learners entering grade 4 are expected to be fluent and independent readers. They are expected to be able to read on their own. Reading is very important because it makes a child to be self-reliant. During classroom observation, a group of researchers noted that when learners were tasked to read, most read word for word and still required assistance from the teacher. The researchers got the impression that those learners were taught to read only using the phonic method or the bottom-up approach. They were not trained to see a word or a sentence as a whole. Their vocabulary was limited due to English being their first additional language and as a result, they were not fluent in reading. This could affect reading comprehension. Learners became easily distracted and frustrated; they read slowly and could not understand what they had read about.

2.7.3 Lack of training for intermediate teachers on reading skills

Even though teachers were trained to teach Grade 4 learners, not all of them were trained on how to teach reading. For example, the phonic method, the whole-word method and the combination of the two methods raised a major concern. From the data collected, only two participants were qualified as junior primary school teachers and they were thus trained to teach reading. Three of the participants were qualified as Intermediate phase teachers and one had not been trained as a teacher. This indicates except for the two teachers who were initially trained for the foundation phase and thus received training on how to teach reading. The other teachers were not trained or retrained to teach reading. Intermediate phase teachers needed more

training to know how to teach reading and specifically reading skills, which includes the main methods and approaches to teaching. It is evident that there is no link between teaching reading in the foundation phase and in the intermediate phase, in the curricula of the teacher training institutions. Questions about what should be done when a learner progresses from grade 3 to 4 being still unable to read according to the demands of the grade 4 classroom, need to be attended to so that these learners could be helped.

2.8 THE ABSENCE OF DEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT

Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2008) agrees that there is an increased need for educator support in South Africa due to the aftermath of apartheid, as well as unprepared teachers to deal with demands posed by curricular reform. There is inadequate support that is leaving educators feeling unsupported and not having the muscle to face the challenges presented by the new education system. There is limited evidence of support for primary school educators in South Africa. Teachers in grade 3 need much support in order to prepare the learners for the next grade. A key recommendation by review of literature was that more curriculum instructors (CI) and heads of the department be employed to increase the capacity of support for primary school educators. Departmental support is very much essential in lessening the friction in the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase. This is only possible when the struggles of teachers are attended to and their work made less strenuous.

The National Policy on the Organisational roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts, National Education Evaluation and Development Unit, (2013) prescribe that education districts and circuit offices are required to conduct the following duties: school visits, classroom observation, consultation, cluster meetings, suitable feedback reports and other means: providing an enabling environment and organising provision and support for the professional development of managers, educators and administrative staff members and holding education institutions in a district area to account for their performance.

Curriculum instructors need to go deep into the needs of the current state of the education system. The issue of overcrowding in classes and learning difficulties

portrayed by learners could prompt a need for special training to counter such challenges. Educator support is a vital ingredient in the functioning of education systems across the world. Generally, educators require support to be able to handle the reality of the teaching and learning process (DBE, 2013:8). Whilst CIs monitor and support teachers with content, they also need to support teachers to cope with the real issues they face in the classroom, namely the teachers. The transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases may be affected negatively if they are not trained to handle the challenging issues in their classes. This could lead to learners not being ready for the next grade, due to unmanaged or mismanaged transitioning from foundation to intermediate.

2.9 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Policy initiatives implemented quality assurance in the general education system in 1997. The National Department of Education joined the "All Africa and World Educational Projects Group". The main focus of this project was to enhance the quality of science and language teaching in South Africa. The development of guidelines for the whole school development and the design of a policy framework for quality assurance in the education and training system in South Africa resulted from this initiative (RSA DBE, 2000a; 2000b; 2000c). The guidelines of the National Framework provided direction for the evaluation of schools. These criteria and guidelines were decided upon after various discussions with all the representatives from the National and Provincial Education Departments and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the nine provinces. The framework with its guidelines forms part of the Tirisano Implementation Plan of the Minister of Basic Education, Professor Kadar Asmal. This plan started in January 2021 and was terminated at the end of 2004. The main aim of Tirisano was to improve the effectiveness of schools and to enhance educator professionalism. Where there is good monitored quality of education, transition in schools becomes easier as quality learners are also produced, meaning that teachers are assisted in helping learners to prepare adequately for the next phase.

Currently, a whole school development approach is advocated according to which schools are evaluated against clear and open criteria. School assessors have to inform schools on the criteria against which they will be evaluated and needs to guide schools on how they can evaluate their performance. It is anticipated that the self-evaluation

process will play a major role in the quality assurance processes of schools. The underlying assumption is that quality assurance systems are dependent on whole-school evaluation to make meaningful interventions that will hopefully raise standards of performance and improve learners' achievement. The quality assurance system increases the chances of a smooth transition of primary scholars from the foundation to the intermediate phase in that it ensures quality of education. The implementation of the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) of 1996 can be viewed as another important milestone in introducing quality assurance in the South African schooling system. This Act mandates the Minister of Basic Education to monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided by schools (DOE, 2000a). The Act also specifies that should the evaluation reveal problems in complying with the provisions of the constitution, the head of the department in that Province will have to account to the Minister in writing within 90 days.

Within this law, the framework is set for all stakeholders to be accountable for the quality assurance process in their provinces. Stakeholders were to introduce quality in education that would harmonise the foundation and intermediate phases. The Tirisano Implementation Plan would ensure that transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase was supported by a recommendable quality of education. As mentioned earlier, school effectiveness and educator professionalism are two of the priority programs of the then Minister of Basic Education as stipulated in the Tirisano Implementation Plan. In terms of that program, the whole school evaluation played a key role in seeking to:

- introduce a strict accountability system to see how well each school is doing, how it compares with other schools and if it was meeting requirements;
- improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as standards achieved in schools.
- Schools were to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses to target interventions;
- monitor the progress of education transformation,
- Schools were to be able to prove the success of new policies;
- identify pockets of excellence within the system, which were to serve as models of good practices; and

- improve the general understanding of what those factors created when implemented.

2.10 CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION

To get enrolled in the education programs one has to have a junior degree. The degree must have at least three teaching subjects to be considered for foundation phase, senior phase (SP) and further education and training (FET) teaching specializations in any of the South African universities. Some college students have less than three teaching subjects. As a result, they are considered for the foundation phase (FP) specialization hence other specializations require three teaching subjects (Kamla-Raj, 2012). FP specialization accepts applicants with two, one and even none of the teaching subjects. These applicants are considered if they have modules with the underpinnings relevant to FP teaching. These underpinnings are psychology, sociology, social work, nursing science and others with relevancy to teaching young children. They should have done these modules up to the second-year level to qualify for admission.

The specialization of these students is determined by the nature of the subjects they have in their initial degrees. No matter how much they like teaching in the upper phases if their subjects deny them, they eventually fall into the FP specialisation. Teachers coming from college are forced by the circumstance of their results to fall into the foundation phase whereas they do not have an interest in teaching young children. They just teach for the sake of receiving an income. This could make the transition process from foundation to intermediate phase difficult. Kamla-Raj (2012) attests that this education qualification was introduced to address the shortage of foundation phase teachers. Bachelor of Education degree is a four-year-long qualification but does not produce ample teachers in the country. This qualification was an attempt to speed up the process of accumulating competent teachers. Matured individuals who have degrees were trained.

Kamla-Raj (2012) also states that there was a high turnover between 9000 and 27000 in the department whereas a low percentage joined in. A great explanation could be that most people are not aware of what they are getting themselves into. They have a blurred knowledge of what it is to be a teacher. Career counselling could have been

the key to limiting high turnover. The continuous introduction of new teachers could affect the transition process negatively. New teachers may take a long time to adapt to the system and understand learners under their tutelage.

2.11 IMPORTANCE OF CAREER COUNSELLING

Gordon (2005) argues that career counselling is important for the mental and career development of college students. It assists them to mature and deepen their personalities. They also self-reflect and restructure beliefs. Choosing a career is a crucial step in the establishment of self-identity (Good, 2008). Career counselling entails attitude development and basic skills needed in any organization. Choosing a career is a hunt for satisfaction and self-identity (Mara and Mara, 2010). College students choose foundation phase teaching specialization but do not get satisfaction and do not want to identify with teachers of young children. Career counselling helps in creating awareness and purpose for the intended work. It also helps individuals in refining their level of work despite the challenges brought by the work atmosphere. Most organizations do not offer important support to assist teachers to develop after they have been employed. As a result, they become incompetent. Teachers become unsettled and then leave the employment.

Career counselling and development could help teachers face the challenges and be able to solve some. When done properly career counselling can do wonders in an individual's personality and performance at work. It does not only enhance his work skills but brings out his hidden resourcefulness. Career counselling takes care of various aspects like personal insight, support and even a better understanding. Other than these, it helps in building a high motivational level by understanding the individualistic wants (McMahon, 2006). Career counselling inspires every individual to make a career for themselves in the field in which their interest and passion lie. Career counselling helps individuals to know what they are getting themselves into. Career counselling could help college students to understand their strengths and to keep their vision and values ahead of anything else.

If the person's inner needs are not being met by work, then there is no motivation except perhaps basic survival. If teachers are not motivated they are likely not to exert their best effort in their work, making the transition processes not to be as smooth as

it should be. Even the highest abilities, without the right motivation to exercise them, are useless and potentially destructive, stultifying for the person and frustrating for the organization (Good, 2008). Gordon and Habley (2000) maintain that 'career counselling introduces individuals to theories such as trait and factor, developmental decision making and social learning theories. The trait and factor theory allow college students to project their preferences on occupational titles and roles assigns individuals to modal personality styles, including realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional.' Career counselling is the art of honing a career that is developed at a very early stage in every individual. Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad and Herman (1951) and Super (1990) as cited by Gordon and Habley (2000) argue that career development occurs generally from childhood through fantasy by young persons or adults.

Therefore, career counselling is a way of career crystallization, specification, implementation, stabilization and consolidation as Gordon and Habley (2000) put it. Teachers who get into the specialization without undergoing these stages are likely to quit. Since theories prove that career development at a young age, students should be encouraged to pursue their careers and not change because of the circumstances. Career counselling is not only important to students who are choosing careers but also to policymakers. Policymakers are recognizing the importance of career counselling in assisting to achieve policy goals related to lifelong learning, employment and social equity (McMahon, 2006). This statement bears testimony to career counselling as one way in which people can have lifelong employment. Policies would not be implementable if people who are expected to enforce do not have a passion for their career. In many cases people resist change and this could be the reason for being in an employment position by default.

2.11.1 Impact of lack of career counselling

In some cases, parents put pressure on college students by choosing a career for them. In due respect, students take the specialization and in the middle of the study, they realize that it is not their calling. If career counsellors were there to lead teachers, the situation would have been different. Review of literature reports that employees are unlikely to live long in any kind of employment if they have no passion for it. People who have an alternative qualification are even worse. Once they get the desired

employment they quit. Students find it difficult to say goodbye to their past life roles as Chen (1999) maintains. This results in the shortage of teachers in the foundation phase. Sajid (2010) reveals that in Pakistan it is reported that there is a lack of career counselling. The literacy rate is so low that people are not equipped with enough education on how they can be self-guided about the career direction. The dilemma of South Africa is that even many educated people undermine this critical issue of career counselling.

Many parents forced their children to choose the field they decided for them whether they had the abilities or not, they had to conform. This would impact the entire organisation negatively. In her speech, the former Minister of Basic Education, Naledi Pandor (2005) stated that there is empirical evidence that the richer the learning environments in schools, the better children learn. The environment cannot be rich if teachers who are teaching in that phase are not passionate about their job. Counselling learners about careers will expose facts about a particular career in question and those facts will inform the decisions to be made by the student about what they want to do. In the study conducted by Salleh and Mustapha (2010) on the influence of contextual aspects on teachers' career planning and development, the results showed that contextual factors have influenced the choice of teachers' career decisions. The authors highlight two facts such as the lack of role models in the family and lack of career information received at home which influences the respondents' career decisions.

Serving teachers may already have a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and degrees but not having a teaching qualification. PGCE is a qualification that can be completed in two years if done part-time but only a year if it's done on a full-time basis. Most serving teachers who are fresh from university apply for this qualification after having completed their main degrees. They apply for PGCE due to failed job hunting. Despite their high qualification status of holding honours and masters' degrees in their respective field of study, students will fail to find a job for a maximum of three years. They resort to the teaching profession out of desperation after having looked in vain for a job in their specialised area of study. They opt to take up the one-year training to enter into the field of teaching without considering their true passion, moreover, choosing to be a foundation phase teacher. Serving teachers are not at any point advised on the decisions they make regarding their choice of specialization and

regarding their choice of teaching as a career. Only their qualification for admission is considered. Generally speaking, there is inadequate counselling in the department for those who want to take up the teaching profession to become either foundation or intermediate phase teachers.

2.12 MONETARY INCENTIVES

There are some other factors that draw serving teachers into the foundation phase specialization. Some serving teachers qualify to do specialization in upper grades but because there are some incentives in the foundation phase specialization then serving teachers choose to specialize in the education of young children. There's a belief that there are bigger chances of getting a bursary for people who want to specialize in the foundation phase. Most individuals are willing to work in rural areas since the awarding of the bursary uses this as one of its criteria. Serving teachers need money therefore, they get tempted to specialize in the field they are not passionate about (Hargreaves, 2007). In the context of South Africa foundation phase classes were marginalized long ago and are now receiving attention from the Department of Basic Education, Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Higher Education Institutions (HEI). There is a lot of money that has been injected into this field. At higher education institutions, students who specialize in education training are granted bursary as the way to increase the number of teachers who teach in this field. This makes the transition process more difficult because learners are not well trained at the foundation phase. Teachers have no passion for the learners but are rather surviving and making a living from the job they have been hired to do. They care less about the academic development of their learners.

2.13 EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

When children encounter distressing or frightening experiences, it can challenge their sense of security and the predictability of their world. These events include traumatic death in the family, brutal car accidents, floods, bushfires and sudden illness, crime, abuse, or violence. Cook and Spinazzola (2017) add that children's responses to experiences rely on several factors. These may include their stage of development, age and the impact on their parents or relevant others including siblings or next of kin. Naturally, adults would want to protect children from harsh realities. However, when

children are kept in the unknown, they are not necessarily protected from the impact of emotional distress and frightening events. Keeping them in the dark could somehow make things worse. Learners who are affected by trauma tend to struggle academically if they are not urgently attended to and thereby making the transition process from the foundation to the intermediate phase cumbersome.

Cook and Spinazzola (2017), explain that children are keen observers and will easily pick up a tense atmosphere even if no one in the family talks to them about it. If a child has not been told the facts about a situation, they revert to filling in the gaps using their imaginations, previous experiences and knowledge. Since children are naturally self-centered, they may conclude that the tragedy was somehow their fault. A child, for example, may conclude that God sent sickness to kill their parent to punish them for disobedience. In some cases, a child may have scarier imaginations than what actually happened. Evidence of this would be seen in the child's academic performance and behaviour.

2.13.1 Children's reactions to trauma

As children grow older, their reactions change. A child may react surprisingly in a way one did not expect. Depending on their age and stage, they may not have obtained the ability to express their feelings and thoughts to those around them. They may also struggle to use their language skills to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Sometimes, symptoms of distress emerge weeks or even months later. These reaction problems could be a sleeping problem, refusing to get out of bed and nightmares. They may also portray a change in their eating habits and continuously seek attention. Some learners may refuse to go to school or have negative behaviour at school resulting in a drop in performance. Other common reactions could include withdrawal from social life and mysterious physical ailments, such as headaches and stomach aches (Osofsky and Pruett, 2004). Children need immediate attention to help them to cope with such predicaments. Professional counselling could be necessary to help the child's cognitive state and thereby making the transitioning process from the foundation to intermediate phase a success.

