

THE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF PLAY IN THE TEACHING OF GRADE R AT
SCHOOLS IN THE UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

BY

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DECLARATION

I, HILDAGARD SIZAKELE MZIMELA hereby declare that this thesis comprises my own investigation, except for the information indicated in the acknowledgements and references, and comments included in the body of the dissertation.

Signature

Date

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my late parents, Mr and Mrs Cele for their commitment to the education of their children.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my late daughter, Zama Nguni Mzimela.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the Foundation Phase teachers' understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R in the Umkhanyakude District. The study targeted Grade R educators, because they are responsible for laying a sound and solid foundation for learners, which can be effectively done through proper use of play in the teaching of young learners.

The study used a qualitative approach in order to get an in-depth knowledge in terms of understanding the importance of play when teaching young learners. The research sample comprised of seven teachers from four different schools in the district. Purposive sampling of participants was used. Data were collected through inside and outside observations and interviews. The research findings were first analysed according to eight main themes according to the data elicited through interrogations during interviews.

Key findings revealed that some Grade R educators did not have a clear understanding of play in Grade R teaching. The study also showed the impact of current constraints of the Department of Education, like restricted kilometres and shortage of ECD officials in terms of providing monitoring and support.

Key words: Early Childhood Development, Grade R, transition, play, curriculum and assessment policy.

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CHAPTER 1

MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction of Grade R in South African schools is aimed at improving the quality of education. The Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (ECD) of 2001 states that the Department of Education (DoE) will, within the ECD priority group of the National Programme of Action on Children, develop appropriate curricula for pre-reception year programmes with a special emphasis on mathematical literacy, language and life skills (DoE, 2001). The DoE has taken a keen interest in ensuring that the Grade R programmes are both inclusive and integrated focusing on the provision of opportunities to foster children's emotional, social, intellectual, physical, spiritual and moral development and use of play as the primary vehicle for achieving this (DoE, 2001). In order for the programmes to be truly integrated, a focus on children's nutritional and other health requirements, safety, physical development, and water and sanitation needs would also be included. Particular care will be taken to ensure that when addressing children's intellectual developmental needs, practitioners make use of developmentally appropriate practice. In other words, the kind of opportunities that children are offered for language and literacy development, the development of numeracy and other mathematical concepts, and the development of critical thinking skills must meet children's needs at their particular stage of development (DoE, 2001).

The Council for Quality Assurance in General Education and Training (GET) as well as the Further Education and Training (FET) Bands aims at the following, according to Umalusi (2010:6):

- *Preparation for life and to build a foundation for life-long learning;*
- *Holistic development of the child;*
- *Development of learning dispositions that will support life-long learning;*
and

- *Preparation for Grade one.*

A grade R class is normally called a Reception Year class in the context of South Africa. The name in itself proves that this class is not yet a formal class but a transitional class, a class that bridges a gap between home and school. There is consensus in a way different scholars define the concept of transition. Dunlop and Fabian (2002) define transition as being the passage from one place, stage, state, style or subject to another over time. Vrinioti (2007) says that transition deals with border crossings, a physical movement from one physical context to another. UNESCO (2012) defines transition as the process of change that is experienced when children and their families move from one setting to another. Docket (2011) looks at transition as a child's readiness for school.

Play is regarded as a manner of creating a natural learning context for children to capture their interest and absorb their attention. Children's play should involve physical activities such as running, kicking, catching and exploring materials and objects. Young learners should be exposed to creating and acting out realistic or imaginary situations. Children can be allowed to play on their own or with others in early childhood settings. Children's play is depicted by making use of established learning centres or spaces of play both indoors and outdoors. Play in Foundation Phase provides a context for speaking and listening. When oral play is used, there is the potential for enhancing children's ability with the specific language components of semantics, phonology and syntax (Fellowes & Oakley, 2013: 59-61).

Given the above definitions, it is clear that play is an important vehicle for conveying knowledge to the child in a Reception Year class. Transitional activities support the principle of continuity for young children to ease their anxieties about leaving a familiar environment for an unfamiliar one and these transitional activities are in the form of play. According to Ames, Rojas and Portugal (2010), transition entails multiple changes in terms of identity, roles, relations and settings. Transitions are key events and or processes occurring at specific periods or turning points during the life course. They are generally linked to changes in a person's appearance, activity, status, roles and

relationships, as well as associated changes in use of physical and social space, and or changing contact with cultural beliefs, discourses and practices especially where these are linked to changes of setting, and in some cases dominant language. When children leave home for school, they assume new duties, they meet new people, their social life changes as well as their behaviour and they adapt to the new situation. Docket (2011) posits that transition to school occurs over an extended period of time as children engage in a range of experiences that promote their learning, development and well-being. He further says the transition process starts when parents and children begin to think about, and make decisions related to school and it concludes when children and families feel secure and accepted with school environment. Historically, transition was viewed as a matter of a child's academic and social preparedness for a smooth move from the home setting to a primary school in reading, writing and numerical skills (Rimm-Kaufman, 2004). Early childhood development programmes are supposed to be an effective approach to solve the problem (Woodhead & Moss, 2007).

Therefore, the grade R class requires a curriculum that is appropriate to the age of learners. Woodhead and Moss (2007) assert that a sound pedagogical approach marks a good grade R programme. Pedagogy refers to the interactive process that takes place between the educator and the child to enable learning to occur considering the four principles of relevance in Grade R, namely: a play-based approach, mediation, integration and child-centeredness. The pedagogical value of play does not lie in its use as a way to teach children in a specific set of skills through structured activities called 'play' (Bergen, 1998). Furthermore, play nourishes every aspect of children's development viz.: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and creative. The learning in play is integrated, powerful and largely invisible to the untrained eye. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement [CAPS] is the curriculum that was superseded by the National Curriculum Statement [NCS] and was implemented in 2011. It states clearly in one of its principles that teaching and learning in Grade R is always play-based (DoE, 2011).

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The DoE (2008) defines play as an action which develops different skills in a child. It motivates and stimulates learners, because they are happy and actively involved. It also allows the children to find out about themselves and explore the world or environment around them. It is part of every child's life whether in rural or urban area. It is an activity that has few obligations and a little discipline. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive and emotional strength (Ginsburg 2007). It helps young children to acquire an understanding of concepts in three stages. It is the primary way children can learn. Through play, children eagerly use all the tools they have at their own disposal namely their bodies, their relationships, with their family and peers, and the world around them. Play as well as learning, are natural components of children's everyday lives (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008).

De Witt (2009) and Lucich (2011) concur that play contributes to the young child's cognitive development and the learning process. According to De Witt (2009), play lays the foundation for almost everything that the child learns during the preschool years and what they do all day. He further states that play is any voluntary activity that the child performs solely for the pleasure it gives. Lucich (2011) states that play is beneficial in the learning process of the child. She states further that children learn about concepts, how to group and classify objects, how to make sense of things and events, and how to solve problems through play.

Berk (2007) states that play offer the child an opportunity to be independent, to make his own decisions and thus become self-reliant. Feeny (2007) describe play as intrinsically the nature of a child's motivated, relatively free of externally imposed rules, as the process whereby the outcome is not important. Mayesky (2006) reveals that concepts like reversibility and equality are developed. He further says that play develops the young children's self-confidence and leads to a positive self-image. Finally, he says play cannot be taken lightly since it fulfils an important role of the child's total humanisation, hence justice should be done in any programme for young children.

Lucich (2011) asserts that play fuels healthy development of young children. It is through play that much of children's learning is achieved. It takes many forms, but the heart of play is pleasure. And with pleasure comes powerful drive to repeat such activities. With repetition comes mastery and mastery brings a sense of accomplishment and confidence. According to Piaget (1962) play is assimilation or the children's efforts to make environmental stimuli match their own concepts. His theory holds that play, in and of itself does not necessarily result in the formation of new cognitive structures. Piaget claims that play is just for pleasure, and while it allows children to practise things they had previously learned, it does not necessarily result in the learning of new things. In other words, play reflects what the child has already learned but does not necessarily teach the child anything new. In this view, play is seen as a process reflective of emerging symbolic development, but contributing little to it. Similarly, Rotumoi & Too, (2012) state that play is an activity that leads to development in children.

Minett (2005) mentions that children including those with special needs learn through play and that children play, because it gives them pleasure. This means that children need to play in order to enjoy themselves. Play is also part of education because while playing they are learning. They do that for socialisation purposes. Moreover, children need opportunities both to play with other children and also to play on their own without interference in order to learn how to amuse. It also prevents boredom and reduces stress as well as assisting in divert aggressive instincts. On the other hand Ginsburg (2007) says play is essential to development, because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social and emotional well-being of children and youth. Play also offers an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children.

According to Lucich (2011), play is beneficial in the learning process of the child. Lucich (2011) also states the value play has in the learning of a child. He says children's cognitive skills are enhanced. Through play children learn about concepts, how to group and classify objects, how to make sense of things and events, and how to solve problems. Play often involves trial and error, and problem solving tasks. Play requires a child to make choices, direct activities, and to make plans to reach a goal.

Lucich (2011) also states that children develop motor skills. He says through play, children develop control and coordination of muscles that are needed to walk, eat or write. Gross motor skills can be enhanced with a toddler pushing a toy grocery cart or an older child playing hopscotch. Fine motor and manipulation skills are developed when pre-schoolers use their fingers to string cheerio's for a necklace or toddlers scribble with crayons on paper. When throwing and catching a ball, children are practising hand- eye coordination and their ability to grasp. When children kick a ball across the room they are practising coordination and developing muscle control, tone and flexibility.

Children enhance language skills in accordance with Lucich (2011). Talking, singing, rhyming and the word play help to master the rules and sound of language while they have fun. He further says children also gain social and emotional skills. Play develops imagination and creativity and gives children practice in social skills such as waiting, negotiating, taking turns, cooperation compromise sharing and expressing emotions. Children learn about themselves and the world they acquire self-confidence, self-reliance and keep them happy. Quality experiences to Grade R learners should also be offered for them to reach their potential (Lucich, 2011).

The most important question is: "How should play be harnessed to provide quality learning experience for children in their earliest years". Johnson (2010) says play should not be a standalone activity. Direct instruction in core early literacy skills is advised to complement play related strategies. The teacher must then ensure that learners use the best possible experiences in this grade, settle down happily and feel motivated to learn from the beginning, and that they develop holistically i.e. emotionally, physically, morally and intellectually. The teacher is also responsible for helping learners to achieve mathematics, home language and life skills. Finally, material and many different activities should be prepared for these learners to keep them happy. Quality experiences to Grade R learners should be offered for them to reach their potential.