2.13.2 Possible intervention of parents and carers

Cook and Spinazzola (2017) observed that children look to their parents and carers to gain an understanding of a situation and find appropriate ways to deal with it. The first step in helping the child could be coming in the open about what happened and why it happened using age-appropriate language. A parent could also try to gauge if the child understands what happened by assisting the child to play or talk about their thoughts and feelings. In an instance a child may choose to open up about their feelings to someone else, a parent must comply and not make demands on the child as this could lead to conflict. Children need to be reassured that their feelings are normal by a parent telling them how they feel. However, this should be limited so that the child is not burdened. When children are given the help they need to overcome trauma, they may cope with their school work and thereby make the transition process from the foundation to the intermediate phases smooth.

2.14 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

As a result of trauma, a learner can incur learning difficulties. This could tremendously affect the transition process if no attention is given to the affected learner. Teachers who face the challenging task of dealing with learners with learning difficulties need support from other teachers, parents and communities to effectively provide adequate education to learners. Learners are a product of the influences acting upon them (Bailey and Flack, 2005). Therefore, if teachers are to identify such learners, they need to understand what is happening to those learners. Inclusive education is relevant as this study explores the struggle experienced in the transition process of learners at the primary school level, from the foundation to the intermediate phases. For such a process to occur smoothly, learners' struggles need to be addressed.

Brady and Woolfson (2008) explain that teachers' efficacy is what a teacher feels about learners with learning disabilities and is vital in identifying and supporting such learners. Lampropoulou and Padeliadu (1997) state that if teachers are not supportive of inclusion then they may not be willing to adapt their teaching styles to accommodate learners with learning difficulties (LD). What a teacher feels about learners with disabilities is likely to have an impact in the classroom on the teacher's behaviour and learner's outcome. A study was conducted in Cyprus by Georgiou, Christou,

Stavrinides and Panaoura, (2002) who investigated the relationship between teachers' attributions of learners' failure and teachers' behaviour towards failing learners. They found that the level of teachers' efficacy either promoted or depleted the help the learner received from the teacher. In light of these findings, it is important that teachers develop a positive attitude towards struggling learners so as to contribute to a smooth transitioning of learners from foundation to the intermediate phase.

Reyna (2000) found that all the stereotypes directed at learners, make learners doubt themselves and lose confidence in their abilities and thus have a negative perception of themselves and their future. A learner who lacks confidence is likely to struggle in academic performance. This poses a struggle for the grade 4 teacher. Mainstream teachers are generally found to be sometimes against the idea of inclusive education (Tait and Purdie, 2000). The intermediate phase teachers are sceptical towards inclusion as it seems burdensome especially when one lacks the training thereof. A close connection exists between the teachers' understanding of the learners' ability and the way teachers facilitate new knowledge based on experience. This has proven to be very important for effective teaching, which results in learning becoming an active process between a learner and teacher (Alant and Cassy, 2005). As researched by Swart and Phasha (2005), South African teachers' are inadequately trained to deal with parents and communities and this could be detrimental to teachers' efficacy, especially in assisting in the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases.

2.15 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The literature reviewed in this chapter shed more light on the transition of learners from foundation to intermediate phases in schools. The South African educational system applied in primary schools was elaborated upon. Authors have been quoted on topics such as language barrier, the role of teachers and parents, inclusive education, challenges of reading and mother tongue versus foreign tongue. The role of parents in the transition was also discussed followed by the effects of overcrowded classes. Overcrowded classes hinder the teacher's creativity and paralyse essential activities that need to take place in a classroom environment. Several points have been extracted from this review of literature making it clear that the transitioning of primary scholars from foundation to intermediate phases is not as simple as it appears.

This amongst others is complicated by myriad factors like the individual differences of primary scholars and their teachers. The support provided by parents from home to their children has share on the progress on transitioning. In the following chapter, research design and methodology was discussed.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, literature was reviewed and several factors that impact the transition process were shared. From the literature review, it is quite clear that both the parents and the teaching staff play a vital role towards the transitioning process of primary scholars from the foundation to the intermediate phase. This chapter explores the research design and methodology of the study. Methodology refers to the methods applied to a study. These methods are systematic and theoretical (Taylor, 2015). Methodology alludes to one's approach towards problems and how one seeks answers to solve those problems. It is how the research was conducted. An individual's interests, assumptions and purpose shape which methodology one actually partake in (Taylor, 2015).

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This is a qualitative research study. This approach was appropriate for this study because it concentrates on phenomena, attitudes and opinions. It is a naturalistic process that seeks a more profound comprehension of a social phenomenon in its original setting. It aims at answering the question of 'why' instead of the 'what' of social phenomena (Ferrer, 2002). This is a case study that depended on the direct and meaningful daily experiences of humans. Systems of inquiry for the study of human phenomena included biography, discourse analysis, grounded theory and phenomenology.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a strategy used by a researcher to marry the different categories of study logically and consistently (De Vaus, 2016). The researcher used a qualitative design. This is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data; it answers the question of why and how a certain phenomenon may occur rather than how often. Gaston-Gayles (2005) state that one of the characteristics of qualitative design is that interpretation depends on the researcher's perspective and accumulated data. Patton (1990) states that part of being a scholar is to make a follow up on the impact of one's work and to establish if one is making the required difference.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Sharma (2017) defines population and sampling as a process of taking a subset of subjects that is representative of the entire population. The sample must have sufficient size to warrant analysis of data. Sampling is done usually because it is impossible to test every single individual in the population. Since it is impossible for the researcher to test every single individual in the primary school, only three primary schools have been sampled from a total of 18. Population sampling was also done to save time, money and effort while conducting the research.

3.4.1 Population

Hawkins, Sanson-Fisher, Shake Shaft, D'Este and Green (2007) explain population in research terminology as a comprehensive group of individuals, institutions, objects and so forth which have common characteristics that are of interest to a researcher. The common characteristics of the groups distinguish them from other individuals, institutions, objects and so forth. Sometimes the population can be counted easily, which is called finite population. In this case study, three schools were sampled out of a population of 18 primary schools in Mashishing. From the three schools, only educators who were directly involved with the transition grades which are grades 3 and 4 were sampled.

3.4.2 Sampling

Sampling is obtaining a group of people, objects, or items from a larger population for measurement. Generalisation can be based on such representatives. Bless (2013) states that convenience sampling is based on the availability of the units of the target population. Out of the population of 18 urban primary schools in Mashishing, only 3 schools were conveniently sampled. One of the research sites was the researcher's school. These were conveniently selected due to their proximity. In each school 3 research participants were part of the study, namely the HOD, the teacher and a parent of a grade 4 learner. The total number of research participants amounts to 9. These participants were likely to bring more accurate data. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) consider convenience and cost-effectiveness as being important factors to consider when choosing research sites. Maree (2008) debates that purposive

sampling is not only limited to the selection and sampling of participants - but also settings or events where data were collected.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that typical methods of data generation in the qualitative case study approach include interviews, observation and document review. The researcher recorded and transcribed all the responses from interviews. Information from documents was recorded and filed. Observed scenarios were recorded in an observation schedule. Qualitative research uses a variety of data generation tools to achieve trustworthiness (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010 and Mutch, 2013). To collect data, the researcher used the following tools:

3.5.1 Interviews

ALE (1983:174) defines the qualitative research interview as an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee concerning the interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. Collecting these descriptions can be done in several ways of which face-to-face interviews are the most common. This method aids to acquire factual information, respondent's evaluations, preferences and attitudes during the conversation. The interviewer can probe for explanations of responses.

The face-to-face interview was selected as the type of interview method. It is a data collection tool whereby the interviewer uses a set of questions to directly communicate with the respondent verbally. Shannon (2016) explains that nonverbal language, displays of mannerisms, including dress, body language and cues can give much information in the face-to-face interview. Such aspects can give the interviewer a lot of excess information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee. In other words, the face-to-face interview method increases the rate of responses and also ensures the quality of data collected.

Body language and facial expression are more clearly identified and understood allowing for more in-depth data collection and comprehensive understanding. Extra questions, especially open-ended, can be used to access detailed information.

Memory probing material and visual aids can be used to support the interview. The interviewer can help the respondent to understand the questions, however, there is likely to be an unconscious influence or manipulation of the interviewer (Shannon, 2016). This type of data collection method can be time-consuming. Respondents are also likely to feel uneasy about anonymity when asked sensitive questions. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with HODs, teachers, and parents. This data collection tool is most convenient to use as it aligns with the research design of this study and played its purpose of gathering adequate data for the study. A total range of questions were used in the interviews. A schedule was designed to record feedback for each participant. To maximise the utilisation of these tools an interview schedule was prepared in advance to guide the process.

3.5.2 Document review

This is the second data collection in this study. Qualitative research entails document review as a form of a data collection tool. Documents were interpreted by the researcher to give meaning and weight to the research topic (Bowen, 2009). A rubric was used to grade or score documents. There were several reasons why researchers choose to use document review. Firstly, document review is an efficient way of gathering data because documents are manageable and practical resources. Documents are commonplace and come in different forms, making documents a very accessible and reliable source of data. Obtaining and analysing documents is often far more cost-efficient and time-efficient than conducting one's research or experiments (Bowen, 2009). Also, documents are stable, non-reactive data sources, meaning that they can be read and reviewed multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher's influence or by the research process (Bowen, 2009: 31).

With document review, documents were gathered and reviewed. Such documents comprised academic annual mark schedules, staff allocation, Annual Teaching Plans (ATP) and Language Policy (LP). Data were compared between the foundation and intermediate phases on learner performances. Planning took place before actual document analysis occurred. The researcher had a detailed plan to ensure reliable results. O'Leary (2014) suggests 8-step that were followed in the planning process, not just in document review, but in all textual analysis:

- A list to explore had to be created, for example; population or participants.
- Texts were accessed with attention to linguistic or cultural barriers.
- Biases were addressed and acknowledged.
- Appropriate skills for research were developed.
- Considered strategies for ensuring credibility.
- Know the data one is searching for
- Consider ethical issues (e.g., confidential documents) and
- The researcher should have a backup plan.

3.5.3 Observation

This is the third and last data collection tool. Observation is defined by Maree (2012) as a systematic way of capturing the behavioural patterns of objects, occurrences and participants without questioning or making contact with them. This is a daily activity where one not only engages their five senses but also intuition to collect more data. The observation type used was the observer as a participant. This form of observation allowed the researcher to be part of the situation without influencing the dynamics of the setting. Observations were recorded by designing an observation schedule where findings were recorded. The researcher concentrated mainly on the teaching method used, the teaching environment, manner of assessment and the teacher and learner dedication. The researcher put emphasis on observing the 4 mentioned aspects in order to determine their impact on the transitioning of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases. The researcher was convinced that the observed aspects were directly linked to the transitioning of learners from the mentioned phases.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Mayan (2001) explains analysis of data as the inspection of patterns in the data, analysing those patterns, developing opinions and conclusions formed based on incomplete information. Purposefully gathering data from carefully selected individuals or targeted topics, accepting or refuting the opinions, and then continuing analysis by arranging, questioning, thinking, designing and putting those opinions to the test. The data analysed were the responses from interviews which were recorded and transcribed, the information recorded from the reviewed documents and the observed

points from the researcher's school. The researcher used the thematic content analysis and the constant comparative analysis methods to analyse data.

3.6.1 Thematic Content Analysis

The researcher used thematic content analysis and the constant comparative method to analyse data. Braun and Clarke (2006) define the thematic constant analysis as a popular form of data analysis in qualitative research. It emphasises recording patterns or "themes" within the data, examining and pinpointing those themes. With the data that was collected from interviews, the researcher employed thematic content. Interview schedules were analysed and then categorised into themes. This form of data analysis is also applied to the observation schedules. Those schedules were reviewed and categorised into themes. Patterns were identified in data and those patterns are referred to as 'themes'. Those themes were sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are linked to a particular research question. This means that each theme could address a research question that sought to discover the cause of friction in the transitioning of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase.

3.6.2 Constant Comparative Method

This is the second data analysis method. The constant comparative method is part of grounded theory. Document analysis is also one of the methods of data collection used. The constant comparative method was used to analyse the documents that were compiled from both the foundation and the intermediate phases. Grade 3 mark schedules were compared contently with the grade 4 schedules to find out if there are any gaps in the performance of learners. This method of data analysis was deemed suitable for this study as it provided a good stand of comparing historical and current documents. Strauss and Corbin (1990) enlist some workable guidelines for coding data when engaging in constant comparative analysis and comparing is one of them.

3.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

Quality criteria are a tool for assessing the quality of findings in research (Oltmann, 2016). The following are the criteria in which these findings can be analysed;

3.7.1 Credibility

Beck (1993) states that verification is about drawn results from the data collected. This is referred to as credibility. The researcher ensured that data was correctly recorded to give credibility. Triangulation is applied to ensure there were no discrepancies in the findings, which were to be believable and convincing. Validity entails credibility - internal validity: in this regard, the researcher had the interview questions and observation schedules viewed by the University of Limpopo to verify if they were able to collect the data that was needed. There was a need to facilitate quality assurance namely data verification. To promote the credibility of this study, after the responses of the research participants were transcribed, they were shown to the participants to have them confirm their accuracy and their correctness. This assisted in ascertaining that the researcher's works had verified responses.

3.7.2 Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba, (2003) in Johnson and Turner (2009) describe 'trustworthiness' as the ability of the researcher to convince the audience that the results of a study are worth paying attention to and that the research is of high quality. The researcher, therefore, made accurate recordings of the data collected. To promote the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher cross-checked the data gathered from the research participants using various ways. One such way was ascertaining that more than one data collection tool was applied in this study. To be precise, not only interview but also document review and observation were the data collection tools in this study.

3.7.3 Transferability

Durrheim and Wassenar (2002) describe transferability as the degree to which generalisations can be developed from the context and the data of the research study to the broader population and settings. Generalisability is the ability of the reader to apply findings adopted to other contexts. (Creswell, 2003; Mayan, 2001). This aims to provide rich descriptions of participant's perceptions and experiences. To enable transferability in this study, the researcher ascertained that carrying out this study was executed in line with the tried and tested research conventions. This is to imply following the known research steps as done by experienced scholars. Furthermore,

the researcher explained in detail every aspect of this research, as a way of enabling knowledge gained in this study to be applicable in other similar studies.

3.7.4 Dependability

Durrheim and Wiassenaar (2002:64) explain dependability as the extent to which the audience is certain that the findings are true as the researcher professes them to be. This means that the findings need to be reliable. Can the same results be obtained if the study was repeated? No. therefore the researcher noted any change experienced within the research. The corrections that were done by the participants were noted. To promote the dependability and reliability of this study, the researcher ensured that the manner of data collection, analysis and presentation and discussion of the data was as much as possible free from the biases and prejudices of the researcher. This was done through remaining as objective as possible when involved in the study, despite the reality that by its very nature the study opted for a qualitative research paradigm which is known to be generally subjective in approach and execution. Dependability emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs.

3.7.5 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. Frankel (2003) assumes that each researcher has a unique perspective on the study. The researcher recorded the procedure of checking and re-checking data throughout the study. Data collected from the interviews, document review and observations were being re-checked constantly. To ascertain the confirmability of this study, the researcher, kept the process of data collection and data analysis closely knitted together. This signifies that as the researcher was busy collecting data, she was at the same time involved in data analysis. This enabled her to identify gaps within the collected data and to fill those gaps when still in the field. Through such efforts, no doubt confirming the reliability and the validity of the entire study was greatly boosted.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Merriam Dictionary (2006) defines ethics as a category of study that embarks on ideas about what is and not acceptable behaviour. It is a branch of philosophy dealing with what is morally correct or wrong, a belief that something is very crucial. Shamoo (2009) defines ethics as a standard of conduct that differentiates between good and bad, right and wrong etcetera. In this regard, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the ethics committee at the University of Limpopo. Kapucu (2014) in an animated video states that ethical consideration is one thing that one should be concerned about in research. Sensitivity should be applied to ethical concerns. To ensure ethical procedures the following were considered;

3.8.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

Kapucu (2014) asserts that confidentiality and anonymity are crucial in research. To keep the information contributed by the participants confidential, pseudo names were used in the place of original names. With anonymity, the real identities of research participants were kept anonymous meaning without identifying who they were. In the context of this study, the researcher ensured confidentiality of the information gathered from the research participants, by first utilising such information solely for the study. Secondly, the researcher ascertained that not a single identity of any of the research participants' name were divulged as the provider of the information needed for the study. Through such means, the researcher was convinced the confidentiality of who shared the required information for the study was adequately protected from being known by members of the public.

3.8.2 Ethical Clearance

All research involving people requires review by an independent committee to determine whether the proposed research poses inappropriate risks to either the subjects or the researchers (Usher, 2000). Before the researcher commenced with the research an application was made to the ethics committee of the University of Limpopo for clearance. Application for permission was also sought from the Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education to conduct research in the Mashishing circuit. After securing permission from the Department of Basic Education, an application was made to the Mashishing circuit office. The school principal was as well requested to

permit for the conduction of the study. Permission to involve participants in the research was directly requested from them in writing.

3.8.3 Voluntary Participation

Participation was voluntary; no one was to be paid to take part in the research. Yip, Han, and Sng, (2016) explain that potential participants should be made alert of the right to withdraw from participation at any time without reprisal and without affecting the relationship between participant and researcher. The researcher, therefore, left the participant to decide whether they were willing to participate or not without threatening them.

3.8.4 Safety of Participants

The safety of participants rested entirely with the researcher, meaning that safety had to be the priority. Although physical safety of participants could not be compromised, there was also likely to be an impact on participants' emotional safety if their physical safety was breached (Williamson and Burns, 2014). The researcher needed to ensure that no harm, either physically or emotionally befell participants. Their safety was greatly dependant on the researcher's confidentiality and willingness to adhere to research ethics.

3.8.5 Honesty and clarity

Keliso (2016) states that the participant should never be embarrassed by the researcher and the researcher should explain to the participants in detail what the research is about - so that they know what they are getting into. The researcher never used deception to accumulate data for any particular study. Maree (2012) lists honesty and integrity amongst other considerations on ethics. The researcher was clear about the research and what it entailed. Participants were also given a go-ahead to verify anything pertaining to this research and its authenticity.

3.9 THE ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY

Thembi and Hugo (2016) define a theory as a research model that gives the direction of influence to the research in this study. The researcher adopted Lewin's model which is called Change Management Model. The theory was chosen because it identifies with the study undertaken. It was likely to help with managing the transition process of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase. It would assist to understand and manage the gap in performance between the two phases being addressed. Kurt (1996) in his Change Management Model, listed three stages of bringing about change. These stages were Freeze, Change and Unfreeze. For change to take place successfully, an understanding of the importance of change is important.

When all stakeholders in the education system can recognise the need for change, then the journey to change can begin without much anticipated friction. Lewin states that motivation for change must be generated before change can occur. One must be helped to re-examine many cherished assumptions about oneself and one's relations with others. This stage is termed the 'unfreezing stage' this is where change begins. Lewin in his theory defines change by giving a picture of melting an iced shape, for instance, a cone and then refreezing it again into the required shape-which could be a square. He called this process 'Refreeze'.

In this study, Lewin's theory points out the need to let go of old behaviours and customs and to implement new strategies that will promote good management of the transition process. Kotter (2012), in his book 'Leading Change,' elaborates that preparing the organisation i.e. the school, to embrace that change is critical, it entails dismantling the existing way of doing things before building up a new operational method. This is the first stage of change. The most effective way is developing a convincing message that elaborates why the old system of doing things should stop. This theory is crucial to this study as it addresses the necessity of change to experience a well-managed transition between the two discussed phases.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

As was clear from this chapter, the research design ensured that there was a functional structure for how data was collected and analysed and with clear guidelines on the procedure that was followed with the interpretation of data to answer the

postulated research questions successfully. In chapter four the research design and research methodology for the case study were explained. It was made clear that a qualitative research paradigm was the best option to enable the researcher to reach a deep understanding of the management of the transition process from the foundation to the intermediate phases in Mashishing, Mpumalanga. It was further clarified that a combination of individual interviews, personal unobtrusive observations, and document review ensured sufficient and trustworthy data to have deduced convincing research findings. A discussion of the research findings of the empirical investigation is presented in chapter four.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter looked into research design and methodology. This chapter presents data analysed and findings from the 9 participants that were sampled from three primary schools in Mashishing. Presentation of data refers to an exhibition or putting up data in an attractive and useful manner such that it can be easily interpreted (Duffield, Stowe, and Shankar, 2017). The purpose of this study was to examine how the transition process from the foundation to Intermediate phases could be properly managed to minimise challenges that are part of it, some of which disturb a smooth integration into the intermediate phase.

The following data collection tools were used; Interview, which was done with Heads of Departments, teachers and parents. The responses were both voice and script recorded and then analysed. The second tool used was document review which focused on mark schedules, staff allocation, annual teaching plans and Language policy. Observation was the third tool used, it focused of the observation was on the teaching methods, manner of assessment, the teaching environment and dedication of both teachers and learners in both foundation and intermediate phases. After data were collected, it was analysed, interpreted and categorised into themes.

After signing consent forms of their willingness to participate in the study consent forms were signed and filed to preserve anonymity. A total of nine participants, comprising 3 HODs, 3 teachers, and 3 parents were interviewed. Interviews were conducted with Heads of Departments. Those shed much light on the struggles encountered in the phases. Grade 3 and 4 teachers were also interviewed. These are recipients of learners who have graduated from the foundation phase and are in a better position to outline the performance of these learners. After the schedules were analysed, a learner was strategically picked from each school and the parent of that particular learner was interviewed. The observation was done only in the researcher's school. Both grades 3 and 4 were observed.

4.2 PROFILING OF RESEARCH SITES

4.2.1 School X

School X was one of the research sites that were sampled for this research. It is a public, non-fee-paying primary school. It is located in the province of Mpumalanga in a small town called Lydenburg which is currently known as Mashishing. It was one of the first schools to be built by 'Lydenburg United Churches' in 1941. Dr. De Jager officially opened the school that year. School X was named after a nearby river named after the gold diggers in the area who moved from one place to another. Originally Zulu and Sotho-speaking children were accommodated in the school. In 1963 the school was divided into two. The Zulu-speaking children remained while Sotho-speaking children formulated School Y.

School X accommodates a total of 1349 learners in the current academic year 2020. Most learners are from extension 6 which is where the school is situated whilst others come from other surrounding townships such as Mashishing extension 6, Majubane, and BlackBerry. There is a total number of 42 teaching staff. From a total of 42, 15 teachers belong to the foundation phase whilst 27 are in the intermediate phase. The school has a male principal and a male deputy. There are 5 Heads of Departments. There are 27 standard classrooms accommodating a maximum of 30 to 35 pupils. The school does not have a hall and learners assemble outside the classrooms. The playground is available and it is big enough for learners to play. Although the school lacks facilities like modern toilets, a library and a school hall, it produces an average of 68% pass rate annually. The foundation phase comprises 480 pupils whilst the intermediate phase has 869 learners. The annual pass rate in the foundation phase ranges from 65 to 80% while for the intermediate phase it is between 60 to 78%

4.2.2 School Y

School Y is a public primary school that emerged from school X. It is also located in Mashishing and the language of instruction is Northern Sotho. It is a non-fee-paying school. It accommodates a total of 1428 learners. There are 34 teachers of which 16 are the foundation and 18 the intermediate phase teachers. There is a male principal, a male deputy principal with 6 HODs. There are 3 clerks and 3 general workers. 11 community personnel workers were attached to the school. The school has a total

number of 28 classes and an administration block. There is a lack of classes in the intermediate phase. This has caused overcrowding in some classes as some learners had to be squeezed in classes. The school has an administration block which includes HOD offices and a photocopy room. The school lacks important facilities like a library and laboratories. There is no school hall, so learners assembled in front of a building block when conducting morning assembly.

There is also a need for additional toilets to cater for a large number of learners. Teachers park their cars under trees because of the lack of parking slots. The school participates in circuit sports competitions. Though they have a big sports field, it is not well structured. Part of it is just soil and dust. The foundation phase starts from grade R to 3. It has a good annual pass rate that ranges from 67 to 80% whilst the intermediate ranges from 65 to 75%.

4.2.3 School Z

School Z is a public primary school located in a semi-suburb in Mashishing. It was constructed in 1983. It accommodates a total of 928 learners of which mostly are from the surrounding townships such as Beverly Hills and BlackBerry. 80% of the learners are black and 20% are coloured. It is a non-fee-paying school. English is used as a medium of instruction whilst Afrikaans is the second language of instruction. It is a Section 21 school classified under quintile 2. The school has a motto that intends to motivate and drive all its members towards one goal, the motti is: We thrive for excellence. There are 11 members of the SGB component of which 9 are above the age of 36. The school is served by 27 teachers; including one lady principal, one male deputy head and three HODs. There are 22 teachers who are post level 1 educators. There are three male auxiliary staff members, two admin female clerks and 4 female food handlers.

There are a total of 23 classes and an admin block. The staff room is located in the admin block. A separate photocopy room is also part of the admin block. Attached to the admin block are the computer room and a big book- store where old books and detergents are stored. The primary school has two netball courts and a soccer field. The school has a hall for learner's assembly and can also be utilised by the community if needs be. Additional toilets are under construction to cater for the increased

admission of learners. However, due to the high number of intake caused by the increasing population, the school requires mobile classes. There is one laboratory that is not fully functional because of the lack of extra classrooms. The school has a good infrastructure. A large playground exists that can accommodate 920 learners in the school. The school falls under a full-service school. A full service school is one that provides a broad range of services including inclusive education and school Z does not have supporting facilities. Implementation becomes difficult since the department has not hired any special needs teachers for the school.

The foundation phase starts from grade R to grade 3. In each grade, there are 3 classes. This makes a total of 12 classes in the foundation phase. However, there are only 11 classrooms and one grade R class which is accommodated in the school hall. The maximum number of learners in each class is 45. The foundation phase occupies two blocks in the school. The average pass rate for the past 5 years has ranged from 70 to 85%. The intermediate phase also has three classes in each grade. This makes a total of 12 classrooms. Two extra classrooms have been built to accommodate the growing number of learners.

4.3 ADMINISTRATION OF DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Data collecting tools were chosen and administered with great consideration. The correct choice of tools was essential in bringing about the required data. They corresponded to the nature of the research which is qualitative. This study, whose focus is on the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases, was conducted using data collection tools which comprised interviews, document review and observation. Since this is a qualitative case study found that the selected 3 data collection methods to be most appropriate in this context. Each data collection tool was discussed in detail below.

4.3.1 Interviews

This was the first data collection method. Semi-structured interviews were used in this qualitative research. A semi-structured interview is open, allowing one to divert and bring in new ideas to the interview as a result of what the person being interviewed shares (Drever 1995). This form of interview was selected over structured interview because of its nature to permit research participants a leeway to express themselves

without being limited. By so doing, new important themes were birthed. A total number of 9 participants were interviewed in a quiet and conducive place and they comprised 3 teachers, 3 HODs and 3 parents. Fogg and Wightman (2000), suggest that the researcher can find software for recording and transcribing data. Such applications (APP) save time. During an interview, a voice recorder was used to record views of research participants. The responses were later transcribed. An interview schedule was used to prepare interview questions in advance. Each interview did not exceed 40 minutes so as to remain focussed to the core of the research and not to tire research participants.

4.3.2 Document review

This is the second data collection tool used in this study. Smulowitz (2017) agrees that the inclusion of documents in a qualitative research study can provide additional rich data. The researcher needed to find out if reviewing documents could disclose any cause of friction or disharmony in the transition of learners from the foundation to intermediate phases and how to overcome that. The researcher considered reviewing relevant documents that would assist to bring accurate results. The following documents were reviewed; mark schedules. Language policy, Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) and staff allocation. South African School Administration and Management System (SA SAMS) provide standardised data collection at the school level in South Africa since 2010. It provides annual mark schedules and also a staff allocation record. Muriithi and Masinde (2016) add that module 12 of SA SAMS states that one of its purposes is to record and report on the progress of learners. The researcher used mark schedules to review the performance of both grade 3 and 4 learners. Mark schedules provided quarterly marks for every learner in all subjects. The system also added and calculated the percentages, allocated levels and determined progression which is represented by (P), or non-progression which is represented by (NP).

However, the document did not list condoned learners but rather provided marks as raw as they were. In the year 2018 for grade 3, the schedules reveal an average pass rate range of 85-95% across the 3 schools and a failure rate of 5-11%. In the year 2019 for grade 4, the pass rate ranged from 30-66% whilst the failure rate ranged from 30-45%. The point of review of this source- mark schedules, is legitimate, reliable and credible as the mark have been moderated by the HODs and also reviewed by deputy

principals. ATPs were also reviewed. The researcher aimed to find out if the annual teaching plan did not play a role in the struggle for the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases. Both grade 3 and grade 4 ATPs were analysed. ATPs served as a guideline for the teacher on the content to be taught in the year, the content was divided into quarters. The researcher's aim of reviewing the documents was to find out if teachers were not burdened and if the content was appropriate for the given grade.

Bubb and Earley (2010) agree that teacher qualification is essential in the education system. Staff allocation documents were reviewed to find out if the teachers were qualified or well trained for the phase or grade that they were teaching. The qualification of an educator plays a role in the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases. For instance, where educators are not trained to handle the teaching work in class, then learners might not be well prepared for the next grade. The language policy was also reviewed. African languages have, throughout the apartheid periods, remained societally inferior and relatively insignificant. They are used almost exclusively in the domestic and informal domains in the social lives of African language speakers (Bowen, 2009). The researcher sought to find out whether the incorporation of those African languages together with foreign language were not impeding the smooth transition of learners from grade 3 to 4 and what to do with state of affairs.

4.3.3 Observation

Observation is the third data collection tool that was used in this research. The researcher used participant observation also known as direct observation. The observation was done only in the researcher's school for the past 5 years. The researcher has taught in both phases, namely the foundation and the intermediate phases. Participants were aware that they were being observed. The researcher refrained from unobtrusive observation because of its ethical issues as stated by Bessey (2001) in his educational research. He states that the main problem with unobtrusive measures is ethical. Issues involving informed consent and invasion of privacy were essential in this case. An institutional review board may not be pleased with one's study if it implies not informing your subjects (Bassey, 2001). In this light, the SMT and the teaching staff were supportive since the observations were likely to

assist in their struggles between the foundation and the intermediate phases. The observation focused on the following; teaching methods applied by the foundation and intermediate teachers, teacher and learner dedication in grades 3 and 4, manner of assessment and the environment.