In the process of play, adults can offer support which is sometimes described as scaffolding. Scaffolding refers to the valuable support in the child's learning and development (Coffey, 2003). The role of an adult during play is to provide a

structure or a series of steps for the children to explore a new experience successfully and add to their initial learning. Smith and Pellegrini (2013) mentions assert that quality childhood settings and programmes are characterised by a healthy balance between providing structure giving children choices and ensuring a variety of playful learning opportunities where the adult is in a positive caring relationship with the child and is responsive to the needs of the child knowing how to guide the next step in the child's development and learning. Gosso (2013) emphasises that if children grow up with adults who perceive play as a waste of time, as a frivolous, unimportant and of no value, children would not have time to play. Scaffolding as proposed by Vygotsky, is also described as an instructional technique associated with the zone of proximal development. The key for the adult is to know how to provide steps which are small enough for the child to gain success, but challenging enough to motivate and take the child's learning forward.

It is through interaction that children's development and learning is extended. If children are left to explore something new on their own, their playing is at the stage of their actual level of development. However, if an adult skilfully interacts with the child's play extending the child's development and learning within the play activity, it becomes developmental. Cairney (2012) agrees that that the adult provides children with the support, props, time, and space to develop their play activities. This role involves many dimensions such as when to intervene and when to stand back. He further posits that the adult provides children with the support, props, time, and space to develop their play. This role involves many dimensions such as when to intervene and when to stand back. He further says adults take time to observe, consult, plan, and participate in play. They are clear on the great potential for learning that play offers. Adults understand the importance of play for all children. In order to make the most of the opportunities that play provides, adults need to plan for, support and review play.

Children come from different backgrounds and bring their own previous learning experiences and interests to the early years' settings. Adults within settings have a responsibility to provide support to these children and encourage participation in a wide variety of meaningful experiences and build reciprocal

relationships through meaningful interactions. This combination gives children support to gain confidence in their own abilities and become increasingly more independent in their learning and communication. For adults to extend on children's learning and development and to promote self-esteem, effective adult-child interaction is required.

According to Hirsh-Pasek (2009) play has to do with how children are given opportunities to grow holistically. Development is about learning. In the early years this learning should be playful. Learning through play is a pedagogy that is internationally debated primarily around how adults should be involved. Playful learning offers one way to reframe this debate by nesting a rich core curriculum with a playful pedagogy. In free play children play freely and do not need parental involvement. This is unfortunate because adults have a variety of critical roles in supporting children's play. These roles include providing material that encourages a high-quality play like and when the teacher becomes a participant in a socio-dramatic activity, and introducing children to new play opportunities. Fellowes and Oakley (2013:63) maintain that socio-dramatic play is a type of pretend or imaginative play, which entails the use of whatever resources, may be available, adopting various roles and developing various scenarios to imitate or act out realistic or imaginative situations. Socio-dramatic play is regarded as a comfortable pursuit for children. Children spontaneously or independently engage in activities in an endeavour to enjoy and learn about and make sense of their world. The early childhood classroom should provide a special area to stage a play setting e.g. a hospital, post office or a restaurant. Socio-dramatic play should support children's use of oral language as they talk to determine various roles they will play.

Vygotsky's idea of scaffolding is particularly useful in explaining the role of the teacher when extending play further. His concept of the use of private speech to structure, extends, and expands their own play, illustrates children's internalisation of teacher scaffolding (Wessels, 2010:5). The teacher does in fact, have a central role in children's play. Olson and Platt (2000) state that the teacher must provide assisted activities that are just one level beyond that of what the learner can do to assist the learner through the zone of proximal development.

Play can be initiated by either a teacher or a child. Child-initiated play is a play which is led or chosen by the child where the child has the right to choose and may involve adults and other children in it. In a child-initiated setting, teachers thoughtfully arrange the environment and allow children to become involved in the activity of their choice. According to Fromberg and Bergen (2006) play has been considered the characteristic mode of behaviour of the young child, and expression of the natural spirit of childhood and thus a key defining feature of childhood. They also highlight what they describe as the permeable nature of play as it interacts with parallels, represents and integrates physical, social, aesthetic and cognitive experiences. Teachers develop a wide variety of activities that are 1) age appropriate, by using their knowledge of child development as a guide for planning the range of activities and materials and 2) individually-appropriate by using their knowledge about the individual child as a guide for planning the learning in the environment.

During the child-initiated experiences the teacher should be engaged with children to ensure that structures and learning are occurring. This is one of the best ways for the teacher to observe and understand what children know and can do. Providing time to play does not mean that anything goes in the classroom. It also does not mean that the teacher prescribes how children will play during the child-led portion of the day. The teacher's role is to plan an environment conducive to learning that encourages the child's natural curiosity. Teachers plan several activities that are stimulating and challenging. Teachers assist in several ways such as facilitating the child's involvement by asking open-ended questions, making suggestions and guiding children to investigate potential areas

In the process of play, adults can offer support sometimes described as scaffolding. The role of an

The theories of interactive learning and interactive teaching underpin this study. The Interactive learning theory that stands out in this study is Piaget's theory of constructivism. The interactive teaching theory begins with a philosophy about teaching interactive approaches. In this framework both learners and teachers are central to the process. According to Sessoms (2008) teachers are

responsible for planning, teaching and facilitating sequences while learners are responsible for constructing and demonstrating knowledge as well as collaborating with peers to create new knowledge. These theories will be used in the study to craft questions on how teachers understand play in the teaching of Grade R. The literature review will be highly influenced by these theories as well.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As an Education Specialist in Early Childhood Development, the researcher does school visits with the purpose of doing grade R monitoring in all primary schools and sites of Umkhanyakude District with Grade R. During these visits she found that no areas were being displayed in the class to engage learners with play. The Constitution of South Africa on the Rights of Young Children (1996) states clearly that children should be given daily opportunities to play with a variety of objects.

Play is only accommodated in one session i.e. outdoor sessions forgetting that play should be incorporated in all teaching sessions i.e. the first session up to the last session. Davin and Van Staden (2005:7) maintain that play must be present in every activity. The DoE (2008) also says the teacher has to make sure that there is always enough for the learners to do and that various tables and material stay appealing and organised. The Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (White Paper, (2001:5) emphasises that play is the only strategy that can make teaching and learning in a grade R class effective.

Also during play inside, the traditional or formal way of teaching is still being used where the teacher stands in front of the class and learners sit listening attentively, absorbing the information shared by the teacher, and they are sometimes told to put fingers on their mouths in order to be quiet. Davin and Van Staden (2005) say the teacher should not expect learners to be quiet while working.

During free play outside, children play alone without being supervised by the teacher. Davin and Van Staden (2005) say outdoor play is not the time for the teacher to sit down away from the children and enjoy a cup of tea. Lucich (2011) says that it is through play that much of children's early learning is achieved. According to Ginsburg (2007) play is so important to optimal learning of the emergent learning child that it has been recognised by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a basic right of every child.

Therefore, it is against this background that the study seeks to answer the following questions:

Main question:

- To what extent do grade R teachers understand the use of play as a teaching strategy?

Secondary questions:

- How do grade R teachers plan, incorporate and utilise play in their teaching?
- How do grade R teachers identify an appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcomes?
- What understanding do teachers have about the role of a teacher in a play-based approach in grade R?

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to explore Foundation Phase teachers' understandings of play in the teaching of grade R learners. The aims and objectives are discussed next. The aims and objectives of this study are:

- To establish the extent to which grade R teachers use play as a teaching strategy
- To find out how grade R teachers plan, incorporate and utilise play in their teaching

- To ascertain how grade R teachers identify an appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcomes
- To explore the teachers' understanding of the teacher's role in a play based approach

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Early Childhood Development (ECD) Specialists, grade R teachers as well as grade R learners will benefit from this study. ECD Specialists will be able to see whether the impact play features as a strategy in grade R teaching and learning as emphasised in Modules 1,2 3 &4 of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) as well as Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was clearly understood by grade R teachers.

The researcher decided to conduct this study so as to uncover the challenges that hinder grade R teachers' understanding of play as the only teaching strategy in their teaching. The benefits of the study will be the holistic development of the child as well as provision of quality teaching through play as it is stated in Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development.

1.6 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on grade R teachers, because they are responsible for providing quality education as the Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education states (DoE, 2001). It has been deemed relevant to explore the teachers' understanding of play in this grade, considering the fact that, grade R is a transitional class, a class that bridges the gap between home and school. Therefore, they are required to implement the grade R curriculum effectively considering its play-based principle as well as mediation principle. The participants were rural teachers, because they were the ones who were expected to apply the play-based teaching approach more frequently than any other grade in the Foundation Phase. Selected participants were in the Empembeni Circuit located in Hlabisa under Umkhanyakude District in

KwaZulu-Natal province the area considered to be highly disadvantaged because of its social context viz.: the rural countryside.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this study terms are defined to ensure that readers of this research to read and comprehend the same manner that the researcher understands them. Definition of terms assists in ensuring that the problem of ambiguity is avoided and terms understood in the context of the research topic. It is imperative that the explanation of the principal concepts that underpin the study are provided (le Roux and Bouazard, 2009). The following terms are therefore defined and should be understood in the context of understanding of play.

1.7.1 Play

Play is widely recognised as a major route to learning in children's early years. It starts in children's infancy and ideally, continues throughout their life (Anderson-McNamee et al., (2010). Learning through play is the main emphasis in early childhood education settings. According to Lagoni (2012), play is the most vital activity in the lives of children. Play involves a free activity that is non-literal, self-motivated, and enjoyable and process oriented (Johnson, Christie, and Yawkey, 1999). Smith and Pellegrini (2008) concur that play is an activity done for its own sake as it is freely chosen by a learner, characterised by means rather than ends and is deemed as exerting a flexible and positive effect. Sometimes it is more important than eating and sleeping. Children do not play for a reward, praise, money or food. They play because they like it (Wardle, 2008). Play is the work and the occupation of childhood. Most researchers like Vygotsky, Froebel, Dewey, Piaget and many more agree that play is important in the child's growth and development. Finally, the importance of play is also emphasised by Grade R educators (Zululand Observer, 2014).

1.7.2 Grade R

Grade R is the first year of the Foundation Phase of the outcomes-based approach (Coleen, 2008). It is also known as the Reception Year Class; a class that is not yet formal, but bridges the gap between home and school. It is also a border crossing from one context to another. The Reception Year Class is the first introductory year of an integrated four-year Junior Primary Programme. It is in this grade where children develop hand-eye coordination and physical skills through play (Drum Magazine, 2014). The duty then of the parents is to create opportunities for their children to play with other children and develop social skills. By the time children go to school they should be able to perform a wide range of activities including playing with friends, taking turns and sharing.

1.7.3 Transition

Transition is the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another or a movement /change from one position to another i.e. from home/crèche to school (Wright, 2009). Transition is the process of change that is experienced when children and their families from one setting to another i.e. from home to school. However, transition from home to ECD centres/schools should be a positive experience for young children.

1.7.4 Foundation Phase

Foundation Phase is an approach to learning designed for children aged four and a half /five to eight years. It is a combination of early years i.e. grade R to grade 3. Foundation Phase lays the groundwork for all formal schooling. During grades 1, 2, and 3, learners are taught strong literacy, numeracy as well as life skills including grade R where only emergent numeracy, literacy and life skills are taught. The Foundation Phase includes three subjects for grade R, i.e. emergent literacy-Home language; emergent Numeracy, emergent Life Skills and four compulsory subjects for grade 1 to 3, namely: Home Language., First Additional Language (only grades 1 to 3), Mathematics and Life Skills.

1.7.5 Early Childhood Development (ECD)

According to the Education White Paper 5 of 2001, Early Childhood Development is an umbrella term which applies to the processes by which children from birth to at least nine years grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally spiritually, morally and socially (DoE, 2001).

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Design and research paradigm

This is a qualitative study with an interpretive paradigm. A qualitative approach was used because it gave an in-depth of knowledge on how newly admitted grade one learners performed in literacy activities that involved listening, speaking, reading and writing (Cohen, Manion, Morrison & Morrison 2011). It also assisted in surfacing teachers' understanding of play as a teaching strategy. According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative approach is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting dated views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting whereas a quantitative approach is an inquiry into a social human problem based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers , and analysed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true. According to Maree (2007), qualitative research attempts to collect rich data regarding a particular phenomenon or context with an intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied. Qualitative research therefore focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of experiences. A qualitative approach was used because it gave an in-depth knowledge on how newly admitted grade one learners performed in literacy activities that involved listening and speaking. It also assisted in surfacing teachers' understanding of play as a teaching strategy.

1.8.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Purposive sampling is a method of sampling which is used in special situations where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind (Maree, 2007). Grade R teachers were deemed to be relevant because that is where play is used in almost every activity in the process of teaching and learning. Although play is used across the Foundation Phase classes but the Reception year class requires a play-based approach so that learners have a smooth transition from home to school. Sampling is also defined as a method of selecting some part of a group to represent the total population. The sample was intentionally selected according to the needs of the study. This type of sampling is referred to as a purposive sampling wherein participants are selected to meet particular goals of the researcher, such as ensuring heterogeneity or involving key persons in the research samples.

1.8.3 Selection of participants

The Empembeni Circuit in UMkhanyakude District has 16 primary schools with grade R. In these schools, 6 educators are qualified, that is, they are holding Matric plus Matric Certificates. Some do not have Matric but are in possession of an ECD L4 qualification and some do not have both.

The selection was as follows:

- 02-qualified educators
- 02-unqualified with Matric
- 02-unqualified- with no Matric but holding ECDL4/5 Qualification plus long service
- 02-unqualified with no Matric or ECDL4/5 Qualification plus long service.

Grade R teachers will be selected because they are the ones that are responsible for laying a good foundation of mathematical literacy, life skills as well as language through consideration of play as the only teaching strategy.

1.8.4 Research instruments

Since this is a qualitative study within the interpretive paradigm the following research instruments were used: Qualitative research is a research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied. It therefore focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning from their experiences (Maree, 2007). A qualitative study method is also defined as a method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines. It investigates the why and how of decision making and does not only involve the what, where and when. Hence, smaller but focused samples are used. It is an understanding of human behaviour and the reason that governs such behaviour.

1.8.5 Observation

Observations will be used. Grade R teachers were observed in order for them to be assisted in the challenges that hinder their understanding of considering play as the only teaching strategy because Maree (2007) describes observation as the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. He further says it is an everyday activity whereby we use our senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting) but also our intuition to gather bits of data. Qualitative research uses observation as data collection method. Observation is the selection and recording of behaviours of people and events in their environment or natural setting. The researcher physically goes to the people setting or site in order to observe the subject as it normally and naturally occurs or behaves.

1.8.6 Interviews

Grade R educators were interviewed by preparing questions that they were going to answer. Interviews are one of the major sources of data collection. An interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant

to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant. The aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant and they can be a valuable source of information, provided they are used correctly (Maree, 2007). The type of interview conducted with grade R teachers were semi-structured interviews because they are commonly used in research projects to corroborate data emerging from other data sources. They seldom span a long time period and usually require the participants to answer a set of predetermined questions. They do allow for the probing and clarification of answers. Semi-structured interview schedules basically define the line of inquiry (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:193 & 214).

1.8.7 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the descriptive analysis technique as it is discussed by McMillan and Schumacher (2010). They list four steps towards data reduction and display. The steps below were adopted for this study in an attempt to present and analyse qualitative data.

1.8.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is a very important component. According to Given (2008), trustworthiness allows researchers to describe the virtues of qualitative terms outside of the parameters that are typically applied in quantitative research. Trustworthiness involves credibility, transferability, dependability as well as conformability (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Different methods of analysing data to establish trustworthiness were used. Triangulation was considered for this study. Cohen, Manion, Morrison and Morrison (2011) argue that triangulation is when a researcher uses a variety of data collection instruments and sources of information in order to limit the risk of distortion which normally occurs when using one method and limited sources. Tactics that would assist in ensuring honesty in the population were employed. An assistant researcher was invited to scrutinise the research project. The researcher

adopted the style suggested by Shumba ,Rembe, Pumla (2014) in their investigation of parental perceptions of ECD provisioning at early childhood centres.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission was sought to conduct a research study from the Department of Education, principals of schools as well as grade R teachers. Consent was given to these teachers to participate. Teachers were informed of their rights in the process of data generation. They were also informed that they should feel free to withdraw from the study at any point should they feel like doing so. The names of the participants were withheld to protect their identities. Gardner (2011) asserts that ethics must be observed and individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and should be free from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief, or any other significant difference. The ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the University of Zululand.

1.10 Organisation of the study

Chapter 1 covers the background or motivation of the study.

Chapter 2 presents literature that explains the importance of play in Grade R teaching.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology and research design of how the study was conducted.

Chapter 4 presents the data presentation, analysis, and interpretation.

Chapter 5 presents discussion of findings, recommendations, avenues for future research and conclusion.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed a general outline of the research. The research objectives, motivation for the study and key questions have been explored. The research design and methodology have been outlined. The next chapter which is Chapter 2, focuses on the conceptual framework while exploring some key concepts guiding the study with regard to the understanding of play in the teaching of grade R. It further focuses on the literature review, looking at the existing literature and what other studies have examined and discussed regarding their understanding of play in the teaching of young learners, especially grade R.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the underpinnings of the study (Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks), and the review of related literature. Studies reviewed are related to the questions of this research study. Finally the concluding paragraph that summarises the chapter is presented.

2.2 UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY

This study has two underpinnings and these are play as the conceptual framework and Piaget's and Vygotsky's theory of constructivism.

2.2.1 Conceptual Framework of lay

Young children need freedom to explore and play. Through play the young child learns to approach the world from different perspectives and discovers that the views of others are not necessarily wrong (De Witt, 2009). A pre-schooler imitates the social roles of others by putting her/himself into someone else's shoes (Imenda, 2012).

Whitbread (2012) describes play as an action that children do naturally. Play is beneficial for children and it is fundamental for their well-being and holistic development. Play as it relates babies, toddlers and young children is complex and multi-faceted.

Play also contributes to the brain development. Play nourishes every aspect of children's development. It also forms the foundation of intellectual, social, physical, and emotional skills necessary for success in school and in life. Play paves a way for learning. Learning occurs when children are engaged in play. During play children try new things, solve problems, invent, create, test ideas and explore. In fact, play underpins all development and learning for young

children. Most children play spontaneously, although some may need adult/teacher support, and it is through play that they develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally (Fellowes & Oakley, 2013:59).

According to Niland (2009), young children learn through play. This has long been acknowledged in the writings of educational theorists dating back as far as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel and is strongly supported by current early childhood research. Play is at the heart of early childhood pedagogy, and this has led to a strong belief in the importance of an emergent, child-centred approach to curriculum. Music is also part of young learners' play however, according to Niland(2009), music educators commonly recognise the importance of making music enjoyable rather than making music education pedagogy for young children teacher-led and structured towards specific behavioural outcomes. His (Niland, 2009) research has however shown that the child-centred musical play can be a powerful medium for young children's exploration of many musical elements and concepts.

Play is an absorbing activity in which healthy young children participate with enthusiasm (Fox, 2008). Kernan (2007) states that play is an activity that is positively valued by player, self-motivated, freely chosen, engaging and has certain systemic relations to what is not play. Play helps young children to develop self-regulation, language, cognition, and social competence (Walsh, et al 2010). All children learn more in the first four-five years than at any other time in their lives, so by the time they enter school they are learning experts .This is being achieved by being immersed in the real world: watching, listening, playing, exploring and experimenting; learning through practice, trial and error with the support and guidance of sensitive adults and role models.

All Early Childhood Development teachers know that play is an integral part of young children's lives and that being able to play, both done and with others, is a hallmark of children's healthy development. They concur that play is a dynamic, active, constructive type of behaviour and an essential and integral part of all children's healthy growth, and learning across all ages, domains and cultures. Play is a dynamic process that develops and changes as it becomes increasingly more varied and complex and is considered a key facilitator for

learning and development across domains, and reflects the social and cultural contexts in which children live.

Theorists' view on play, regardless of their orientation, concur that play occupies a central role in children's lives. They also suggest that the absence of play is an obstacle to the development of healthy and creative individuals. Psychoanalysts believe that play is necessary for mastering emotional traumas or disturbances. They also believe it is necessary for ego mastery and learning to live with everyday experiences. Constructivists believe it is necessary for cognitive growth. Maturationists believe it is necessary for competence building and for socializing functions in all cultures of the world; and neuroscientists believe it is necessary for emotional and physical health, motivation, and love of learning

While some consider play to be trivial, simple, frivolous, unimportant, and purposeless and even a waste of time, it is a serious behaviour that has a powerful influence on learning and no program of adult instruction can substitute for children's own observations, activities and direct knowledge. Joubert (2013:83) adds that play as part of role play, offers learners the opportunity to work in pairs and to interact as part of their language development. She refers to play in situations such as offering learners the opportunity to participate in a game of playing the roles of the shopkeeper and customer, a doctor and a patient making use of the relevant props to enliven the experience.

Play has a crucial role in the optimal growth, learning and development of children from infancy through adolescence. Yet, this need is being challenged, and so children's right to play must be defended by all adults, especially educators and parents by means of Vygotsky's scaffolding. Play is therefore a scaffold for development, a vehicle for increasing neural structures, and a means by which all children practice skills they will need in later life.

Play is seen as being central to children's learning in the sense when children show the developing use of imagination referring to the ability to think about things, events, people, or ideas that are not necessarily physically present. Therefore, play is regarded as being important in relation to children's cognitive

development, particularly their flexible thinking and problem-solving skills (Niland, 2009). Piaget defines play as assimilation, or the child's effort to make environmental stimuli match his or her own concepts. He holds that play does not necessarily result in the formation of new cognitive structures. Moreover, play is just for pleasure and allows children to practise things they have previously learned. Hence, play is seen as a process of reflection of emerging, symbolic development (Fox, 2008). In contrast, Vygotsky states that play actually facilitates cognitive development. Children do not only practice what they already know but they also learn new things.