The researcher observed the environment to check whether it enabled a smooth transition from grade 3 to 4 or whether it posed an obstacle. Pandor, (2006) agrees that in a positive environment, the process of learning becomes something that learners easily adapt to and look forward to. Another point of observation was the teaching methods that were used by teachers, whether teachers were careful as to whether when learners get to grade 4 they had too much work or not. This study also checked whether the manner of assessment on grade 3 was preparing learners for grade 4. The dedication of teacher and learner for both grade 3 and 4 were also observed to find out if they differed in any significant manner.

4.4 THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted and recorded in an audio device. This was done for referral purposes during data analysis and for credibility. One of the basic benefits of recording an interview is that it permits the interviewer to concentrate on the interview rather than writing notes, which can disturb both the interviewee and the researcher (Chory and McCroskey, 1999). After the interviews were conducted, the researcher replayed the audios and transcribed word for word the responses of the participants in paper sheets which were kept in a secure file. This is relevant for durable records and evidence. After an analysis of these interviews, themes were then formulated and categorised into main and sub-themes as follows:

4.4.1 Slow pace in writing

When learners commence with grade 4 at the beginning of the year they tend to struggle finishing their work in due time. Each period is allocated time and at the end of each period comes another teacher and subject. Learners lagged behind and found themselves with a pile of work to catch up. Di Brina, Aversa, Rampoldi, Rossetti, and Penge (2018) state that while the key to becoming a fluent writer is common practice, teachers need to make sure that children remain motivated in improving their writing

speed, especially in new grades they are in. The cause of slow pace in writing was elaborated under the following sub-themes:

4.4.1.1 Lack of time-consciousness in grade 3

Herbert and Bailey (2002) believe that the pace of writing is crucial for progress in the teaching and learning environment. Teachers do not prioritise timekeeping in the 3rd grade. This could be due to the fact that teachers spent the whole day with learners. Learners were then able to catch up with their work in the free time allocated by the teacher. Whilst this was good for keeping work up to date, it, however, disabled the learners from being time conscious and accomplishing their work in the correct stipulated time in grade 4. This was confirmed by the following participants;

HOD Y: *"Teachers in grade three have a time table that allocates time for each of the subjects they teach but do not adhere to it. They are very much unconscious of time, taking the advantage that they are with the learners the whole day."*

Teacher X: *"A simple activity with grade 4 takes a long time. They cannot finish their work within a period of an hour. As a teacher, you get frustrated because you hardly cover the activities of the lesson. They struggle to keep up with the work and most of the time the bell rings whilst they are still busy writing. This causes a drag in finishing the ATP in time."*

Parent X: *"My child is very slow when writing. He takes longer than necessary to finish his homework. This is a concern for me because my patience is always on the test. I'm usually tired from work and wish he could write a bit faster."*

Learners struggle to keep time in grade 4 because they have not been trained to accomplish their work in stipulated time. When learners get to grade 4 they struggle to finish their work within a given period. This puts much strain on the learners, teachers and the transition process as a whole.

4.4.1.2 Poor communication between phases

Chory and McCroskey (1999) highlight that teacher to teacher communication is a tool in enhancing performance in a school environment. This could mean communication between the two phases is an essential tool in a successful transition. Teachers in grade 3 hardly communicate with the intermediate phase teachers. No communication system alerts the grade 4 teachers about the learners who are progressed to their phase. The following participants expressed themselves regarding this issue.

HOD Z: *“Communication is a vital tool between phases. When it comes to learner performance, our communication is not impressive. The performance of individual learners is only communicated in the beginning of the year when the teacher faces problems with certain learners.”*

Teacher Z: *“The foundation phase teachers do not communicate problematic learners with the intermediate phase teachers. Most often you get to discover the learners’ struggles when they are in your class. We need a communication system that gets grade 4 teachers prepared for the learners.”*

Parent Y: *“I was invited to school last year to discuss my child’s medical condition. I was invited again early this year for the same discussion. I wish the teachers could educate each other pertaining my child’s epileptic condition.”*

In light of this response, it is clear that communication between teachers of grades 3 and 4 is essential to make the transitioning process a success.

4.4.1.3 Unfamiliar with handwriting

The issue of having a variety of teachers in the intermediate phase brings with it differing teaching styles, characteristics and styles of writing. Each teacher uses hers or his different handwritings which may cause learners to take time to scan through the chalkboard. Building on the motor patterns of written letters usually taught in the foundation years, this method adds connecting strokes that allow faster writing than is possible with the separated letters of print. Emphasising the vertical downstroke and the natural connections between manuscripts, combine the simplicity of the manuscript with the speed of cursive writing (Hagin, 1983). Learners are trained in cursive writing in grade 3 and when they begin grade 4 they revert to printing. This

could be a mammoth task for most learners hence the presentation of clumsy work. Most learners write work that is illegible because they cannot see properly on the board. It then means learners cannot have effective studying at home. Learners have to familiarise themselves with various kinds of handwritings and this could slow down and affect negatively the learning process and thereby cause a gap in performance between grades 3 and 4. HOD X, Teacher X and Parent Y pointed out this fact.

HOD X: *"I'm not quite pleased with the grade 4 handwriting when I do book inspection. Not only is the handwriting unbecoming in most books but also spellings and sentence construction. They still struggle to copy from the chalkboard."*

Teacher X: *"It is quite strenuous to conduct a lesson in a grade 4 class because time wastes away whilst you wait for the learners to finish copying work from the chalkboard. When you collect the books for marking you discover that they have even miscopied words from the chalkboard. They are used to the cursive method that is generally used in the grade 3 classes. Only a few teachers consider printing when writing on the chalkboard and most foundation phase teachers are not familiar with the cursive method of writing."*

Parent Y: *"I always have a problem when assisting my daughter with her homework because I cannot read her personally written notes. She herself struggles to read her own work. It is clear that she can't correctly copy work from the chalkboard. When I ask her why she doesn't copy words correctly she says that she cannot see some words properly. She also states that the teacher is always encouraging them to write quickly, so she tries to increase her writing phase."*

4.4.1.4 Unresolved psychological assessments

Inevitably school psychologists are crucial in the education system. Through their work with children, parents, schools and local authorities they can have a major role in shaping policy and practice. Psychologists can support inclusive development of learners in their everyday work in schools (Farrell, 2004). However, psychologists need to attend to the referred learners in due time. Attending to learners in good time makes work easier for the next teacher and also smoothens the transition process. Learners who struggled in the foundation phase were usually referred to psychologist who assessed them to render professional remedy. Some learners were referred to a

psychologist but the process was prolonged and learners graduated to the intermediate phase before they were assisted. An HOD from school Z and Teacher Y attested to this, in this way:

HOD Z: *"We have waited for long to get a way forward from psychologists regarding some learners with impediments, the process seems to be elongated until our learners leave to the next grade."*

Teacher Y: *"Learners usually proceed for two to three grades before they are referred to special schools by psychologists. During the waiting period, teachers become frustrated because they are not trained to help the child".*

Parent Z: *"Sourcing a personal psychologist is very expensive process. I cannot afford the cost. I'm glad that the school has a referral process though I wish it was much quicker than it is."*

4.4.2 Language barrier

Poor communication is birthed in the fourth grade due to foreign language usage. Learners hold back as they are intimidated by using a foreign language every time they have to communicate. This leads to a drop in performance rate in schools. It also threatens the confidence of the learners as they resort to being introverts. Uys, Van Der Walt, Van Den Berg and Botha, (2001) agree that although English teachers play a vital role in assisting learners to acquire language skills in the medium of instruction, subject content teachers' lack of attention to the teaching of the four language skills may be a cause for learners' lack of academic achievement. Teachers of the content subjects, need to participate in enforcing language skills to make smooth the transition process.

4.4.2.1. Diverse language of instruction in the foundation phase

Van Wyk (2014) states that due to the perceived instrumental value of English, many local schools rejected indigenous languages as a medium of instruction in favour of English. Despite Van Wky's (2014) statement, most primary schools still preserved their mother tongue as the language of instruction in the foundation phase. The question of mother-tongue education in South Africa remains a vexed one (Pandor, 2006). On the one hand, it seems reasonable and desirable that learners should be

able to receive education in their mother tongue if they so wish. On the other hand, there are some very real difficulties involved in the implementation of this ideal (Pandor, 2006). HOD X highlighted his concern while a parent from school Z seemed to be glad that her child was taught in English from the foundation phase.

HOD X: *"The predicament of language shift is a very changing one in our school and other neighbouring schools. It is quite difficult to introduce a child to a new language. Much time is spent on language training than on the actual concepts of the subject. It is difficult to explain some concepts in the mother tongue."*

Parent Y: *"It's a good thing that I took my child to an English speaking school, I do not regret this at all. Now my child can read and write and even speak English. He can even understand English children's programs on television; this helps her to learn much further."*

In school X IsiZulu is used in the foundation phase as a medium of instruction and as learners graduate and proceed to the intermediate phase, they are expected to master a foreign language. This could be the cause of disharmony in the transitioning of learners from the foundation to intermediate phases. English is a medium of instruction in the intermediate phase and learners have to abandon their mother tongue to adopt a foreign language. Most learners take much longer than needed to master the new language. A teacher in school X alluded to this fact.

Teacher X: *"When you talk to a learner in English, they will stir at you and not respond. You are then forced to translate into IsiZulu and that is when the learner will respond. Learners do not practice speaking the English language and so they continue to struggle using it"*

4.4.3 Reading incompetency

In grade four, according to intermediate phase expectation, all learners need to be able to read (Darling, 2005). In grade 4 learners now read to learn unlike in the foundation where they were learning to read. Grade 4 becomes stressful as learners must read with comprehension. No teacher in the intermediate phase is expected to be teaching basic sounds. Teacher Z and Parent Y exposed the fact that a considerable percentage of learners in the fourth-grade struggle with reading.

Teacher Z: *"Teaching is difficult when you have learners who cannot read. A learner has to read and understand the text to answer the questions. About 60% of our learners struggle with reading in grade 4. Learners who cannot read fail to answer the given questions even the simplest of them all."*

Parent Y: *"My child reads Sepedi fluently. Now he is in grade 4 and has to read in English. It is a big struggle for both of us because I'm also not well versed with the English language. He is used to doing mathematics in Sepedi and now he faces the frustration of counting and re-learning mathematical terms in English. I so wish he had learnt his foundation phase in English. Instead of; tee, pedi, tharo, it's now one, two, three"*

She eluded that though the language of instruction was English in both phases, still learners lacked the skill of reading. The teacher qualified for senior primary education and is not trained to teach basic sounds. HOD from school X stated that learners who cannot read often lose confidence and struggle in all subjects.

HOD X: *"If a learner cannot read in English, they struggle in all subjects that are taught in English. It is a huge task to master a new language when a child has a foundation in another. Most often teachers have to handle such learners who are part of overcrowded classes."*

He also showed concern for teachers who have to contend with these struggling learners and still have to control an overcrowded class. The reading struggle is a factor to be considered in the transition of learners from grade 3 to 4. If learners struggle to read English then they waste a lot of time in grade 4 trying to master the new language of which most learners take much longer than others. The teacher in the same school expressed disappointment in the department for not keeping their promise of providing mobile classes and additional human resources to fully service pupils as required.

4.4.3.1 Complex content.

Sibanda and Baxen (2017) noted another challenge that complicates the transition process from grade 3 to 4 as the shift in the nature of the texts. Texts change from narrative texts to expository texts where the latter are more challenging on account of their embodiment of technical and academic vocabulary. An example of a narrative

text would be a short story while an expository text would be a life skills textbook. An HOD in school Z highlighted the following.

HOD Z: *"Learners in the foundation phase particularly grade 3 need to be taught how to work with complex texts so that when they reach grade 4, they have the skill to work with such activities. However, grade 4 teachers need to take the child through these texts until they can work independently."*

Teacher Z: *"learners from grade 4 use textbooks mostly. It takes a while for the learners to use and to adjust to the content of textbooks. Questions change from low to mostly high order questions in grade 4. The challenge then comes with reading, understanding and then answering the questions- in English."*

The grade 4 teacher needs to realise this form of transition to help learners. As learners need to catch up to the new level, the teacher needs to accommodate their struggles and make sure that they embrace the new content in grade 4. Feister (2013) confirmed that readers who struggle to read at grade 3 normally fail to catch up academically with their peers. On arrival in the grade 4 class, a learners need to be able to handle complex texts and this should begin in the grade 3 classes so that learners don't struggle in grade 4.

4.4.3.2 Lack of training on sounds for Intermediate teachers.

Le Cordeur, (2010) attests that learners who experience reading problems can learn to read successfully when given the necessary support. When a learner cannot read, the teacher does not know how to assist such a learner. This can be very much frustrating for both the learner and the teacher. Eventually, the teacher is likely to give up on the child. Sound training is done on foundation phase teachers. Intermediate phase teachers are not trained to teach sounds. Curriculum implementers have not done much to assist teachers on this issue. HOD X and Teacher Y testified as follows;

HOD X: *"Curriculum implementers need to revise their training session to include teaching teachers how to teach reading. This would help grade 4 teachers to help struggling learners."*

Teacher Y: *"Workshops are conducted to help with subject content but we as teachers are not trained on how to handle the difficult situations that we encounter in the*

classrooms, for example, how I can help learners who cannot read in my class. I am trained to teach intermediate and senior phase and therefore I do not know how to teach a child to read."

When learners struggle with reading in grade 4, teachers try to help them but they are frustrated because they do not know what to do or how best to help them. In a case where learners have a background of a home language, the English teacher might be challenged in helping those learners with reading. This disturbs the smooth transition of learners from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase.

4.4.3.3 Language change

When a language changes from mother tongue to foreign language in grade 4, learners are left frustrated. Nel and Müller (2010) attest that in grade 3, English has been taught as a subject and in grade 4, a switch occurs whereby all subjects are learnt in English. For some years now, educationists have proposed that for at least the first three years of schooling, African language learners should be taught in their mother tongue before switching over to English (Herbert and Bailey, 2002). The whole teaching and learning process is frustrating. HOD and teacher in school Y together with Parent X expressed their concern on this matter, in this way:

HOD Y: *"The low pass rate in grade 4 can be blamed on the change of language in the intermediate phase. Learners are taught in Sepedi in the foundation phase and when they graduate into intermediate phase, they are taught in English. This becomes a whole new world altogether to the child. The struggle to learn a foreign language begins.*

Teacher Y: *"If I had personal rights to change the language of instruction in the foundation phase, I would do that instantly. Our learners are taught in IsiZulu in the foundation phase and when they get to grade 4, they switch to English. This causes much strain on learners as they have to learn a new language altogether. The teacher also struggles because she has to teach the basic sounds of the new language. It doesn't make much sense to me."*

Parent X: *"I used to help my child with homework when she was learning in IsiZulu but now I struggle to help him with homework because I struggle with the language myself.*

My child is always frustrated and I don't know how to help him. I wish I enrolled him in an English medium school from Grade R."

Learners in the foundation phase are not aware of the changes that lie in intermediate phase, ahead of them. An English talking teacher becomes a great surprise to them. Learners are used to mother tongue grammar; sounds and pronunciation, now they are forced to learn a new language altogether, whilst at the same time they have to learn new concepts in different subjects. This could have a detrimental effect on their performance and could cause a total disaster on the learners' transitioning process from the foundation to the intermediate phase.

4.4.3.4 Lack of parental support

Negligent parents usually tend to leave everything to the teacher or the school. They do not participate in their child's academic matters. Darling, (2005) asserts that children benefit when teachers and parents reinforce the same concepts and ideas. For this to happen, teachers and parents need to have some knowledge of what happens in the classroom and what happens at home that supports reading acquisition. On the contrary, most parents are not in partnership with the teachers and so cause an imbalance in the process of learner support. This fact however may be caused by the illiteracy of parents. No matter how the parent wishes to help the child with homework, they find themselves incapable because of their educational background. One parent participant from school Z agrees to this fact in this way.