Barblett (2009), defines play as self-motivating in the sense that play is considered its own reward to the player. He also mentions and supports Wardle (2008) when he talks about play being process oriented, meaning that play is a means in itself and may not have an end or goal in sight and that play is an enjoyable and pleasurable activity. Also according to Niland (2009), play involves free choice, enjoyment, self-motivation, and a focus on process rather than a product. Barblett (2009) also believes that play is voluntary and is supported by Wardle in the first paragraph saying that play is freely chosen by players. However, in contrast, Barblett (2009), states that players can also be invited or prompted to play.

Young children's play allows them to explore, identify, negotiate, take risks and create meaning. The intellectual and cognitive benefits of playing have been well documented. The experiences of children who engage in play are more likely to have well-developed memory skills, language development, and are able to regulate their behaviour, leading to enhanced school adjustment and academic learning. Physically active play allows children to test and develop all types of motor skills. It promotes significant health and well-being benefits. One of the greatest benefits of play is to assist with the development of social competence. Children can build relationships, learn to resolve conflicts and negotiate and regulate their behaviours. In play, children usually have increased feelings of success and optimism as they act as their own agents and make their own choices. Playing is a known stress release; it is often linked to child well-being.

Hadley & Rice (2014) are of the opinion that young adults should learn simple strategies with relatively brief instruction, and the use of play talk should also change the richness of tense/agreement marking in adult language input. According to Hoisington (2008), play enhances physical, social, emotional and creative growth and this is assessed through watching or observing children as they play. Niland (2009) agrees when he mentions that play has a big role in the development of brain, social integration and life successes from birth through to old age. Play encourages language development as well as personal development (Joubert 2013).

Anelka (2010) says play is important to a child's development. Play is not just physical, but involves cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social aspects. Niland (2009), concurs that play is regarded as being important in relation to children's cognitive development, particularly their flexible thinking and problem solving skills. Furthermore, play is the main way most children express their impulse to explore, experiment and children of all ages play. She also believes that play is the key to a child's learning and development because the child's intellectual skills are developed. The researcher agrees with the above theorists that children develop social skills which change rapidly intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially. The DoE (2011), concurs that play is essential for its ability to stimulate and integrate a wide range of children's intellectual physical, social and creative abilities.

2.2.2 Theoretical framework

Knowledge is quintessentially a social construct. Proponents who endorse a social constructivist perspective are Piaget and Vygotsky.

2.2.2.1 Piaget

According to Piaget, two major principles guide intellectual growth and biological development, adaptation and organization for individuals to survive in an environment, they must adapt to physical and mental stimuli. Assimilation and accommodation are both part of the adaptation process. Piaget believed

that human beings possess mental structures that assimilate external events and convert them to fit their mental structures. Moreover, mental structures accommodate themselves to new, unusual and constantly changing aspects. His second principle refers to the nature of these adaptive mental structures. He suggested that the mind is organised in complex and integrated ways. The simplest level is the schema, a mental representation of some physical or mental action that can be formed from an object, event or phenomena.

Piaget's theory on accommodation and assimilation can be linked with children's play. Children construct knowledge through involvement in play by using their senses and more specifically along certain developmental stages. Jean Piaget is regarded as a pioneer in modern constructivist thought. He maintains that learners are not passive recipients of new knowledge but are actively involved in their own development (Wessels, 2010:2).

The following four steps are suggested by Piaget:

- Step 1: Learners first learn the names and words of concepts they are familiar with such as horse, cow and hen and then construct knowledge further;
- Step 2: Learners listen to sentences and gradually construct knowledge further;
- Step 3: Parents and teachers give learners feedback and they continue to construct knowledge using the comments made by the caregivers; and
- Step 4: The shorter sentences are then strung together to form paragraphs (Wessels, 2013:2).

Fellowes and Oakley (2013:109) assert that Piaget proposes a theory that drives the notion of concept development which is done by exposing the learners to concepts existing separate from them and then they also need to be alerted that these concepts still exist even when they cannot see them. This perception teaches learners conceptual understanding. A concept such as 'cat' can be refined at a later stage to refer to cats only as initially cats might include all other animals for the emergent learner. Over the time the concepts are

refined and more features are added. Piaget underscores the importance of objects in the environment and children's self-talk.

Mwamwenda (2014:134) discusses the various stages of development as proposed by Piaget. Piaget observed the moral development of young learners by studying them when playing marbles. He more specifically observed the manner by means of which learners implement the rules of playing marbles among children aged one to three (sensori-operational), four to seven (transition to concrete operational) and eight to eleven. Children aged four to seven are prone to just play the game ignoring the rules. Seven to ten year-olds (moving towards formal operational) follow the rules as stipulated by the adults. This observation also holds implications for teaching emergent learners as it points out their vulnerability and dependence on the caregiver's guidance.

Carey, Zaitchik and Bascandziev (2015:39) assert that research on pre-school children's biological knowledge began with Piaget's (1929) classic studies of childhood animism, which is all about the child's tendency to attribute to inanimate objects. When asked to say what it means to be alive, pre-schoolers often reply that it means to be active or moving. They often ascribe life to the sun, wind, animals and people, but fail to acknowledge attributing life to plants. Moreover, young pre-schoolers fail to differentiate the living from the unreal. Similarly, they are not able to differentiate the contrast between being alive or dead. Later work showed no understanding of the body as a biological system or to recognise that the parts work together to sustain life. It is only when children develop and undergo the conceptual change from this theory of animals to comprehend the more mature vitalist biology, which implies that they commence to differentiate the living from existent and even non-existent.

Piaget's constructivist thoughts on child development are crucial in understanding early childhood development, even though Piaget has received criticism for being rigid in dividing youngsters in specific compartments when it comes to their development. Pre-schoolers are unique and certain children might find themselves to be unique and function differently. Rigid compartmentalisations of learners are thus not always viable (Carey, et al., 2015:38-39).

Piaget was the first to note that children play an active role in gaining knowledge of the world. He believed that children's thinking passed through four separate stages and changed qualitatively in each of these stages. The stages directly relate to play as he stated that the intellectual growth occurs as children go through the stages of assimilation or manipulating the outside world to meet one's own needs-play acting-and accommodation or readjusting one's own views to meet the needs of the outside environment (Ozer, 2004).

Piaget believed children were active learners. He had been and continued to be an important influence on how we think about children's thinking skills. He was supported by Vygotsky when he also saw children developing in stages but he emphasised the social and cultural influences on a child's learning. Vygotsky was interested in both cognitive and social development as it had been mentioned earlier on. To him, both informal interaction and formal schooling convey the way in which a child's culture responds to and interprets the world. Informally, adults mediate experience and help children learn the tools and processes that their culture rewards. Formally, through education, teachers systematically impart ideas, concepts and behaviours that children need to be successful in school (Ozer, 2004).

2.2.2.1 Vygotsky

Wessels (2010:2-3) discusses Vygotsky's tenets on constructivism. Vygotsky regards the ZPD (the zone of proximal development) as crucial in the child's endeavour to learn and develop. The ZPD is impacted when the teacher as caregiver interacts with the child. The possibility for cognitive development is rooted in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which refers to a level of development that is achieved when children are engaged in social behaviour. The range of skills that are impacted to develop can occur with adult guidance or peer collaboration and these skills acquired exceed what can be attained by the learners of their own accord.

According to Vygotsky (1978:86) a learner can develop from his actual towards his potential level of knowledge attained. Vygotsky is of the opinion that

learners are able to develop and scaffold onto previous existing knowledge with the help of the caregiver. The learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD) forms part of their inner area of knowledge and is affected by communication with peers and teachers. Vygotsky (1978:86) defines the ZPD as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by interdependent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers."

Wessels identifies four basic activities as important to constructivist thinking viz.:

- Learners gain support from more the experienced caregivers(teachers, parents or peers);
- Learners interact peers or caregivers that know as much as they do;
- Learners support peers who lack capabilities; and
- Learners access their own knowledge (Wessels, 2010:2).

Gupta (2008:6) asserts that learners find solutions by engaging with adults and peers. Focusing on providing learners with learning opportunities for social interaction is consequently a way of teaching learners constructivist tenets. Gupta (2008:7) posits that through engaging with play and acting learners are equipped with the required opportunities to communicate and to consider caregivers' perspectives Vygotsky's principles of social constructivist thought can be incorporated as the bedrock of learning through interaction and engaging with play as play is done also by means of guidance by a more knowledgeable person, whether it is a peer or adult.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory relates to both cognitive and social development (Vygotsky, 1978). He proposes a seminal learning theory which is influential in the field of education. He suggests that children will use play as a means to grow socially (Rollins and Riggins, 2013). He further says in play children encounter others and learn to interact using language and role play. Like Piaget, Vygotsky (1978) is of the opinion that children learn actively and through hands-on-experiences. His sociocultural theory also suggests that

parents, caregivers, peers and the culture were responsible for the development of higher functions.

Child development occurs from birth to adulthood and involves play. This is supported by an ancient proverb which says “all work and no play make Jack a dull boy” Rollins and Riggins (2013). It is therefore crucial to understand how children grow, because it allows us to fully understand the cognitive, emotional, physical, social and emotional growth that children go through from birth into early childhood.

Although the study focuses on two developmental theories viz.: Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s tenets, the following are just a few of the many childhood development theories that have been developed by theorists and researchers and that can be linked with Piaget and Vygotsky’s theories on constructivist learning. They outline the developmental stages of children at which these growth milestones occur. They also describe the current trends put into play in today’s educational setting (Rollins & Riggins, 2013).

2.2.2.2 Psychoanalytic theorists: Erikson, Freud and Skinner

Sigmund Freud posed a psychoanalytic play theory which he defined as beyond the pleasure principle and further described play as a child mechanism for repeatedly working out a previously experienced traumatic event in an effort to correct or master the event to his satisfaction (Rollins & Riggins, 2013). This type of play was also favoured by Erikson and built upon by Sigmund Freud when he proposed a stage theory of development, but his theory encompassed human growth throughout the entire life span (Cherry, 2014).

Erikson (2001) believed that in each stage children face a crisis that needs to be resolved in order for them to develop socially and emotionally. He further says each stage has a positive and negative outcome. The outcome of the stage is determined by a child’s environment and the caregiving strategies or experiences which the child is exposed to. Behavioural theorists of child development such as Watson, Pavlov and Skinner focused on how environmental interaction influences behaviour. They dealt with observable

behaviours, such as rewards, punishment, stimuli and reinforcement. Their theory differs from other theories, because it gives no consideration to internal thoughts or feelings but on how experience shapes who you are.

There is a great deal of research on the social development of children and theorists like Bowlby, Bandura and Vygotsky focused on this. Bowlby (2008) believes that early relationships play a major role in child development and continue to influence social relationships through life. Social learning theory was also proposed by Bandura (1966) when he said children learn new behaviours from observing other people. Unlike behavioural theories, he believes that external reinforcement is not the only way that people learn new things but intrinsic reinforcement such as a sense of pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment could also lead to learning. He further states that by observing the actions of others, including parents and peers, children develop new skills and the new information is acquired.

Vygotsky developed his theories around the same time as Piaget yet he emphasised the importance of relationships and interactions between children and more knowledgeable peers and adults. He believed that children's cognitive understandings were enriched and deepened when they were scaffolded by parents, teachers or peers. Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky did not see the child as a solitary discoverer of knowledge, but as learning within social interactions that involve communicating. Vygotsky therefore emphasised the role of the language in the development of thinking processes. Like Piaget, he saw children as active partners in their own learning, and increasingly so as their ability to interact with others develops. It was Vygotsky's view that thinking concepts was not possible without verbal thinking while thought and language initially develop independently; they are emerged once language is developed to create verbal thought (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky (1978) sees the adult as vital to the process of scaffolding in the child's behaviour like when one scaffolds the building for structural support while internal developments occur. While Piaget felt there was no use in presenting materials and problems to children beyond their developmental

capacity. Vygotsky saw an important role for adults in extending children's learning beyond areas in which they are independently capable.

In conclusion, the researcher feels that the understanding of child development is therefore of vital importance in the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices. Appropriate educational decisions for young children cannot be made without this.

2.3 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

2.3.1 Teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy

Play is the integral part of young children's lives, and it enhances children's physical, social, emotional, and creative growth (Hoisington, 2008). The teachers therefore need to use significant strategies in their teaching to enhance their learning as well as to prepare them for the future ahead (Strosky & Jung, 2014). Yet, this need is being challenged, and so children's rights to play must be defended by all adults especially educators and parents. Therefore, they claim that educators must provide play activities and experiences for all children. Children's play depends largely upon the play materials, equipment and role models available to them. Early exposure to appropriate play activities and materials is important and provides a sound basis for development.

According to Hoisington (2008), teachers need to observe children whilst they are playing both indoors i.e. free play inside which is done during the second session in a grade R class and outdoors i.e. free play outside which takes place during the sixth session where they are fully engaged with activities linked with play like running, jumping, climbing, playing ball and dancing. It is during these sessions that the teachers note learner's increasing abilities to move with confidence and control, to balance their bodies, and to utilise eye-hand coordination. Gradual strengthening of their small muscles is observed when they build small blocks and play with manipulative toys. Learners need to be observed when they are engaged in different types of play like solitary play, associative play, cooperative play etc. at all times i.e. from the first session up to the last session. Moreover, play should be integrated in teaching and

learning throughout the day. In this way, teachers quickly notice that children's play becomes more complex and more social as the year progresses. They are also able to assess children's growing abilities to direct their own play, to make decisions about materials and props, and to assert their own ideas and opinions about what they want to play. As children begin to play interactively i.e. in the cooperative play, educators see growth in their abilities to follow the rules of the game, to take turns, to share materials, and to begin to cooperatively solve problems that emerge during play.

Barblett (2010) describes play as pleasurable, symbolic, active, voluntary and process-oriented. According to Shipley (2008), play is motivating where play is considered its own reward to the player. She goes further to say that many researchers believe that it is impossible to disentangle children's play, learning and development. Young children's play allows them to explore, identify, negotiate take risks and create meanings. Furthermore, children who engage in quality play experiences are more likely to have well developed memory skills, language development and are able to regulate their behaviour, leading and enhanced school adjustment and academic learning (Bodrova and Leong, 2005). Play does not happen in a vacuum, it is usually undertaken within a physical and social space (Leister and Russel, 2008). They also point out that one of the greatest benefits of playing is to assist with the development of social competence. Indeed, all young learners play spontaneously and, in their play, rehearse behaviour which they will use in maturity. Experience of living and working with young children easily strengthens their appreciation of the basis of traditional emphasis on the educational value of play, one that may have developed at a time when children's play was not valued and when few materials to play with were available for children.

An educator needs to expose children to both visual and auditory stimuli. Young children are interested in colours, sizes, shapes and sounds and enjoy working with table toys that encourage matching, ordering and comparing. Play with such equipment stimulates vocabulary and concept building. Young children play with these materials by grouping them according to size, colour, form and texture. They can recognise things that do not belong to a group as well. Clay sand and mud give children of all ages the opportunities to explore changes in

form as they mould the substance. Adding water enables the younger child to observe changes in the substance and the older child to build and form more complex shapes. Ample opportunity to explore and experiment with these substances should be provided.

According to the DoE (2011), educators need to understand that learning is an active process that must involve children's engagement. Play is essential for its ability to stimulate and integrate a wide range of children's intellectual, physical, social, and creative abilities. Active engagement with, and attainment to children in their play extends and supports their learning. Shared, sustained conversations are also a powerful and important feature of active adult engagement. The integration of child-directed play and learning; guided play and learning, and adult-led play should be used. Educators should encourage children to explore, solve problems, communicate and construct. They should use their judgement to support children's learning and development through a combination of child led-learning. Educators should create physical environments that support a range of opportunities for learning and physical activity, both indoors and outdoors. They should build on children's interest, abilities and cultures and previous learning experiences to extend their thinking, learning and development. They should also use child-centred approaches to explicitly teach particular knowledge and skills. They should also recognise the connections between aspects of children's learning and development'.

According to Davies (2012), early years' curricula promoted learning through play and in addition emphasized the development of computer literacy. Teachers were found feeling unprepared to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and play. The researcher then suggests that effective computer use in the early years is associated with adult direction and suggests adult presence can inhibit play. The teachers' experiences of integrating computers in the classroom practice, children's level of engagement with computer activities and how playful children perceive computers form an integral part of the Grade R learner's development through play. Teachers confidently deliver a variety of computer experiences. Children consistently rate those activities as play, regardless of adult presence and demonstrate moderate to high levels of engagement. Play linked with positive experiences

with computers help to ensure that children leave their formative years with a positive disposition towards ICT that will serve them as well as their progress into the formal stages of their education.

The Early Years Learning Framework (2009) suggested that educator guidance in sustaining play is essential for learning development (Ridgway, 2012). However, after his study, educators realized that play needs to be taught in pedagogical and intentional terms and that they should coordinate children and have an intentional attitude towards learning and play. Play integrates with all the subjects in the early childhood development. It is for that reason that it should also be included in physical education in the early childhood development. Johnson (2014) states that because play is timeless, meaningful, and fundamentally human, physical, physical educational professionals should guide learners in learning to play. They should fully embrace and promote learning to play as their fundamental aim. Physical play should only occur in a formal physical education class but in and through a multiplicity of opportunities for children and youth to engage in activities and interests. Providing a large quantity of quality opportunities for children to learn to play is a viable way to assist learners in developing an active and productive play life.

In early childhood settings, each moment that teachers and children interact with one another is an opportunity to develop positive relationships. Teachers can use a variety of play strategies in order to build positive relationships with children by following the child's lead and interest in play. Teacher behaviour such as listening to children, making eye contact with them, and engaging in many one-to-one, face-to-face inter-observations of children help them to assess which children make connections with other young children to promote secure teacher-child relationships. Talking to children using pleasant, calm voices and simple language and greeting children warmly when they arrive in the classroom with their parents or from the buses help establish secure relationships between teachers and children.

It is important for teachers to use developmentally and individually appropriate strategies that take into consideration children's differing needs, interests, styles and abilities. For example, with infants and toddlers, teachers respond to

their cries or other signs of distress. Teachers let children know they care about them through warm, responsive, physical contact such as giving pats on their back, hugging, and holding young children on their laps. For preschool children, teachers encourage mutual respect between children and adults by waiting until children finish asking questions before answering them, and by encouraging children to listen when others speak. In addition, teacher's use of positive guidance techniques (e.g. modelling and encouraging appropriate behaviour, redirecting children to more acceptable activities, setting clear limits) helps children develop trusting relationships with their teachers. In developing positive teacher-child relationships, it is important that teachers should also follow the child's lead and interest during play.

Practitioner's observations of children help them to assess the progress which children are making. Observations help practitioners to decide where children are in their learning and development and to plan what to do. This is an essential part of early practice in any setting regardless of the age of this child. Looking, listening and noting is important, because it helps a teachers to:

- get to know a child and develops positive relationship with children and their parents;
- plan appropriate play and learning experiences based on children's interests and needs; and
- develop their understanding of a child's development.

According to Barblett (2009), early childhood educators should know the children and families, in their centre; they assess or document children's learning and know their interests. Then, together with families, they plan carefully how to use play-based activities as one tool to promote the learning that will achieve the early years' learning framework outcomes. Furthermore, early childhood educators need to be articulate, to be able to justify clearly, provide evidence for and proclaim the benefits of play-based learning. However, for the early years learning framework to be implemented properly, all early childhood educators need to know what play is, why it is important, how to implement and assess a play-based programme and their role in it.

Since music is regularly a part of young children's play, music educators should work towards developing children's musical skills. However, many early childhood educators argue that it is important to consider music as an integrated part both of life and of the educational curriculum especially where the pre-schoolers is concerned (Niland, 2009). Moreover, when music educators adopt a playful approach to music they are valuing children's music-making in its wider context. Teachers should have a wide range of teaching strategies at their disposal and from these teachers select the best strategy to use in a situation, depending on the learning goal, specific context and needs of individual children at that moment including children who may need much more support than others even in exploration and play (Walsh et al., 2010). According to Devlin (2012), adults need to extend learning from children's play.

According to Lee and Ginsburg (2009), teachers need to change their classroom teaching so that they will support young children's mathematical learning. Various mathematics manipulatives like pattern blocks, counters and number sticks found on the market should be used in order to guarantee that young learners make meaning when learning. Basically, teaching needs to be intentional and focus on how children learn. Investigation and exploration, purposeful, engaged play; and intentional, scaffolded instruction based on the development level of each child are essential elements of appropriate practice. Tokmak (2013) conducted research on the effect of curriculum-generated play instruction on the mathematics teaching efficacies of early childhood development where he identified two strategies for using play in young children i.e. teachers structure play to teach curriculum content, and teachers watch children during free play time and focus on children's interest in order to help them become engaged in the curriculum content. He also discovered three functions of the play generated curriculum i.e. juxtaposition, integration as well as segregation. In the segregation model, teachers are involved in children's play without aiming to teach them. In the juxtaposition model, teachers watch children during their free play, note key points that can be used, and arrange activities to teach concepts or skills in the curriculum, and in the integration model, teachers try to take advantage of teachable moments during children's free play.

Reyner (2013) mentions that there are six strategies that teachers are currently using in classrooms to prepare children for the boundless future ahead. One of the six strategies is cross-curriculum teaching. Here, teaching multiple subjects simultaneously or in an integrated approach help learners go much deeper in learning concepts and skills. Naturally, this approach asks more from the teacher. It can be easy to blend or integrate home language, mathematics as well as life skills. This strategy works so well because teachers do not only tell learners what they should know, but also engage children in exploring and uncovering the information in a meaningful way in which all the subjects come into play together.

In contrast, Ford (2010) indicates that there are eight strategies for preschool ELLs i.e. English Language and Literacy Development and they have been proven to be effective. The most significant strategy is that children who have developed early literacy skills in his or her first language will find it easier to develop those same skills in English home language. This will be done through preparing the child for learning to read by using play word games. Walsh et al.(2010), mention that children benefit when teachers have a wide range of teaching strategies at their disposal and from these teachers select the best strategy to use in a situation, depending on the learning goal, specific context and needs of individual children at the moment. Children also benefit because of a wide range of teaching strategies as there are learners who may need much more support than others even in exploration and play.