Parent Z: "I dropped out of school in grade 8 and I struggle to help my child with school work. My child's homework is complex for me. I ask other people to help her sometimes but they don't always have that time. I cannot afford a private tutor."

Lack of support could also be caused by negligence and unhealthy habits. When parents spend their time attending to their interests and not caring about their child's work, they cause damage to the academic performance of their child. During the transition process from grade 3 to 4, a child needs their parent to carry them through the challenging times.

4.4.4 Poor writing skills

Hess and Wheldall (1999) believe that writing skills depend partly on the author's ability to plan and manage the composition process. In grade four, according to intermediate phase expectations, all learners must be able to read and write. No teacher in the intermediate phase is expected to be teaching writing. Basic writing and reading are taught in the foundation phase. Self-regulation strategies are also described as a means of helping learners master planning and reflective strategies. There is a clear consensus that educators should also give specific instruction to learners who struggle with writing (Hess and Wheldall, 1999).

4.4.4.1 Language shift

Mother tongue is used in the foundation phase and a foreign language is used in the intermediate phase instead of the mother tongue that learners are familiar with. This could be a stumbling block when it comes to reading. Van Assche, Duyck, Hartsuiker and Diependaele (2009) agree that being bilingual can change a person's thought patterns and language processing in several ways. In their study, Van Assche et al (2009) show that one of the people's most automated skills, reading in one's mother language, is altered by the knowledge of a second language. Learners have to learn new letter sounds, sentence construction and pronunciation. Learning a new language can be exhausting especially if the assessment is done in that very same language. They struggle to understand instructions that are written in a foreign language. Due to the incompetence in the new language, learners find themselves falling away from excellence and underperforming in grade 4. HOD Y, Teacher Z and Parent X added to this fact in this way:

HOD Y: *"The struggle of language background continues in our school and it is doing much damage to teacher motivation and learner confidence. The process of changing the language in the foundation phase from Sepedi to English is a long process that involves the SGB and other delegates. The process takes years. Since we made an application three years back, we are still awaiting a response from the Department of Basic Education."*

Teacher Z: *"The change of language from Sepedi to English causes a lot of stress for the learners and the teachers as well. Teaching a child who has a background of their*

mother tongue is very much challenging because you are forced to teach basics in English instead of moving on with the teaching plan. It is a time-consuming process. Some learners do not understand anything in English and even the best of them struggle to comprehend simple English texts."

Parent X: *"My child struggles a lot with his homework because he is not used to English as a language of learning. He has been learning in isiZulu from grade R to 3 and now in the 4th grade, he has to change to English. He gets discouraged sometimes and I as a parent don't have the skill of helping him to cope with the new language."*

Most of the time learners struggle to read in English. If they read they then battle with comprehension. For a learner to answer the question in English they need to comprehend what is required of them by the question. Lack of understanding of the language will cause a learner to write wrong answers, wrong grammar and wrong spellings. For a smooth transition to take place from the foundation to the intermediate phase, the issue of language shift needs to be attended to.

4.4.4.2 Lack of practise

Qureshi, (2012) argues that to become a well-rounded communicator one needs to be proficient in each of the four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The ability to speak skilfully provides the speaker with several distinct advantages. Learners need to practise speaking and reading foreign language in order to master it. HOD Z, Teacher Y and Parent X responded as follows:

HOD X: *"Learners are encouraged to use English for communicating within and outside of classroom but this has been a struggle because they have been given a foundation of their mother tongue. Drilling a new language in them will take longer than the time expected."*

Teacher Y: *"Learners will only speak English in the presence of a teacher but will divert to their mother tongue when they go out to play. We have tried to encourage learners to speak English but they will only do so in your presence and then switch to vernacular when they go out to play."*

Parent X: *"Our home language is isiZulu. We hardly speak in English at home. It is difficult to train the child to speak in English because I struggle speaking it myself."*

She expressed concern for parents who do not encourage English-speaking at home. Qureshi, (2012) continues to explain that the importance of speaking skills is enormous for the learners of any language. Without speech, a language is reduced to a mere script. Failure to commit to a new language by the learners affects their transition from grade 3 to 4. They might continually play catch up as they will trail behind with their school work. Lack of practise in English speaking should be avoided if a smooth transition should take place from the foundation to the intermediate phase.

4.4.5 Anxiety

The anxious thought cycle is overwhelming because it causes feelings of helplessness. Children get caught in a cycle of what ifs and I cant's, when anxiety spikes (Craig, 1998). Anxious kids tend to over generalise and stretch their negative imaginations. An adult needs to help the child to take control of his thoughts. When learners begin their fourth year in primary schools, they tend to struggle with anxiety. Both teachers and parents need to assist to ease these intense feelings. A series of questions can be asked a child just to understand how they feel for instance and what do they think might happen?

4.4.5.1 Introduction of new subjects

Workload increases in the intermediate phase, learners are required to cope with a lot of class work and home work. They also take responsibility for textbooks' safety. As the content gets more challenging, learners struggle to balance the work. From having only four learning areas, learners are introduced to two extra subjects in the intermediate phase. An HOD and teacher from school Z added to this fact in this way:

HOD Z: "It is obvious that learners are taking strain in grade 4 as they venture into new subjects. Whilst others embrace new subjects with great excitement, others are stressed and this probably leads to anxiety. When checking learners' books during book control, one can see the struggle that the learners are experiencing with the new subjects like Social Sciences and Natural Science."

Teacher Z: "Now in grade 4, learners have to contend with six subjects and they don't understand what the new subjects are all about. Most learners struggle with such changes in grade 4. It is an overwhelming challenge for their little bodies and minds."

As a teacher; I try by all means to help my learners. The work becomes much easier when parents are involved. "

Additional subjects in grade 4 can bring a challenge to the transitioning of the learner from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase. Learners may not be ready to add an extra load on top of the one that is already upon them.

4.4.5.2 Uncollected report cards

Wiggins, (1994) advises that to ease parents' confusion, report cards should clearly differentiate between standard and norm-referenced achievement, layout teachers' judgments about student progress, consider longitudinal standards, identify strengths and weaknesses and evaluate intellectual level of pupils. A parent is one of the pillars that can provide both emotional and academic support to learners. Report cards give parents a clear vision of how the child is performing academically and where she needs to be. Without such information, it makes it almost impossible for the parent to intervene in their child's education. When parents do not collect report cards from schools they remain paralysed in helping their child. A learner in grade 4 needs all the assistance that they can get. The transition process from the foundation to intermediate phases can be cumbersome. Being burdened by the pressures of the new phase, a learner needs a parent to act as a cushion that will support and encourage her. When a parent is not supportive, she makes the transitioning process more difficult than it should be. An HOD from school Y and Teacher Z highlighted this in an interview.

HOD Y: *"My concern is for learners whose parents do not make a follow up on their children's academic performance. Some parents who have not collected their children's report cards since the beginning of the year and they will not come until the end of the year when they come to question the teacher about why their child has failed."*

Teacher Z: *"I have report cards in my class that have not been collected since the beginning of the year. Such a calibre of parents is not helping in developing the child academically."*

Parent X: *“Sometime times parents need to be encouraged by teachers. In the SGB meetings, parents express their concern for the negativity from teachers when collecting their children’s reports. Parents see the event as a platform of embarrassment and degradation.”* Love (1996) in his journal advises teachers that even if it’s just a good attendance record that the child has, they should praise it. It is important that the parent understands that you are looking at everything not just the negatives.

4.4.6 Behavioural change

Felliti, (1998) writes that different changes in behaviour are experienced with learners who join the intermediate phase. A teacher in school X brought to light the change of behaviour in children which cannot be easily explained. She said some children with a good reputation would just suddenly portray an unbecoming character and most of the time they will not come out in the open to reveal what they are going through. This change of behaviour affects their academic performance drastically. Even the transitioning from the foundation to the intermediate phase is affected.

4.4.6.1 Unattended trauma

Trauma is a challenge particularly for educators because children don't often express themselves in an easily recognisable way hence making it difficult for teachers to detect it (Rappaport 2004). Rappaport continues to explain that children hide their pain behind aggressive or unbecoming behaviour; she explains that they are masters at making sure you do *not* see them bleeding. She adds that trauma does not only result due to an incident but that it can be an ongoing thing in a child's life. A good number of learners in schools suffer from trauma. Teacher and parent Y expressed the following:

Teacher Y: *“Learners go through trauma at their tender age and all we can do is to refer them to professionals. When terrible incidents happen to learners they suffer much emotionally, they need help from adults. In our school, we have a boy in the fourth grade that was involved in a car accident and watched his father die in the accident scene. Such instances can hinder the academic progress of a child. We are fortunate to have a school psychologist who helped the learner. It took a while but the learner got all the professional help that he needed.”*

Parent Y: *"My child was very much disturbed since our shack burnt down. The picture of seeing her mother battling to extinguish the flames stayed with her until she got assistance from a psychologist. She had nightmares. At times she would start screaming hysterically."*

Teacher Y pointed out the fact that a number of learners are undergoing counselling because of some trauma that they have encountered in their early years. Learners who suffer from trauma tend to be worsened by the transition process from one phase to another. Therefore, urgent help is needed for such learners for them to cope academically.

4.4.6.2 Home and schooling Abuse

Traumatic practices have a grievous impact on children and adults need to have this knowledge. The more knowledge caregivers have, the more they understand the reasons for certain behaviours and emotions and are in a position to render needed help (Felliti, 1998). Child neglect is the most commonly reported form of child abuse and the most destructive. Child abuse can come in form of failure to provide for the shelter, safety, supervision and nutritional needs of the child. HOD Z attests to this in this way:

HOD Z: *"Most learners depend on the schools' nutrition program due to parental neglect. The meal that learners have at school is the only meal of the day for most learners. Even though parents receive child support grants from the government, they use them to support their habits and addictions. Most cases are being attended to by a school psychologist."*

Physical abuse is the second most frequently reported form of abuse and is defined as a physical injury inflicted upon the child with cruel or malicious intent. Physical abuse can be the result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking, or otherwise harming a child. The parent or caretaker may not have intended to hurt the child; rather the injury may have resulted from physical punishment (Ahmad and Alkammawa, 2009). HOD Y adds to this in this way:

HOD Y: *"We try by all means during parents' meetings to discourage parents from using corporal punishment. We also encourage teachers to control their temper in*

class because anger may lead to using corporal punishment which was abolished by the constitution of South Africa."

Sexual abuse is the least frequently reported form of child abuse and is believed that this is due to secrecy or conspiracy of silence that characterizes these cases. Sexual abuses can include fondling, rape, intercourse, commercial exploitation through prostitution, or the production of pornographic materials such as magazines or films that show sexual acts. Trauma with the intention to harm is linked with children's reports of psychotic symptoms. Clinicians working with children who report early symptoms of psychosis need to inquire about traumatic practices such as ill-treatment and bullying (Arseneault, Cannon, Fisher, Polanczyk, Moffitt, and Caspi, 2011.) Children who suffer abuse tend to show withdrawal symptoms or on the contrary, can exhibit violent behaviour. Home and schooling abuse can play a fatal role in the transitioning of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase if not attended to with urgency.

4.4.6.3 Poverty

In reality, poverty is a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affects the mind, body, and soul (Yoshikawa, 2012). Most children in schools depend on the DBE's nutrition program. An HOD and teacher from school Z and Parent X mentioned the following:

HOD Z: *"Our community is poverty stricken. We try by all means to understand where the children are coming from and to help wherever possible. We are grateful to SASA for providing uniforms for the less privileged learners and to the surrounding mines who constantly donate essentials for such children."*

Teacher Z: *"Amazingly, we as teachers are oblivious of the level of poverty that our learners are in. some of our learners do not even televisions in their homes, something that we deem every home has. I know these things because I am on the wellness committee and I visit many of our learners' homes. Some of our learners come from shambled shacks that could crumble at any time under any harsh weather. Sadly, children have to endure such situations and still be expected to excel in the classroom."*

Parent X: *"The school nutrition program has been of great aid to my child since I struggle to put food on the table. I am truly grateful because I'm unemployed at the moment. I struggle to provide basic needs for my child."*

Needless to say, poverty is very complex and the factors surrounding it are emotional, unique and quite personal. Children living in are exposed to more longer-lasting stress that negatively impacts their attention, focus, cognition, IQ and social skills. This means that the little children's minds, bodies, and souls are affected (Lacour and Tissington, 2011). They also engage in conversation will less complex vocabulary and less sentence structure, and read less frequently than their peers not living in poverty (Yoshikawa, 2012). Poverty affects learner's academic development and impedes them from experiencing a successful transition to the intermediate phase.

4.4.6.4 Bullying

Bullying is best defined by the Oxford Living dictionary (2014) as seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce someone perceived as vulnerable. Williams, Chambers, Logan, and Robinson (1996) relate that kids who are bullied can experience a decrease in academic achievement and school participation. They are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school. Bullying can lead to depression and anxiety when a child no longer enjoys what they usually used to enjoy. An increase in feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. These issues may be carried on into adulthood. Kids who are bullied are also more likely to experience health complaints. Their academic performance could drop drastically. HOD X, Teacher and parent from school Y witnessed that state of affairs in this way:

HOD X: *"Bullying is our main concern in our school. Most children are coming from violent background and the take bullying as normal life. We have meetings after meetings of disciplinary hearings. This is all in a bid to control bullying and mostly to conscientise parents of the role they need to play in their children's lives."*

Teacher Y: *"Bullying is a major problem that affects our school. However, we work tirelessly to rid of this ill habit. Strict measures have been put in place to protect all vulnerable learners from being bullied. Most learners who are bullied remain quiet about it, either as a result of threats from the bullies or not being sure if the teacher*

can come to their aid. We have a well- functioning disciplinary committee that handles such cases with an iron hand. Bullying affects the overall performance of learners and that is the last thing we need in our school."

Parent Y: "For some few days my child stayed at home and claimed to be sick. She could hardly go out to neither play nor watch her favourite TV programs. When her friend reported that some bigger girls were bullying her at school, I realised that she wasn't really sick but it was a ploy to stay away from the bullies. Fortunately, the class teacher and the principal helped to solve the matter."

4.4.7 Lack of learner academic development

A learner, who gets too emotional, cannot concentrate on a given task. If a learner is overly emotional, he or she can't process information and learn. These are factors that may affect a learner's academic development and these are problems at home, economic hardships and low parental support (Clint, 2012). Some problems can cause learners to be emotional and affect academic performance.

4.4.7.1 Economic hardships

Mestry (2017) states that economic hardships can affect the development of a learner as it pressures the learner to place more value on their personal needs rather than their academic achievement. Uncountable learners in South Africa come from low socio-economic backgrounds, and many adults in these households have low literacy levels (Pretorius, 2014). Learners who come to school hungry may value a plate of food above their test scores. Parents can lose their jobs, die or even divorce causing a sudden and sudden drastic change in a learner's life. The following participants added to this in this way:

HOD Z: "The South African has affected many of our parents. Many of our learners' parents have been retrenched and those who are working are getting barely minimum salaries. This affects the child in the class as they begin to compare themselves to other children who are well off."

Teacher Y: "I have learners in my class who depend mostly on the school's nutrition programme. Things are bad at home and such innocent children do not deserve to go

through experiences in life but that's the way life is. We teachers try by all means to assist but at times we are overwhelmed."

Parent Y: *"Life is hard when you are a single parent and unemployed. I struggle to make ends meet. I feel much pain if I cannot provide for my child's needs. It is sad when no one around you knows what you are going through"*

Children misunderstand the situation at their homes especially when they begin to compare themselves with other children. This may hinder a smooth transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase. Learners may develop an inferiority complex and this may affect their academic performance. Family income seems more strongly related to children's academic achievement than to their emotional outcomes. Children who live below the poverty line for multiple years appear, all other things being equal, to suffer the worst outcomes (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, 1997)

4.4.7.2 Problems at home

Learners may go through a lot of problems at home. These problems can range from parents divorcing, parents losing jobs, family squabbles, abusive step-parents, loved ones on death beds and also domestic violence. It is therefore important for a teacher to always probe learners to find out what they are going through especially when they exhibit a negative behavioural pattern. Chemtob and Carlson (2004) agree that domestic violence affects the lives of many South Africans, including children. HOD and Parent Y add to this occurrence this way:

HOD Y: *"Our learners encounter a lot of problems at home and that is why we encourage teachers not to jump to conclusions when they see an unbecoming behaviour from a learner. The teacher should try to lovingly talk to the child to understand what is happening in their lives. For example, a learner might not have done homework because their shack was affected by rains and had to shift to another safer place. This alone could be traumatic to a child and they might be questioning what is happening to them. The teacher might be the only source of comfort."*

Parent Y: *"My husband used to beat me in front of my child and this affected him so much. My child would refuse to go to school because he felt he needed to guard against his father harming me. It was so painful to see the trauma in my child's eyes."*

When forced to go to school, he would be violent to other learners. I requested the principal to assign professional help for him."

It is crucial that primary care providers working with children, including paediatric nurse practitioners understand the complication of domestic violence, identify domestic violence and appropriately intervene. Such issues can have a deep impact on the learner and if learners own up to such predicaments, the teacher may take an initiative to refer learners for further help. Learners may not be strong enough to handle home issues together with school pressures hence the struggle with transitioning to grade 4.

4.4.7.3 Low parental support

Family factors also play a role in a teacher's ability to teach primary scholars. Principals and teachers agree that what is going on at home will impact a pupil's propensity to learn. Divorce, single parents, poverty, violence and many other issues are all challenges a student brings to school every day. These are difficult challenges especially when parents are often not willing to partner with the schools to provide for the children (Mestry, 2017). Negligence of the parent can also play a role in the failure of the child. HOD and Teacher X agree to this in their transcribed response.

Teacher X: *"It is difficult to help a learner when the parents do not seem to be enthusiastic towards helping their child. Some children live with extended family members who do not seem to care much about the child's academic achievement."*

HOD X: *"Most parents are not hands on when it comes to the education of their children. We have several parents whom the school reported to social workers because, despite the grant they receive for the child, the child is not funded for. Children come to school without jerseys in winter and wear tattered uniforms."*

The main objective of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) is to identify and minimise all barriers to teaching and learning (White paper 6, 2010). It assumes that parents are expected to play an equal role as partners in education and should be involved in the decision making process through providing support to their children. Neglected learners often struggle with the transition process because they lack support the parents. They also tend to devalue themselves and regard others to be more superior to them.

4.4.7.4 Overcrowded classes

A classroom is said to be overcrowded when the number of learners exceeds the optimum level such that it causes hindrance in the teaching-learning process. Overcrowding of classes is a big problem in schools. This limits the teacher's creativity and most often causes discouragement. Salem-al-amarat (2011) regards the classroom as the most important area within a school. Learners spend most of their time, hopefully in an environment conducive to learning. The entire design of the classroom reflects the priorities, goals, philosophy, personality and teaching style of the teacher. HOD and Teacher X confess that classes in schools range from 55 to 60 learners.

HOD X: *"Overcrowding in classes is a challenge. We always encourage teachers to be creative but this might be almost impossible for our teachers who attend 45 or more learners in the class. We keep our fingers crossed for the Department to provide mobile classes as it promised."*

Teacher X: *"Teaching a class of more than 50 learners is the most challenging situation I have ever encountered. I have 55 learners in my class and it degrades the value of education because there is little productivity. I am not able to do some important physical activities because one cannot maneuver around."*

This number makes it almost impossible to deliver effective teaching. Learner's learning behaviour can be enhanced when teachers take the time to create a classroom climate in which learners feel comfortable with their teachers and peers. But unfortunately, in most government schools, classes are overcrowded (Khan and Iqbal, 2012). When learners are not getting adequate attention from the teacher it may cause learners to progress to the next phase without being fully developed academically. The transition process may be frustrated as grade 4 teachers would be receiving half- baked learners in the form of having just mastered the schoolwork of the previous grade.

4.5 THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH DOCUMENT REVIEW

Reviewing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to interview transcripts (Bowen, 2009). The following documents were reviewed; SA -SAMS mark

schedules, staff allocation, annual teaching plans and language policy. Mark schedules were reviewed to track the performance of learners from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase. SA SAMS mark sheets provide all the marks obtained by the learner per quarter and automatically allocate levels per subject. Staff allocation documents were also reviewed. These documents list the number of employed teachers as well as their level of qualifications. It is important to verify if educators are qualified to teach a phase or a grade that they have been allocated to as this plays a role in the transition process of the learners. When a teacher is allocated to teach a phase that they are not trained for, they may not exert their maximum performance. Instead, they may be demoralised as they meet challenges related to that particular phase.

Annual teaching plans were reviewed to find out if the content which was quarterly allocated in the curriculum allowed a smooth transition. The researcher needed to know if this content was not overloading the learners or too abstract for them. Language policy documents were as well reviewed. One major goal of the new language policy is to promote the status of the African language, its details are essential to the topic of this research. The aim of reviewing the language policy was to find out if it promotes a smooth transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases. Lastly, the annual mark schedules were reviewed. Mark schedules showed the learners' test scores from the first to the fourth quarter. From the accumulated data, the following themes emerged;

4.5.1 Abnormal number of learners per class

The effects of overcrowded classrooms are far-reaching for teachers and learners. Many parents base their decision on whether to send their child to a particular school on the prospective number of learners in the child's classroom (Mustafa, Mahmoud, Assaf, Al-Hamadi and Abdulhamid, 2014). Overcrowding in classes is one of the major concerns in the education system. This causes ineffective teaching and learning as the teacher cannot attend to every learner adequately. Previous research reveals that both teachers and learners can benefit from smaller class sizes. Learners are given more individualized instruction, which in turn allows one on one attention and teachers have more time to work with each learner individually. Also, they would spend less

time disciplining other learners. As previous studies revealed, larger classes have more discipline problems (Leahy, 2006).

4.5.1.1 Lack of infrastructure

Skelton 2014 states that the government is still struggling to provide adequate school infrastructure, a situation that affects the quality of education imparted to learners. Since the Department of Basic Education struggles to provide infrastructure in schools, many schools struggle to make ends meet. The populated classes cannot be avoided as the number increases over the years and no child should be deprived of education. Lack of infrastructure can affect the transition of learners from the foundation to intermediate phases. The HOD from school Y expressed his concern over this issue, in this way:

HOD Y: *“The department made a promise to provide mobile classes for the past five years but the promise is futile. Those classes could make a great difference in our school.”*

4.5.2 Inconsistency in performance

Inconsistent performance is the hobgoblin of all learners struggling with learning disabilities. It seems to particularly plague gifted LD students (Wassenburg, Bos, de Koning and van der Schoot, 2015). The performance rate is not constant in grades 3 and 4. The grade 3 schedule reveals a high pass rate in all three schools but somehow drops in grade 4. Several factors are likely to contribute to this inconsistency. Change of language from mother tongue to foreign, trauma, abuse and poverty were linked to an inconsistent performance by grade 4 learners

4.5.2.1 Lack of teacher academic upgrade

Guo, Connor, Yang, Roehrig and Morrison (2012) agree that teacher upgrade is related to teacher self-efficacy. Self-developed teachers tend to have high self-efficacy. Guo et al (2012) carried out research that indicates the extent to which teachers believe they can make a difference in their learners' achievement. Results indicated that teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy showed more support and provided a more positive classroom environment than did teachers with lower self-efficacy; also, their learners had stronger literacy skills. In reviewing staff allocation

documents, it was discovered that some educators had not upgraded themselves academically since they were employed. Some of the educators had almost reached retirement age and still held a very basic qualification. Lack of academic development of teachers cause friction in the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase, teachers may not have an updated training on how to handle learners' needs. Some teachers were allocated lower grades whilst they were trained for higher grades. This was likely caused by excess teachers who are spontaneously deployed to other schools and automatically fill open gaps in the newly allocated schools.

4.5.2.2 No training of teachers in handling overcrowded classes

All teacher training institutions ought to evaluate whether they offer appropriate teacher training programs that will enable student teachers to deal with the increasing demands associated with the teaching profession, among others, teaching in overcrowded classrooms (Marais, 2016). In training institutions, teachers are not trained to handle the abnormal number of learners in the class. Most of the prepared videos for training only show a teacher in a class with less than 20 learners which is not a reality for most schools. This inaccuracy increases the stress of the teacher and further hardens the transition process of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase.

4.5.2.3 Effects of the language policy

Kamwangamalu (2002) states that the South African language policy in schools permits the mother tongue to be the language of instruction in the foundation phase. This aimed at equipping learners with a rich background of their mother tongue. However, in as much as this seemed beneficial and replenishing for the learners, it poised a stumbling block as learners progressed to the intermediate phase where they were expected to learn a new language and worse, be assessed in it. The researcher likens this scenario to digging a foundation for a two-roomed house then later on try to build a double storey on the same foundation. The learners have been given a different background to what the intermediate intends to build on them. This is obviously disastrous and causes much stress on the transition process of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase.

4.5.2.4 Burdened Teachers

The grade 3 annual teaching plan is loaded with content that burdens the teacher. The ATP showed that much work was to be covered from the second to the fourth quarter. The working situation of teachers seems to be characterized by a clear imbalance of effort and reward and is associated with a high risk of developing burnout symptoms (Bauer, Stamm, Virnich, Wissing, Müller, Wirsching and Schaarschmidt, 2006). Teachers have no time to get creative with their learners in the class but rather rush through topics to cover all the content that is listed in the ATPs. When CIs visit schools, one of the criteria they check is whether the teacher is up to date with the ATP. Learners might not be well prepared to transition to the next grade, namely grade 4 work because most concepts were rushed through and not thoroughly dealt with.

4.6 THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH OBSERVATION

The following themes are gathered from the data obtained from observation. This was done in the researcher's school. The researcher continuously observed her school for a minimum of 5 years. The researcher has also had the experience of teaching in the foundation phase for three consecutive years. This assists in comparing the two phases as the researcher is well acquainted with both phases. The following were the main focus in observation; teaching methods, manner of assessment, teacher and learner dedication and the teaching environment. From these points of observation, the researcher hoped to come up with a conclusion as to what affects the smooth transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase. From the data collected, themes were identified as follows;

4.6.1 Inconducive environment

Keen, Pennell, Muspratt and Poed (2011) define it as an environment that does not effectively engage young children for positive learning outcomes to be achieved. It is an environment that does not allow learners space and time to interact not only among themselves but also with teaching and learning materials. Conducive environment encourages them to quench their curiosity as they discover new knowledge or reinforces what they already know. Discipline in the classroom lacks as learners seldom do not adhere to the class rules. Ill-discipline cripples the environment of

teaching and learning. Teachers need to tighten discipline to promote progress in learner development. Respect for diversity can promote conducive environment.

Fredericks (2011) states that the constitution of South Africa protects individuals belonging to linguistic minorities from discrimination. Individuals should be respected despite their language or ethnic background. Learners who do not speak the local language seem to be sidelined by other learners and the teacher needs to intervene in such circumstances. The tone and respect from the teacher also impact the environment. A healthy and conducive environment is important in a teaching and learning environment. When this is absent, there is not much learning that can take place as learners are greatly influenced by the environment. In light of this truth, teachers need to put an effort in creating a conducive environment so that the transition process of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase is made pleasant.

4.6.1.1. *Overcrowded classrooms*

As the teacher mentioned the issue of overcrowded classes, this was observed in the researcher's school. Learners were crumpled up and the teachers had no space to move freely in between the desks. West (2020) explains that the South African education system is characterised by inadequate school infrastructure which is contributing to the overcrowded nature of South African classrooms. The distribution of mobile classrooms is an excellent idea but this promise from the Department of Basic Education was never fulfilled even in other neighbouring schools. Learners in overcrowded classrooms do not receive adequate attention. Their transition process from foundation to intermediate phase might not be smooth due to the fact that they might not be in a ready state to begin grade 4.

4.6.1.2 *Lack of training on handling learners with special need*

Ntombela (2011) points to the fact that teachers had limited experiences of inclusive education and limited comprehension of what it entails in the class. As a result, most teachers felt inadequately prepared to implement it. Institutions overlook the need for training teachers on inclusive education. There are mainstream schools that are labelled as full functioning schools and yet they neither have teachers who are qualified for inclusive education nor the infrastructure required to accommodate the

special needs learners. Teachers usually don't know what to do with special needs learners in their classes. As the learners transit from the foundation to the intermediate phase, they become part of the class whose teacher is not capable of dealing with their weaknesses, making the transition process more difficult. Teachers try all they know to do and when there's no change, they give up. Wearmouth, Edwards and Richmond, 2000 observe that the empowerment of educators is yet again neglected in the South African policy documentation on inclusive education.

4.6.2. Teacher frustration

Sutton, (2007) believes that frustration and anger emanate from several sources related to unaccomplished goals including students' ill manners and ignorance of rules. There are also factors outside the classroom that make it difficult to teach well, uncooperative colleagues, and parents who do not follow appropriate behaviour norms or are perceived as uncaring and irresponsible. Teachers also become angry when they believe that students' poor academic work is due to controllable factors, such as laziness or inattention. Many teachers report that most experience of anger and frustration are not minor, momentary feelings, but are intense, lasted more than one hour, and are associated with noticeable bodily sensations. Besides, their anger and frustration lead to changes in their classroom behaviours and coping strategies. Learners are the immediate target of anger and frustration. This frustration of teachers may interrupt the transition process of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase in that the teacher's mind is constantly diverted from the core business of the day which is preparing learners for the next phase.

4.6.2.1 *Congested annual teaching plan in grade 3*

The grade 3 ATP is much congested. There is no flexibility for the teacher to divert into personal creative methods of teaching like designing new games and composing new songs. A participant in school Y expressed concern about the ATP. She stated that in her school days she had all the time to go out and sing songs, play games and even collect objects to help with a topic. She expressed herself in frustration. That now, she has no time to go out with learners to learn through nature. All she is much concerned about is completing the ATP. The transition of learners from the foundation

to the intermediate phase may not be smooth due to the fact that teachers concentrate on completing the ATP rather than developing the learners.

4.6.2. 2 Pressure from Curriculum implementers

Curriculum specialists render support to teachers by assisting to create and re-evaluate materials used in the classroom. They analyse learners' data to find out and improve the school's implementation and evaluation of classroom material. Part of their job typically involves research. They find appropriate textbooks and curricula to improve the learning outcomes of the learners. Curriculum implementers (CI) visit schools to assist the teachers in teaching work but do not pay attention to the amount of work the teachers put in to help the learners.