Finally, play is indeed the integral part of young children's lives and enhances children's physical, social emotional and creative growth. Reyner (2013) and Hoisington (2008) concur that teachers therefore need to use significant strategies in their teaching to enhance their children's learning as well as to prepare them for the future lying ahead.

2.3.2 How teachers plan for and utilise play in teaching young children

According to Hoisington (2008) teachers will want to plan specific activities that extend learning into the domains of maths, language and literacy. In a building unit, she may introduce an activity in which children measure their towers in a

variety of ways, by counting how many books they contain (rote-counting, counting objects, one-to-one correspondence), or by using standard and non-standard measurement. Children's multiple representations of their buildings will provide teachable moments for comparing, contrasting, matching and sorting, and sequencing activities. Fiction and non-fiction books on the topic will provide multiple opportunities for introducing goals and objectives in the areas of alphabet knowledge and appreciation, print awareness of concepts, and phonological awareness. Ongoing discussions about children's building play will support listening and understanding, and speaking and communicating.

The teacher will be the primary documenter of children's discoveries, successes, and challenges and will use this documentation in a number of ways to remind children of previous building experiences for comparing and contrasting different play episodes or for guiding group discussions. The teacher will also be able to use her notes as a foundation for individualising building experiences for children at different developmental levels and for assessing each child's progress in the domains throughout the unit. The teacher may also make suggestions about ways for children to extend their building experiences in new ways for example, by providing new materials that the child may not have thought of, such as small pieces of DAY or tape for holding small constructions together. And ideally, the teacher will combine different pieces of documentation to create a record of what children are doing and learning during units for the children themselves, and for parents and other interested adults. In building units the teacher may make a poster and drawings of specific structures as well as her own written goals and objectives for children's learning in the domains.

Niland (2009) points out that educator should also develop children's musical skills through play whereas, according to Campbell (2002), many early childhood educators argue that it is important in this period of children's lives to consider music as an integrated part both of life and of the educational curriculum. When children play, they use multiple ways of expressing their ideas as they move seamlessly from one mode of expression to another dancing, dramatising, singing, exploring sound, drawing, and making things. When music educators adopt a playful approach to music, they are valuing

children's music-making in its wider context. Increasingly, early childhood music researcher and practitioners or educators are viewing young children's musical explorations as being distinct from those adults, rather than being a primitive imitation of real music-making.

A play based-approach, and child centred curriculum in early childhood settings will be built around the selection of materials based on educators' observations of and interactions with children, other early childhood staff members, and families. Such a curriculum will include songs that relate to children's interests and allow for a range of playful responses. It will allow children to make choices, adaptations, and extensions to songs. It will provide opportunities for freely chosen musical play-exploration of sound, composition, improvised movement, and dramatic play as well as for guided group musical experiences. A play-based child-centred music curriculum may also be enhanced by the use of technology, such as audio and video recording, so that children have opportunities to re-visit their musical explorations (Niland, 2009). According to Kernan (2007), when teachers are planning a curriculum for young children, a key task for teachers of emergent learners is to create a balance between giving children time and space to learn through their self-initiated play and providing learning which is more formally negotiated between the child and the adult.

2.3.3 Identification of an appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcome

According to Barblett (2009), planning the environment assists children to achieve outcomes which are important in providing quality play experiences. The environment can be intentionally planned by considering the four main ways. They are:

- The physical environment i.e. the physical layout of space, furniture and resources;
- The social and emotional environment that is when children need secure, warm and trusting relationships so they are confidentially supported in their explorations and risk taking;

- The intellectual environment as there are times to play freely i.e. free play inside in case of a grade R class and times for intentional conversations, a well-placed question or query that will extend children's learning;
- The temporal environment which is the way the educators decide to use the time available in the programme. Children need large blocks of time to develop play themes and ideas.

Teachers should plan for children's holistic learning using the learning outcomes. They should plan the pedagogical learning environment and teaching strategy. They should also design and set up the physical learning environment. Finally, according to The Early Years Education Good Practice Guide (2009), teachers should plan for ways to monitor and assess children's learning consistent with the principles and the framework. Before identifying appropriate play, it is imperative that the teacher asks herself the following questions:

- How can I use children's prior learning, interests and strengths in conjunction with learning outcomes to guide planning for children's learning?
- How am I going to work in partnership with families to plan for children's learning?
- How can I engage children actively in learning?
- What are appropriate teaching strategies that I am going to use?
- How am I holding high expectations that all children will be successful learners?
- How am I striving for effective and equitable ways ensuring that each child has opportunities to achieve the learning outcome?

Flexible and personalised learning involves planning for children's needs and interests. Hence, it is essential for the teachers to:

- Adjust planning to take full account of the information they have about children;
- Avoid every-day-class-does-the-same approach as it does not allow teachers to respond to individual children or to children who have

additional educational support needs, or it is helpful in fostering innovative creative thinkers;

- Collaborate with team planning to share ideas and contribute towards professionalism among teachers;
- Limit the use of photocopied materials for use by all classes, as this results in all learners completing the same task, thereby reducing professionalism and differentiation; and
- Use regular and on-going assessment so they are informed regarding the child's progress, achievements and new learning (The Early Years Education Good Practice Guide, (2009)).

By using a variety of teaching strategies teachers can guide children towards achieving the following learning outcomes:

- Planning should show how children who are at different stages of understanding or development are addressed and challenged;
- Teachers should have a clear picture of each child's capabilities through well-focused assessment;
- Teachers should incorporate information and concepts that address the Early Years Foundation Curriculum and the Curriculum Standards where appropriate to support the interests, development and achievement of all children;
- Teachers should observe at the same time as interacting with children, noting when children demonstrate that they have achieved a learning outcome;
- Teachers should ensure that planned activities will take full account of all learning objectives).

There are also instructional strategies that are designed for three year-olds to grade 2. They are:

- child-initiated and adult-guided play/learning experiences where adults join in appropriately to extend communication, cognitive motor and social skills development and recognise teachable moments;

- circle time; in a large or small group, where new ideas are promoted and discussed;
- whole class activities, including dialoguing reading, storytelling, inquiry and creative expression activities, and
- Adult-initiated small group activities, where children are taught new skills and concepts across the curriculum, through focused discussion and subsequent activity.

According to The Early Years Education Good Practice Guide (2012), children learn best when teachers:

- Plan active play-based learning opportunities that takes full account of the different learning styles of children;
- Plan activities that captivate children's interest;
- Spend time engaging in conversations and getting to know each individual child so that new learning is planned appropriately;
- Use their deep knowledge of child development to improve learning opportunities;
- Styles of children; and
- Value the child's home and cultural background so that each child feels equally appreciated.

Planning for child-initiated activities is broad and open ended so that children can be engaged in activities that interest them most. In that way they take their own learning forward and develop independent learning skills. Teachers ensure that sufficient time and a variety of play materials are available for children to explore and extend concepts, ideas and interests and complete tasks to their own satisfaction.

Davies (2008) mentions that the goals and the learning outcomes are drawn from extensive review of local regional and internal curricula well as the learning outcomes for early childhood development. The six learning outcomes are:

- Wellness which can be achieved by helping the child to develop physical strength, agility and mastery in using large and small muscles through play;
- Effective communication which can be achieved by helping the child to develop generally, the ability to listen and to understand and to use language to communicate with others and to express thinking and problem solving skills.
- Valuing culture can be achieved by helping children to develop awareness of their own cultural traditions and those of others e.g. Christmas celebrations;
- Intellectual empowerment can also be achieved by helping the child to engage in play and other activities that encourage self-initiated learning and problem solving;
- Respect for self, others and the environment can be achieved such as caring tolerance, dignity, respect for self and others, self-discipline and a consciousness of right and wrong;
- Resilience can be achieved by helping children develop strong ultra-personal skills that increase coping abilities, feelings of competency and autonomy (Davies, 2008).

When educators are planning, organising indoor or outdoor play spaces which engage and interests all young children, collaborative effort between early years 'practitioners, children, parents and other stakeholders such as regulators, school governing bodies, urban planners, architects and landscape designers are required.

According to Wood and Attfield (2005), practitioners should develop an informed understanding of play through the processes that link playing and learning. This can be achieved by critical analysis of children at play, which includes observing what is happening in play-learning contexts, understanding the child as a player or learner and reflecting on the quality of provision. By turning into play, practitioners can ensure that their provision is tuned to the needs of and abilities of all children in the setting. Questions pertaining to what learning processes can be identified should be asked.

Sari (2014), claims that a play-based home support programme is important in early education options that lead to positive changes in the development of children who are either at risk of, or have been diagnosed with the developmental disorders. Play-based home support is significant; therefore parental involvement in the development of children's attention during playtime is vital.

At the planning stage, practitioners should frame aims and intentions, which can be long, medium- and short-term. Pedagogical framing does not put adults in control of everything that happens in the setting. In a constructive curriculum, practitioners' intentions should include responding to children's intentions and meanings as well as allowing for unplanned developments. At the organisation stage, practitioners should decide how the learning environment both indoors and outdoors will be set out what resources will be available, where they will be located, how much choice children have, and whether materials and activities can be combined. The manner in which the day or session is structured also influences the amount of time available for play. At the implementation stage, practitioners should decide where and how they will spend their time, which should allow opportunities to follow children's own learning journeys.

According to Kernan (2007), the rhythms of young children's daily lives, in particular access to time and space, are often dictated by the rhythm of adults' lives, the workplace, and transport systems. Even institutional time incorporating regulatory time frames play a role. This includes the temporal flow of rhythms of children's play activities. This involves providing a predictable, but flexible daily routine; allowing sufficient time for play to develop; protecting time and space so that children can return to, repeat and extend play projects; being aware that there are individual differences in children's rhythms of play; and that play may differ in form at different times of the day. Geographical and related perspectives such as architecture and landscape design and environmental psychology are also being applied in designing early childhood settings, focusing attention on the design of spaces for children. Aspects of design include the interconnectedness between the indoors and the outdoors; the importance for children to feel in harmony with the environment outside the school and to be aware of the changes taking place there.

Aspects of the design of the space and the organisation of resources and materials within the space should be considered as well Kernan, (2007). Whatever the pedagogical orientation being followed, whether the service is home-based, community-based, private or public, Kernan (2007) states that the following points should also be included:

- the connectedness of the different play activities;
- distinct spaces for different kinds of activities;
- the possibility of privacy;
- space for free movement from indoors and outdoors; and
- many challenges and diversity between quiet and busy or noisy areas

2.3.4 Role of the teacher in a play-based approach

The Early Years Learning Framework recognises that all adults or teachers in the learning environment have responsibility for each child's learning journey. It is in the interactions and conversations between adults or educators and children as they are engaged in projects or play that learning is emphasised, enhanced and extended Devlin, (2012). According to Niikko and Ugaste (2012), teachers should consider play as the main way for carrying out the teaching activity and help children develop and learn different things. They added that children should have enough time and space to play.