Teacher X: *“The CIs always complain about the fact that I’m trailing behind the ATP schedule, some of the concepts such as time and data handling are difficult for learners to grasp in a short time. It is clear that the CI is not concerned about this fact but more eager for me to complete the term’s ATP.”*

Some concepts in both grade 3 and four require more time than what is stipulated in the ATPs. The teacher is then intimidated to please the CI than to render effective teaching. The ATP for grade three is impeded; the teacher has no room to be creative with learners outside or in the class. It does not cater to the different learning styles of learners. If the attitude of curriculum implementers remains unchecked, transition of learners from foundation to the intermediate phase may be harmed for many years to come.

4.6.3. Unpreparedness for the next phase

Learners need to be prepared for the next phase for the transition process to take place smoothly. Familiarisation with the norms of the intermediate phase is necessary. Preparation for the next phase may be well-planned in a way that will be effective to the learner and the next teacher (Donaldson, 2006).

4.6.3.1. No plan for orientation week

Donaldson (2006) believes that an open day in a school is a chance to get a feel for the school, inspect the facilities and chat with pupils and staff. However, a school can

use the same system to introduce learners to new teachers and their subjects in the intermediate phase. Teachers can exhibit part of their projects and major topics just to stimulate zeal in learners. It would be good for parents to attend those open day events to support their kids even though they have attended one before with their other children. Donaldson also advises that parents should bear in mind that this day's procedure is new to their child; they have never seen the material that is being presented, the curriculum may have changed or perhaps the teachers could be different. Most schools do not have an open day adding friction to the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase as learners blindly find themselves in a totally new world.

This practice is usually done in high schools but it is also necessary for the primary phases. This helps learners to be acquainted with the next phase and have an idea as to what is coming ahead of them. It is also an opportunity for teachers to set the learners' minds at ease by elaborating on the pleasures of the intermediate phase such as participation in new sporting codes and computer lessons. Teachers may try by all means to release the tension on the negatives such as the introduction of challenging subjects and increased school time.

4.6.3.2. Lack of training of grade 3s on the intermediate phase norms

Although growing up can bring with it an amount of stress, children may experience unnatural and excessive stress in times of change and adaptation (Azeska, Starc and Kevereski, 2017). Learners in the foundation phase are not trained in Intermediate norms. This could introduce unnecessary stress on them. In a South African child's school career, there are three major periods when change and adaptation are required: Grade 1, Grade 4 and Grade 8. Emphasis should be put must on grade 4 to blend them with the grown-up world. These norms include daily activities such as changing classes when the bell rings. Each period in the intermediate phase has duration of an hour. When the bell rings, learners must move quickly to the next class. Learners are not trained in grade three to change classes; this becomes frustrating for the learners when they transition from foundation to intermediate phase. Teachers also lose teaching time when learners arrive late making the transition process strenuous than it ought to be.

4.6.3.3. No introduction to new subjects in grade 3

New subjects are not introduced in grade 3. This could be done at the end of the year when learners finish with the ATP. This would require teacher dedication to making the transition process a success. Instead of learners taking an early holiday, teachers could take the opportunity to introduce new subjects such as Natural science and Technology and Social Sciences. This would help learners to familiarise themselves with what is coming ahead. (Azeska et al, 2017) advises teachers to assist learners to adjust from having only one teacher to multiple teachers, from few subjects to many and from quarterly tests to weekly tests. When learners are introduced to new subjects earlier enough, it is likely to reduce their stress level in the next grade. The process of introducing learners to new subjects whilst they are still in grade 3 should not be undermined as the repercussion could be detrimental to the transitioning process.

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter revealed some of the factors that cause disharmony in the transition process between learners in the foundation and intermediate phases in the schools of Mashishing, Mpumalanga. These were factors such as lack of training of learners in timekeeping in the foundation phase and lack of training of intermediate phase teachers on teaching sounds. Poor communication between grade 3 and 4 teachers was also part of the factors that affect transition. The use of mother tongue in the foundation phase as stipulated by the Department of Basic Education brought much confusion as learners had to shift to a foreign language in grade 4. Other issues such as trauma also disturbed the transition process and most often led to disorientation of the child. Behavioural changes led to deterioration of performance of the learners. From the findings, one concluded that the need to introduce English as a medium of instruction in the foundation phase was important. It was also essential to establish a profound system of communicating the learners' behaviour and struggles with grade 4 teachers to update them for the upcoming learners. In the forthcoming chapter, the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study will be discussed in full.

5. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, data were presented, analysed and interpreted. This chapter concentrates on summarising findings and making recommendations. Findings and the recommendations were discussed against the objectives stated in chapter one as well as the statement of the problem. For a reminder, this study sets out to examine how the transition from the foundation to the intermediate phases could be properly managed to minimise challenges that are part of it, some of which disturb a smooth integration into the intermediate phase (Brady & Woolfson, 2008)

5. 2. SUMMARY OF THEMES

In the previous chapter, themes from interviews, document review and observation were presented. Those themes were summarised as follows:

5.2.1. Themes derived from interviews

Shannon (2016) states an interview is one of the best tools in qualitative research. He adds that the interviewer is a motivation source that can help the participant to understand the questions. The researcher has interviewed the 9 participants to get their experiences on teaching grade 4 classes. She wanted to understand the struggle that they encountered in the intermediate phase that will address the disharmony of the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases in the schools of Mashishing, Mpumalanga. An interview related to teaching experience and management shed much light on the transition of learners from foundation to the intermediate phase. Parents were also interviewed to get their views as guardians of the learners who are part of the studies. The following responses emerged from the 9 research participants that were interviewed:

5.2.1.1. Slow pace in writing

Most of the participants indicated that they experienced a slow pace in writing with grade four classes. This is caused by the lack of training in timekeeping in the grade 3 classes. Learners do not change classes in grade 3 and therefore the issue of changing periods is new to them in the intermediate phase and grade 4. A lesson ends

and learners are not even halfway from completing the work that they had been tasked to write. The other reason for the slow pace is poor communication between grade 3 and 4 teachers. Teachers in grade 4 are caught unaware of the weaknesses of the learners and are hardly prepared to deal with those shortcomings. The pace of writing is important for progress in the teaching and learning environment (Herbert and Bailey, 2002).

The slow pace can also be caused by the varying handwritings on the chalkboard by different teachers since teachers write differently. Learners could take a while to get used to the manner of particular teachers' handwriting. Both the teacher and learners are chasing time; in this case, learners will not even seek clarity of words that they cannot see, so they resort to scribbling illegibly. They will not even be able to read what they have written. Herbert and Bailey (2002) acknowledge that some learners attend counselling with psychologists regarding their cognitive disabilities. The process may take long before the psychologists conclude. Meanwhile, the learner continues to struggle with writing and teachers are not able to help the affected learners. All these factors that lead to slow pace in writing contribute to the friction experienced in the transition process of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase.

5.2.1.2. *Language barrier*

The shift from the use of home language in the Foundation Phase (grade R to grade 3) to the use of the foreign language of learning and teaching (LoLT) from grade 4 upwards is another challenge that the South African context and similar educational contexts have. The shift occurs before learners even become literate in their first home language (Setati and Barwell, 2008; Spaul, 2016). Learners struggle in grade 4 as they need to use a foreign language in all activities and subjects done. This is likely to frustrate their learning process. Whilst grade 4 is a critical grade where a child reads to learn advanced content, there could be difficulties as they cannot comprehend the new language. Learners do not practice speaking the foreign language. This makes it difficult for them to catch up and be to the required level when they transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase.

5.2.1.3. *Incompetency in reading*

Some learners manifested inadequate reading from grade 1 to grade 3, and suddenly struggle with reading when they enter grade 4. Chall, Jacobs and Baldwin (1990) named this phenomenon the 'fourth-grade slump'. It describes learners falling behind in reading due to a shift from 'learning to read' in grades 1 to 3 and 'reading to learn' in grades 4 to 6 (Spaull, 2016). The significant impact of this "fourth-grade slump" upon future learning has been acknowledged internationally (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall and Gwynne, 2010). Teachers in the intermediate phase are not trained to teach reading; hence they do not teach sounds. When entering the intermediate phase, learners read to learn unlike in the foundation phase where they learnt to read. Learners have been learning sounds in another language and now they have to learn new sounds in a foreign language. This becomes a stumbling block and causes many delays in academic progress. The introduction of complex content makes reading more challenging for learners. Whilst they are trying to cope with the new language, they have to tackle complex texts and refine their grammar in the new language. Whilst learners face reading challenges, they tend to develop a negative attitude towards the language unless given proper guidance and encouragement by teachers. Parents at home are not supportive of their children. This makes it difficult for both the learner and the teacher. Lack of parental support may be caused by negligence, poor academic background or even a poor level educational background. The listed factors need to be attended to so as to make the transition process from grade 3 to 4 smooth.

5.2.1.4. *Poor writing skills*

Poor writing skills became more evident at the intermediate phase which becomes a confirmation that in the previous phase, such writing skills were not developed in learners. Writing skills require attention in both the foundation and the intermediate phases to enable the transitioning of learners from one phase to the next. Language change can cause poor writing skills. When learners have to write in a foreign language, they struggle with spelling and grammar. For a learner to write correct answers they need to comprehend the instruction or the question that is given. A learner with difficulties cannot be attributed to one factor but a myriad of factors. Some factors are the problem of underprepared teachers, ineffective teaching of writing in schools, which also provide fewer writing activities and fewer opportunities for learning

in a second language. Practise makes perfect. When learners do not practise the foreign language, they are bound to remain stagnant and not grow in the foreign language. Qureshi (2012) agrees that to be a good communicator one must have speaking as a skill. The more the learner practises the more familiar the learners becomes to the second language and the simpler the transition process becomes.

5.2.1.5. Anxiety

Headley and Campbell (2011) describe generalised anxiety disorder as excessive worry and tension, on most days, for at least six months. Anxious children need adults to help them cope with negative thoughts. An introduction to new subjects is one of the causes of anxiety. Learners who take time to understand what the subject is all about may experience much anxiety. This happens to grade 4 learners. Parents need to play a role in supporting learners. Lack of parental support adds to the friction of the transition process from grade 3 to 4.

5.2.1.6. Behavioural change

Behaviour change is recognisable in learners when they enter the intermediate phase. These changes can be birthed by social factors such as trauma, abuse, bullying and poverty. Learners go through abuse that can consequently lead to trauma. Trauma can have a long-lasting impact on learners, especially if not addressed. Learners go through abuse at an early age and this age, they do not know how to handle the mixed negative emotions that come with abuse. Abuse can come in many forms of which neglect, sexual and physical abuses are some of them. Abuse causes learners to deteriorate in their performance making the transitioning process a nightmare. Symptoms of abuse can be seen. They range from violent and eating disorders to withdrawal from social life (Headley and Campbell, 2011).

Poverty can also contribute to a change in behaviour. Learners at their tender age may not understand the imbalance of their family backgrounds. A child who is coming from a poor family may always feel less and insignificant. They need much love and guidance in the truth that they are of great value even though they might not have everything in life. Teachers need skills of listening to the child and creating a free environment. Rogers (2000) believes that teachers need to acquire the necessary skills in responding to what children state. Asking the right questions is important and

can be achieved by paraphrasing, summarising, or reflecting. This however comes with experience and is a necessity in insuring a smooth transitioning from foundation to intermediate phase.

5.2.1.7. *Lack of learner academic development*

Clint (2012) gives an illustration of Mrs. Benson's learners who arrive in her classroom with a set of challenges they need to overcome to develop to their fullest potential. She works hard to help all learners to use their skills and knowledge to perform well in school so that they may also perform exceptionally well in their next coming academic years. This is called academic development. It is a crucial practice for teachers to give adequate attention to individual learners in the class. However, if classes are overcrowded, it becomes an almost impossible task leaving learners undeveloped and not ready for future academic challenges. Other factors that may affect academic development are economic hardships that learners may be exposed to. When the family cannot step up financially, it could be shattering to a young child. Problems at home are also a contributor to the poor academic development in a child including coping with grade 4. Whilst some of the problems cannot be evaded, support is needed from the teachers, parents and the department. When parents do not play their role in supporting their children, they only worsen an already bad situation of coping with the transition from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase.

5.2.2. Themes derived from document review

Document review was one of the data gathering tools used. The following documents were reviewed; Mark schedules downloaded from the SA SAMS, language policy, annual teaching plans and staff allocation. From these documents, the following themes resulted;

5.2.2.1. *Overcrowding in class*

Documents reviewed revealed an abnormal number of learners enlisted in the grade 4 mark schedules. This goes to show that there is a crammed up situation exists in the classes. The South African education system is characterised by inadequate school infrastructure (West, 2020). In one school a maximum of 60 learners was listed for one class which makes the teaching and learning processes a nightmare. Learners

may have also felt that they were not being given the attention they need and therefore led to unnecessary ill behaviour just to get attention. Teachers not being trained to cope with overcrowded classes were frustrated during the teaching and learning process. The issue of inadequate infrastructure was a contributing factor to the frustration in the learning process. The provincial department struggles to satisfy schools in terms of infrastructure. This causes an overwhelming need in schools. Since teachers were not trained to handle overcrowded classes, this posed a strain to their functionality. The strain of overcrowded classes causes a friction in the transitioning of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase because overcrowding creates an In-conducive environment.

5.2.2.2. *Inconsistency in performance*

Schedules revealed inconsistency in performance by grade 3 and 4 pupils. Grade 3 schedules showed a higher percentage in performance whilst a grade 4 schedule reflected a drop in performance. Whilst some learners maintained the standard of their performance, a significant number dropped. This drop displayed the gap between the foundation and intermediate phases. This is the core of this research. To determine what led to the gap between the foundation and intermediate phases.

5.2.3. Themes derived from observation

The researcher observed both phases for more than five years from the school where she is based. As advised by Maree (2012) a systematic way of capturing the behavioural patterns without having to question them can be used to collect data in research. The researcher's school is one of the research sites sampled for this study and only the researcher's school will be used for observation. Gathering conclusions about a case study takes more than a day's observation; it takes years as it has been in this case study. Observation focussed on the teaching methods, annual teaching plan, learner and teacher dedication and manner of assessment. After close observation was done in the researcher's school, the following themes emerged:

5.2.3.1 *In-conducive environment*

The language policy states that all 11 official South African languages including sign language should be held in equal regard (Fredericks, 2011). Individuals in class have

different cultures and speak different languages. Learners who speak a different language from the rest of the learners are sidelined at times by other learners. Teachers have a mandate to protect all children from any discrimination that could be caused by their language, skin or background. The teachers should by all means create conducive environment that will encourage a positive learning environment. A positive environment is a booster for a smooth transition between the two mentioned phases.

5.2.3.2 *Teacher frustration*

The demand that comes with the annual teaching plan- ATP in grade 3 brought frustration to teachers. The frustration and anger of teachers comes from numerous assumed failures such as unaccomplished goals (Sutton, 2007). Failure to complete the annual teaching plan (ATP) could be part of the teacher's frustrations. The work that has to be covered per quarter may have been burdensome to the teachers. This is worsened by the curriculum implementers who insist that the ATP be completed in the quarters. This diverts the teacher from quality teaching and learning to impress curriculum implementers. Teachers would feel safe where learners' books reflect that content has been covered than to be labelled as an incompetent teacher who could not complete the required work. Such mentality is encouraged by the department and needs to be addressed so as to promote a smooth transition of learners from foundation to the intermediate phase.

5.2.3.3 *Lack of preparation for the next phase*

Learners from the foundation phase are not inducted in time to the intermediate phase. Induction should begin early enough to put learners at ease. There is no orientation week to familiarise learners with the next phase. When learners are not introduced to the norms of the intermediate phase they get into a whole new world where they are frustrated and drained emotionally. Donaldson (2006) advised earlier on that preparation for the next phase is essential and needs to be well planned to make it effective to the learner and the next teacher. New subjects may also be introduced to the grade 3 learners at a later stage of the year to ease the unnecessary tension they may experience in the 4th grade.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from face to face interviews, document review, and observation, the following recommendations were made:

5.3.1 Establishment of a communication program

Based on the finding that there is lack of communication regarding the performance of learners between the foundation and the intermediate phase teachers. The researcher recommends that schools may develop a well-structured program of communication that will connect grade 3 and 4 teachers. HODs may design such a program and where possible involve parents to make it functional. An orientation program can be put in place as it is necessary to update learners into the process of entering a new phase. This could be made an annual fun; friendly and exhibition function where teachers exhibit their subject and also invite parents to the function.

5.3.2 Reinforcing the English language from the foundation phase.

On the finding that changing language from mother tongue in the foundation to English in the intermediate phase causes frustration in the transition process. The researcher recommends that schools may apply with the help of the SGB to establish English as the medium of instruction in the foundation phase so that learners don't have to struggle to change to another language at the intermediate phase. The department can assist by speeding up the process as long as that will be done to help learners.

5.3.3 Training of intermediate teachers to teach reading

It appears that the empowerment of teachers is once again neglected in the South African policy documentation on inclusive education (Wearmouth, Edwards and Richmond, 2000). One of the findings of this research is that teachers lack training in the basic and relevant skills. The researcher strongly recommends that teacher training institutes may in-cooperate the training of sound teaching to intermediate phase teachers so that they may not be left stranded with learners who struggle to read. Teachers deserve to be quite skilled to handle this.

5.3.4 Curriculum implementers to divert focus

Inadequate departmental support was one of the findings that seemed to cause friction in the transition process of learners from foundation to the intermediate phase. The researcher recommends that curriculum implementers should take much interest in the development of the child rather than in the administration part of the lesson. CIs are pillars of support in the education system. They should find a way to redesign the ATP in a way that allows more time for complex concepts. A design that is not burdensome to the teachers. ATPs should promote more quality education than quantity. It should concentrate more on the thorough cognitive development of the child than a long list of coverage. In this way, a smooth transition between the two mentioned phases is sure to be smooth.

5.3.5 Developing language skills

The researcher found out that lack of practise and encouragement in speaking English frustrates the transition process between the foundation and the intermediate phases. Since language skills are an essential driving force to learning and teaching in education, the researcher recommends that schools may develop their learners' language skills by encouraging them to read books aloud and have conversations with their friends about the texts. It is also suggested that they should ensure that children are engaging with a wide variety of media, texts and topics. Writing the language and speaking it more often brings desired results.

5.3.6 Building of extra schools

Lack of infrastructure is a major concern for many schools in South Africa. This was one of the findings of the researcher. The researcher recommends that the department of basic education should engage in a project of building extra classrooms and even new schools. Providing mobile classes could be a good start. This will eliminate the issue of overcrowding in classes which plays a negative role in the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase. As the learner population grows, schools cannot accommodate the number of learners who enrol. Children have a right to education and cannot be denied education even based on overcrowding.

5.3.7 Re-categorisation of schools

The researcher found that schools are defined as full-service schools and yet they do not offer full service. A full service school should be able to cater for all need of learners including disability. Such schools are not even equipped with the necessary infrastructure to serve the special needs learners. It is recommended that the re-assessment of schools should be done and that schools may be correctly categorised. All schools that are categorised as full-service schools should be well equipped to fit the category. This would eliminate the problems encountered in the transition process caused by the enrolment of unfit learners who really need special help.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine and manage the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phases in schools of Mashishing in Mpumalanga. This study examined how the transition process from the foundation to Intermediate phases were managed to minimise challenges that are part of it. Chapter one of this research laid out the background and rationale of the study. Thereafter literature was reviewed in the second chapter to gather point of reviews from other scholars and authors regarding the research title. The research design and methodology were discussed in the third chapter where the approach used to conduct the research and the tools used to gather data were broadly discussed. Data presentation and analysis was done in the fourth chapter. Data were gathered, categorised and presented in themes. In this final chapter, the summary, conclusion and recommendations were made.

The aim of the study was clarified through the aims and objectives of the study which determined how the harmony of the foundation and the intermediate phases were understood. Secondly to establish the gain concerning harmonising the foundation and the intermediate phases and thirdly to determine what led to the gap between the foundation and intermediate phases. These objectives were met and discussed in the literature review in the fourth chapter. Parents, teachers and the department emerged as partners that worked together to harmonise the transition process. The importance of the transitioning was not being understood in its totality. The gain that comes with harmonising the foundation and the intermediate phases was as well unveiled.

The purpose of this study was fulfilled in the sense that ultimately the researcher indicated the existing disharmony between the foundation and the intermediate phase. Furthermore, the researcher recommended how best to manage the transition of learners from the foundation to the intermediate phase in the most helpful and beneficial way for schools to close the existing gap between the mentioned phases.

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Appendix A: A LETTER TO THE ETHICS COMMITTEE, UNIV OF LIMPOPO

Premere Skool Kellysville

Private Bag 89

Kellysville 1120

15 April 2020

University of Limpopo

Tzaneen Road

Mankweng Township

Polokwane

The Committee

RE: A REQUEST FOR YOUR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH UNDER THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

I hereby apply for permission to conduct a research study under the faculty of Education. My name is Ms F. Mangena, a Masters student in your institution (Student number 201834626) – under the supervision of Prof NS Modiba. My research topic reads as follows: **Managing the transition of learners from foundation to intermediate phases in schools of Mashishing, Mpumalanga.**

The researcher will abide by the Ethical norms enforced by the University of Limpopo. All participants' identification will be protected and will not be exposed to any shame, or physical or emotional harm.

I hope the committee finds this request in order.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Mangena Flora

Student

Prof NS Modiba

Appendix B: RESPONSE FROM THE ETHICS COMMITTEE



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 05 March 2020

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/30/2020: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Managing The Transition of Learners from Foundation to Intermediate Phases in The Schools of Mashishing, Mpumalanga
Researcher: F Mangena
Supervisor: Prof NS Modiba
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Education
Degree: Master of Education in Curriculum Studies

PROF P MASOKO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

Appendix C: LETTER TO MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. Box X24536

Mashishing 1120

Cell number: 0834902001

15 April 2020

3 Thulamahashe Street
Maviljan-A
Budhbuckridge, 1282

Dear Sir/Madam:

RE: A REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN YOUR PROVINCE

I hereby request permission to conduct a research study in your province. My name is Mangena Flora (Persal number 82524807). I am currently studying for a Masters degree (MEd) with the University of Limpopo under the supervision of Prof NS Modiba in the School of Education. My research topic is: **Managing the transition of learners from foundation to intermediate phases in the schools of Mashishing, Mpumalanga.**

Methods of data collection will be one-on-one interviews and observations. This will be done during working hours and will require the participation of both teachers and learners who have been purposively sampled for the research. The participants will be protected from any emotional or physical harm.

I believe that this research will be beneficial to the Department of Education and will also be a source of reference for future scholars.

I await a favourable response from you.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Mangena Flora

Masters Student

Appendix D: RESPONSE FROM MPUMALANGA EDUCATION DPT



Ikhemanga Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200.
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Tomfundvo, Umnyango we Fundo

Departament van Onderwys

Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

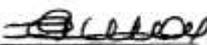
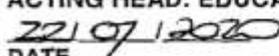
Ms. Flora Mangena
PO BOX 4346
LYDENBURG
1120

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MS. F. MANGENA
(flox2009@gmail.com) 083 490 2001

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The title of your study reads thus: **"Managing transition of learners from foundation phase to the intermediate phase in the Mashishing Circuit."** Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the departmental website and available on request. You are also requested to adhere to your University's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics document. We trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the department, especially the learners and the teaching staff and all officials in the department of education.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department as soon as you complete your research project. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the department's annual research dialogue. For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za.

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.


MR. J.R. NKOSI
ACTING HEAD: EDUCATION

DATE



Appendix E: A LETTER TO THE CIRCUIT MANAGER

Premere Skool Kellysville

Private Bag 89

Kellysville 1120

15 April 2020

Mashishi Circuit Office

Mashishing, 1120

Circuit Manager:

RE: A REQUEST FOR YOUR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR CIRCUIT

I hereby request permission to conduct a research study in your circuit. My name is Mangena Flora (Persal number 82524807). I am currently studying for my Masters degree (MEd) with the University of Limpopo under the supervision of Prof NS Modiba in the School of Education. My research topic is: **Managing the transition of learners from foundation to intermediate phases in the schools of Mashishing, Mpumalanga.**

Methods of data collection will be one-on-one interviews and observations. These will be done during working hours and will require the participation of both teachers and Heads of Departments who have been purposively sampled for the research. The participants will be protected from any emotional or physical harm.

I believe that this research will be beneficial not only to the circuit but to the Department of Education as a whole.

I await a favourable response from you.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Mangena Flora

Masters Student

Appendix F: RESPONSE FROM THE CIRCUIT MANAGER



education
DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

MASHISHING CIRCUIT OFFICE

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Litiko leTemfundvo Umnyango weFundo Departement van Onderwys Ndzawulo Ya Dyondzo
ENQ: MR MOKWENA TG 0839731291

TO : Ms Mangena Flora

FROM : MOKWENA T.G
ACTING CIRCUIT MANAGER
MASHISHING CIRCUIT

SUBJECT : PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Ms Mangena

In response to your letter dated the 28 August 2020, the Acting circuit manager has the pleasure to grant you permission to conduct a research towards your MeD in Education at the schools that you have selected within the circuit.

You are further advised to communicate with the preferred schools in order to agree on terms and conditions of your research project.

The circuit office wishes you success in your studies

Kind Regards

Mokwena T.G
Acting Circuit Manager



Appendix G: A LETTER TO THE PRINCIPALS

Kellysville Primary School

P. O. Box 89

1120

19 April 2020

Marambane Primary School

P. O Box 463

Lydenburg, 1120

The Principal:

RE: A REQUEST FOR YOUR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I hereby apply for permission to conduct a research study in your school. I am a teacher at Kellysville Primary school and am currently studying for a Masters Degree in Curriculum Studies with the University of Limpopo. I'm under the supervision of Prof NS Modiba (School of Education). My research topic reads as follows: **Managing the transition of learners from foundation to intermediate phases in the schools of Mashishing.**

I would like to sample participants from your school for my research. My research study will involve two teachers (Grade 3 and 4) and a H.O.D. I will conduct interviews and observations that will take place during contact time. The researcher will abide by the ethical norms enforced by the University of Limpopo. All participants' identification will be protected and they will not be exposed to any shame, or physical or emotional harm. The input of participants in this study will be voluntary and they can pull out at will.

Please feel free to contact the principal Ms B. Johnson for any verification (072656 1640). I hope my application will be considered.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Mangena Flora

Student

Appendix H: RESPONSE FROM THE PRINCIPALS

MARAMBANE PRIMARY SCHOOL		
Enquiries: Madonsela SD E-mail: marambanepriamary@gmail.com Cell: 078 5240266 Tel: 0132346006		P O Box 172 Lydenburg 1120

**To : Miss F Mangena
: Kellysville Primary (Educator)**

**From : Principal
: Madonsela S.D**

Date : 22 September 2020

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESERACH

The above-mentioned institution wished to acknowledge and receive your application to conduct research. The school has the pleasure to grant your permission to conduct the research and we hope and believe the research to be conducted will also benefit our school.

You are further advised to communicate with the above-mentioned institution to finalize the other logistical arrangements.

The school wishes you well in this important research project you have undertaken and wishing you a success in your endeavors.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in education


Madonsela S.D
Principal



22/09/2020
Date

Appendix I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

1. Briefly explain the difficulties you daily face since heading this phase.
2. What difficulties are posed by the teachers handling grade 4 classes in your phase? Explain.
3. What interventions do you provide for the teachers who struggle in your phase? Explain.
4. Explain how teaching and learning could be improved for grades 3 and 4 learners.
5. Explain what you notice about the behaviour of learners as they start with the intermediate phase?
6. Can you briefly comment on your observation during IQMS class visits in grades 3 and 4 classes?
7. Explain the impact of parents on the academic performance of their children who are in grades 3 and 4.
8. How do parents respond in meetings where the academic performance of their children in grades 3 and 4 is discussed?
9. Explain the common weakness you have witnessed with grades 3 and 4 learners.
10. Explain an area of concern in the foundation and the intermediate phases where intervention is greatly needed?

Appendix J: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – TEACHERS

1. Briefly explain the difficulties you daily face in this phase?
2. Explain how teaching the foundation phase and the intermediate phases could be harmonised.
3. Explain the teaching method you regard to be the most effective in grades 3 and 4.
4. Explain the unique difficulties which grades 3 and 4 teachers grapple with.
5. Explain how you encourage learners in grades 3 and 4 to be devoted to their schoolwork.
6. Explain the rate at which learners in grades 3 and 4 struggle with reading in your class
7. Explain other intervention strategies you try to assist the struggling learners.
8. Explain how do you normally deal with the slow learners in either grades 3 or 4.
9. Explain the kind of support you frequently receive from the Department of Basic Education.
10. Explain in detail what could be done to enhance the pass rate in grades 3 and 4?

Appendix K: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – PARENTS

1. Explain the academic performance of your child between grades 3 to 4
2. Explain as to whether you regard your child to be coping with grade 4.
3. Explain how you are assisting your child to migrate from grade 3 to 4.
4. Explain the biggest challenge that your child is facing in grade 4.
5. Explain how best do you think you can help to enhance the performance of your child in grade 3 and 4.
6. Explain how best do you think teachers can help to enhance the performance of your child in grade 3 and 4
7. Explain the impact of parent’s meetings scheduled by the school with regard to the performance of your child?
8. Considering the informal discussion
9. you hold with your child, explain the conclusion you arrive at on how the child copes with grade 3 and 4 schoolwork.
10. Explain in a brief report of your interaction with teachers about your child’s schoolwork in grade 3 and 4.
11. Explain how do you rate the support the school gives the transition of your child from grade 3 to 4.

Appendix L: DOCUMENT REVIEW

1. SA-SAMS Mark-sheets
2. Staff allocation plans
3. Annual Teaching Plans (ATPSs)
4. Language policy

Appendix M: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

1. Observing how the number of learners in the classroom impact on the teacher's creativity and the motivation of learners.
2. Observing how sitting arrangements in class are conducive for an effective lesson.
3. Observing the method of teaching in class and analysing whether it is well rolled out to bring about positive results.
4. Observing teaching resources used and whether they are sufficient and effective for learning and teaching.
5. Observing the participation of learners in the classroom.
6. Observing the duration the teacher gives learners to complete a task or an activity in class.
7. Observing the teacher's sensitivity toward the use of language in class.
8. Observing the relationship between teachers and learners.
9. Observing the up-keeping of records of struggling learners.
10. Observing how a classroom environment is applied to improve teaching and learning.

Appendix N: PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORM

I give consent to be part of your study whose research title is: Managing the transition of learners from foundation to intermediate phases in the schools of Mashishing, Mpumalanga.

I have read the project information statement explaining the purpose of the research project and have understood that:

- My participation is voluntary.
- I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.
- All the information shared with you, will be treated in strictest confidentiality.
- My name shall not be used in any written reports of your study.
- My school will not be identifiable in any written report of your study.
- Findings of your study shall be made available to me and our school if needed.

Participant

Signature

Date

Witness

Signature

Date