When the teacher is not available or does not intervene in the child's learning, the play sometimes breaks down, leaving the children frustrated and demotivated Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness, Trew and Ingram (2010). The early childhood teacher is the facilitator of play in the classroom. The teacher facilitates play by providing appropriate indoor and outdoor environments. Age and developmental levels should be considered in the design and selection of materials. Guidelines for selecting safe and appropriate equipment for outdoor play environments are available. Once appropriate environments and materials are in place, regular safety checks and maintenance are needed to ensure that the equipment is sound and safe for continued play Fox, (2008). Walsh et al. (2010), identify five roles that can be adopted by adults or teachers that can shape the interaction and set the tone. These roles embrace:

- the role of facilitator when the adult helps children to sustain their play by providing strategies and ideas which extend their thinking and give children time to think and to speak, support recall and create opportunities for children to make the next steps. Here, an adult applies the concept of scaffolding;
- The role of co-learner or co-explorer-in this role, an adult plays the role he or she would wish to see the child taking, thus enabling the child to make their own discoveries and develop problem solving skills;
- The role of play partner which means when the adult just being involved in the child's activity, joins in, enjoying it and following the actions developed by the child;
- The role of listener/decoder who listens very carefully, gives full attention to a child and gives the child time to fully explain or to show what they have been doing; and
- the planner since adults can plan to interact with particular children and to build an interest or strength they have shown, or as part of their observation and assessment.

Legget and Margot (2013), concur and talk about five roles of a teacher in the children's learning. They say the teacher should act as a caregiver, facilitator, scaffold, co-constructor, and a role-model. These strategies direct children toward outcomes for learning. Piaget and Vygotsky presented opposing beliefs influencing the practice of educators. Piaget believed that children have the freedom to explore and construct knowledge through their own participation in their learning: and on the other hand, Vygotsky believed that the adult guidance and support was necessary in assisting children to reach higher conceptual understanding. Dewey advocated that children's freedom should be nurtured with teacher guidance within a democratic learning environment and claims that it is the teacher's role to use professional knowledge, judgement and skills to identify environments and activities that will interact with the existing capacities and needs of those taught to create a worthwhile experience. Kernan (2007) concurs that early years' practitioners should make judgements about the most suitable strategies to use based on the knowledge of the individual children, the

particular context, whilst also taking account of broad moral, ethical and equity considerations.

Dewey is supported by DoE (2011), when he reveals that teachers should use their judgement to support children's learning and development through a combination of a child-led adult-led play-based learning as well as active teacher-led learning. Teachers should also create physical environments that support a range of opportunities for learning and physical activity, both indoors and outdoors. In order to understand the relationship of play and learning and development, teachers must be knowledgeable about the research base and typical characteristics that describe how play enhances all children's learning and development. From this knowledge base, teachers will be able to argue convincingly and make appropriate decisions about providing adequate opportunities and time for all children to play.

Mathematics is one of the subjects that is taught in lower classes. According to Lee and Ginsburg (2009), free play in Mathematics can therefore provide a useful foundation for learning, but a foundation is only an opportunity for building a structure. Adult guidance is necessary to build a structure on the foundation of children's informal mathematics. Teachers should actively assist children to advance beyond their informal, intuitive mathematics to the formal concepts, procedures and symbolism of mathematics. Parents and teachers should provide stimulation, attitudes, and insights that support the development of each child's potential. As far as young children are concerned, the adult is responsible for providing materials and for playing with the child. As the child's attention span increases and interest in the world emerges, provision of materials and experiences takes on new meaning.

Teachers should be aware of each child's needs and know when and how to match materials and activities with the child's interest. They need to know when to offer new materials, a prop, or an idea to move the play toward a more challenging and satisfying end. Teachers must also be observant of children in spontaneous play settings, and intervene at critical times. Teachers must also know how to play with children in those settings, yet maintain the teacher role of leading and directing. It is imperative that educators who work with children or

for children from infancy through adolescence fully understand play and its diverse forms in order to achieve what is best for children.

Kernan (2007) mentions that adult's roles in children's play can also be viewed as a continuum between indirect planning for play to direct involvement in the play. At the end of the continuum, adults adopt a role of manager as the organiser of the time, space and resources that promote play. When children mediate, or interpret the play, adults become more involved. Direct involvement occurs when adults adopt an active role in the play, when for example the adult engages in parallel play, co-playing or plan tutoring. Early childhood teachers and practitioners should know the children and families in their schools or sites; they assess, document children's learning and know interests. Then, together with families, they plan carefully how to use play-based activities as one tool to promote the learning that will achieve Early Years' Learning Framework outcome (Barblett, 2009).

According to Hyvonen (2011), teachers need to be playful as well. He says playful teachers are creative and innovative when adapting to technological innovations in their work. Playful teaching refers to the teacher in different situations either leading, allowing or affording play. The roles of the teacher and children are complementary and dependent on each other: the more the teacher is teaching the play or a play process, the less the possibilities children have to be active. These three roles of the teacher highlight a rich and comprehensive developmental view for learning.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The literature discussed in this chapter shows that the importance of understanding play in the teaching of grade R at schools needs to be given full recognition for holistic development young children.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research methodology and research design which serves as an exposition of how the study was conducted. The chapter starts by unpacking the qualitative research design and methodology as well as interpretive paradigm. It is about the methodology procedures of data collection and data analysis. This section includes details of the selected population for the study, a description of participants, data collection methods and sampling procedures that were used. The section also incorporates instruments that were used to collect information and show how it was analysed. It further covered ethical considerations concerning the participants.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and data analysis to be done (Maree, 2007). Bless et al (2006), state that research design relates directly to testing of hypothesis. They also state that research design is an action plan for getting from here to there, where “here” may be defined as the critical set of questions to be answered and “there” is some set of (conclusions) answers. They further say “...a research design shows how all of the major parts of the research study-the samples or groups, measures treatments or programs etc.-work together in an attempt to address the research questions.” The purpose of a good research design is to enhance reliability of the results by taking into account potential sources of bias and error.

3.2.1 Qualitative approach

The study followed a qualitative approach within the interpretive paradigm. A qualitative research method is defined as a method that involves an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasoning that govern human behaviour Magi, (2010). Bless, Higson, Smith, Sithole (2006) define qualitative research as the method that uses words or descriptions to record aspects of the world. According to De Vos and Strydom (2011), qualitative research refers to research that elicits participants' account of meaning, experience or perception. Mack et al. (2005), reveal that qualitative research seeks to understand a given research or problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it provides.

The researcher used this method to ensure that all participants were involved in the process of data collection. The aim was to gain the perception of the participants towards the understanding of the play in the teaching of Grade R at schools. In this method, the research is carried out in real-life situations and not in an experimental situation where interviews and observations are used to gather information Maree, (2007).

The researcher used this method to ensure that the most participants were involved in the process of data collection. The aim was to gain the perception of the participants towards the Foundation Phase teachers' understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R at schools. Furthermore the researcher used this method because it provides a rich, detailed picture of what the researcher is looking for. The researcher also tried to answer given questions by focusing on the local population it affects, gathering perspectives and insight by conducting interviews and surveys. It is also known as observational research, because of the focus on observing and analysing rather than gathering quantitative data.

According to Mackey (2005), the advantages of qualitative research are that the researcher uses open-ended questions and probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words. He further says: "It allows the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant's responses, that is, to ask why and how." The strength of research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Mack, 2005).

Qualitative methods can allow researchers a degree of sensitive or difficult conduct of a particular study; facilitate the examination topics if a relationship of trust develops between the researchers and the researched; and enable researchers to make connections between different aspects of people's lives Griffin, (2005). Finally, Clayson (2013), concurs and says qualitative research provides in-depth detail, creates openness, stimulates people's individual experiences and attempts to avoid pre-judgements.

There are also limitations or disadvantages of this method as well. According to McMillan & Schumacher, (2010), the limitations of qualitative research are that they involve a relatively small number of participants and this can mean that it is less likely to be taken seriously by researcher or practitioners and policy makers. They further say qualitative research requires training and experience and this is supported by Creswell (2009) when he says the qualitative method of data collection and analysis incorporates a wide range of different techniques and epistemological assumptions and a careful selection of appropriate methods is important. Clayson (2013) states that the disadvantages of qualitative research methods are that it usually studies fewer people. He further says it is less easy to generalise and that it is difficult to make systematic comparisons. Finally, he says it is dependent on the skills of the researcher.

Lara-Cinisomo et al. (2009) used the qualitative research method in order to uncover early childhood educators' beliefs about how to best work with children getting ready for kindergarten. Legget and Ford (2013) also used quantitative research methods when they wanted to understand the role of educators and children as intentional teachers and intentional learners within the Early Years Learning Framework.

3.2.2 Interpretive paradigm

Interpretive research is an approach to research in the human sciences that recognises paradigmatic characters of all research (Packer 2011). He further says interpretive research operates in a paradigm that differs from traditional research in the human or social sciences; it operates with different assumptions

about knowledge and being. The researcher then decided to use an interpretive approach for the following reasons:

- It relies heavily on naturalistic methods i.e. interviewing and observations to ensure an adequate dialogue between the researchers and those with whom they interact in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006);
- According to Cohen, Manion, Morrison & Morrison (2011), an interpretive paradigm is associated with a qualitative study and is used to obtain an understanding of the world from an individual perspective;
- The interpretive paradigm emphasises qualitative research methods, where words and pictures as opposed to numbers, are used to describe situations (Carcary, 2009);
- Moreover, interpretive paradigm seeks to explain the stability of behaviour from the individual's viewpoint; and
- The interpretive paradigm is used to collect information about events through observations and interpret it in order to make meaning of that information (Creswell, 2009).

Woodhead (2006), used an interpretive paradigm in Early Childhood context when he was looking for policies and practices that are shaped by competing images and discourse of young children.

3.3 INSTRUMENTS USED TO GENERATE QUALITATIVE DATA

The two common qualitative methods used in the study are interviews and observations. Each method is particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data.

3.3.1 Interviews

Interviews are optimal for collecting data on individual's personal histories and perspectives, and experiences particularly when sensitive topics are being explored. They provide a clear set of instructions for interviews and can provide

reliable, comparable qualitative data. Interviews are methods of gathering information through oral quiz using a set of pre-planned core questions. Interviews can be very productive since the interviewer can pursue specific issues of concern that may lead to focused and constructive suggestions (Shneiderman & Plaisant, 2005). According to Maree (2007), an interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant. They are discussions, usually between an interviewer and an individual who meet to gather information on a specific topic. He elaborates that the aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant, and they can be a valuable source of information, provided they are used correctly.

Cohen and Crabtree (2006), confirm that asking questions and getting answers from participants in a study using interviews has a variety of forms including individual, face-to-face interviews and face-to-face group interviewing. He finally says interviews can be structured, semi-structured or semi-structured. The researcher decided to use semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a major source of collecting data. The researcher decided to use semi-structured interviews, because they require participants to answer a set of predetermined questions (Maree, 2007). The characteristics of interviews are (to mention a few) that they are a useful method to:

- investigate issues in an in-depth way;
- discover how individuals think and feel about a topic and why they hold certain opinions;
- deepen an understanding and explain statistical data;
- add a human dimension to impersonal data; and
- deal with sensitive topics which people may feel uncomfortable discussing in a focus group. The researcher therefore prepared interview questions that Grade R educators were to answer.

Semi-structured interviews have their advantages and disadvantages. Shneiderman and Plaisant (2002) state that the advantage of semi-structured

interviews is that they have features of both structured and unstructured interviews and therefore use both closed and open questions and therefore have an advantage of both methods of interviews.

According to Wyse (2014), the advantages of semi-structured interviews are that:

- accurate screening of face-to-face interviews help with more accurate screening because the individual being interviewed is unable to provide false information during screening questions such as gender, age, race;
- they capture verbal and non-verbal questions;
- they keep focus; and
- they capture emotions and behaviours.

Shneiderman and Plaisant, (2005), add that the main advantages of interviews are that they

- direct contact with the users often lead to specific, constructive suggestions;
- are good at obtaining detailed information; and
- need only a few participants to gather rich and detailed data.

The disadvantages of semi-structured interviews are that they are costly, that is, they require a staff of people to conduct the interviews, which means there will be:

- personal costs;
- the quality of data you receive will often depend on the ability of the interviewer;
- if the interview is administered on paper, the data collected will need to be entered manually or scanned;
- the size of the sample is limited to the size of your interviewing staff the area in which the interviews are conducted, and the number of qualified respondents within that area.

Rashid and Chowdhury (2013) point out that semi-structured interview have the following advantages:

- They help to save time to select the best suitable candidate. Within a very short period of time communication can be accomplished with the interview;
- They are less costly than other processes of communication for it is simple, prompt and low cost method of communication;
- They increase the knowledge of both the interviewer and the interviewee by changing views and ideas;
- They are sufficient as information can be collected through the interview process because the interviewer can ask any questions to the interviewee; and
- The suitable candidates can be selected through interviews because the interviewer can know a lot about the candidate from this process.

They concur to what Wyse (2014), says on the disadvantages of semi-structured interviews but add that:

- There is always the possibility that the interview process can be influenced by the biases of the interviewer;
- Suitable candidates cannot be selected by interview only;
- In the case of the interview, some confusion may arise in the future as there is no evidence actually that have been discussed;
- The interviewee may be disappointed while he or she faces the interviewers' questions of data collection, therefore the successes of an interview depends on the efficiency of the interviewer; and
- The interview is a systematic process which is not related to the field.

Grade R educators were interviewed by preparing four questions that they were going to answer. Each question had three sub-questions. The aim of conducting interviews was to see the world through their eyes of the participant and they can be a valuable source of information, provided they are used correctly (Maree, 2007). The type of instrument used was a semi-structured because they require the participants to answer a set of predetermined questions and they allow for the probing and clarification of answers. Shumba et al (2014) used the interview method in their study when they wanted to explore parental perception on ECD provisioning at early childhood centres.

Lara-Cinisomo et al. (2009) also used this approach when they wanted to uncover Early Childhood Educators' beliefs about how to best work with children getting ready for kindergarten.

3.3.2 Observation

Observations were used in the study. Observation is appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviours in their usual context. Maree (2007) defines observation as the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participant, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. The researcher decided to use this method, because observation research allows the researcher to gather data in person, watch participants and interpret what they see. It also gives the researcher the chance to see rather than just be told how participants act and react in the classroom environment. Furthermore, the researcher used this technique in order to observe educators' activities in their classes in accordance with the understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R. Kawulich (2005) adds that interviews allow for richly detailed descriptions and they improve the quality of data collection and interpretation and facilitate the development of new research questions or hypotheses. Each participant was observed once but for the whole day, that is, from the commencement of the session up to the last session.

There are advantages and disadvantages of the observation method. According to Moriarty (2011), advantages of interviews are that they:

- provide direct information about behaviour of individuals and group;
- permit the evaluator to enter into and understand situation;
- provide good opportunities for identifying unanticipated outcomes and
- exist in natural, unstructured and flexible settings.

He also mentions that the disadvantages of interviews are that:

- they are expensive and time consuming
- they need well-qualified, highly trained observers who may fortunately not need to be content experts;
- they may affect behaviour of participants;

- they may involve selected perceptions of observer may distort data;
- the investigator has little control over situation; and
- the behaviour or set of behaviour observed may be atypical.

The disadvantages of observation, according to Kawulich (2005), are that: the researcher may not be interested in what happens out of the public eye and one must rely on the use of informants.

Lara-Cinisomo et al, (2009), used this method in his study where they were trying to uncover Early Childhood Educators' beliefs about how to best work with children getting ready for Kindergarten. Excell (2011), also used the observation method when he wanted to explore grade R teachers' perceptions of early childhood development and how these impacted on their classroom practice.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis in research means the breaking down, categorising, ordering and summarising of data so as to get answers to the research questions (Magi, 2010). Data analysis is the transformation of the gathered information or data into answers to the original research question (Kabadi, 2014). The following steps were taken:

Step 1

The researcher started by reading the data set obtained from the interviews carried out with teachers as well as the observation notes to get the sense thereof. The researcher wrote down the ideas that came to mind as they read the transcripts.

Step 2

The researcher identified the topics which emerge from the data. A topic is the descriptive name for the subject matter of a piece of text. The researcher wrote down the topics in the margin.

Step 3

The researcher wrote down a list of topics that emerged from the different data sets and wanted to see if there was any duplication. Essentially she now had a set of topics with which to classify or categorise the data. Classification means that you put similar things together in the same group.

Step 4

The researcher then applied this provisional classification system on all data sets. She abbreviated the topic to a code and then wrote this code next to the appropriate piece of data.

3.5 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Delimitations of the study are choices made by the researcher which should be mentioned. They describe the boundaries that the researcher has set for the study. Delimitations define the parameters of the investigation. In educational settings research, the delimitations deal with such items as population sample, treatment, settings and instrumentation. The research was conducted in eight schools in the Empembeni Circuit which has sixteen primary schools with Grade R. The circuit is located in the Umkhanyakude District in the Northern part of KwaZulu- Natal Province), in South Africa. The circuit is a rural area with scattered schools. Rural schools were chosen because it is where the gaps are identified in many instances. Grade R educators were the main target, because they are the ones that are responsible for laying a good foundation through play

and Grade R is the first year of the Foundation Phase of the outcomes-based approach (Cohen,2008).

3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Sampling involves the selection of a number of study units from a defined study population. According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), sampling is the process of systematically selecting that which will be examined during the course of a study

3.6.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Purposive sampling is a method of sampling which is used in special situations where sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind and is thus selected to include people of interest and exclude those who do not suit the purpose (Maree, 2007). According to given (2008), purposive sampling is what the researcher wants to accomplish and what she wants to know, and the appropriate sampling strategy will follow from that. Bernard (2002) concurs that in a purposive research study, the researcher decides what needs to be known (that is, understanding of responses to play in the teaching of grade R at schools and the researcher set out to find people who can and are willing to provide information (grade R educators/practitioners) by virtue of knowledge and experience.

Purposive research was chosen since it focuses on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest (hence, grade R educators/practitioners were targeted) which will best enable the researcher to answer her research questions. The Empembeni Circuit in the Umkhanyakude District has 16 primary schools with Grade R educators/practitioners who are categorised as follows:

- qualified;
- unqualified;
- have no matric BUT holding an ECD Qualification i.e. an ECD NQF L4/5
- Have no matric or ECD NQF L4/5 Qualification but have long service.

Usually, the sample being investigated in a purposive research is quite small hence eight educators or practitioners were selected from these primary schools. The selection was as follows:

- 02-qualified educators
- 02-unqualified practitioners
- 02-unqualified practitioners with no matric but holding ECD NQFL4/5
- 02-unqualified practitioners with no matric or ECDNQL4/5 but have a long service record.

Grade R educators or practitioners were selected, because they are the ones that are responsible for laying a good and solid foundation in young learners through play.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Triangulation was considered in this study. Triangulation means different methods of generating data (interviews and observations). According to Creswell (2009), triangulation is when a researcher uses a variety of data collection instruments and sources in order to limit the risk of distortion which normally occurs when using one method and limited resources. The researcher opted for triangulation because it provides in-depth data, increases the confidence in the research result as well as enables different dimension of the problem to be considered (Mouton & Marais (2009).

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics is the moral philosophy addressing questions such as what is good and bad, right and wrong, justice and injustice (Wiles, 2012). She further says ethics is the branch of philosophy which addresses questions about morality. Research ethics are concerned with moral behaviour in research contexts. The essential purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of research participants (TerrBlanche, 2006).

Permission was requested from the Head of the Department (HOD), Circuit Manager, principals of schools as well as Grade R educators or practitioners who participated in the study. The researcher fully disclosed the whole purpose of the research to the Head of the Department (HOD), Circuit Manager, principals and the educators or practitioners. The roles of the participants (educators) were clearly explained before they became involved in research activities. All participants were permitted to ask questions to the researcher for further clarity. The researcher was open and honest with the participants and informed them of all the aspects of research. The names of the participants were withheld and pseudonyms were used to protect their identities. Information provided by the participants was treated with confidentiality and privacy was acknowledged. They were also told that they were not forced to participate in the research as it was voluntary. The participants were allowed to withdraw in the study at any time. Gardner's (2012) proposal that ethics must be observed and individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief, or any other significant difference was taken into account.

3.8.1 Principles of ethics

The following principles were observed in this study:

3.8.1.1 Autonomy

Autonomy is an agreement to respect another's right, to self-determine a course of action; support of independent decision making. It is a capacity to think, decide, and act on the basis of a freely made decision. Wiles (2012), points out that autonomy relates to issues of voluntariness, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. According to Min (2015), autonomy means that each research participant is free to choose whether to participate or not in the research.

3.8.1.2 Non-maleficence

Non-maleficence is the avoidance of harm or hurt in order to reach a beneficial outcome. It extends to making sure you are doing no harm. The principle of non-maleficence requires an intention to avoid needless harm or injury that can arise through acts of commission or omission. In common language, it can be considered 'negligence' if you impose careless or unreasonable harm upon another. Wiles (2012), asserts that non-maleficence concerns the responsibility to avoid harm. According to Min (2015), non-maleficence means each research participant will not be harmed, either physically or emotionally, through involvement in research.

3.8.1.3 Beneficence

Beneficence is an action that is done for all the benefits of others. Beneficent actions can be taken to prevent or remove harms or to simply improve the situation. Beneficence connotes acts of mercy, kindness and clarity. It is subjective to altruism love, humanity and promoting the good of others. Beneficence concerns responsibility to do good whether or not they want to participate (Wiles: 2012). According to Min (2005), beneficence means actions that are ethically sound and no harm will come. According to Townshend (2010) beneficence and non-maleficence involve an obligation to provide for the patient and to balance such benefit against risks.

3.8.1.4. Consent

This is when the researcher informed the participant of the purpose, nature, data collection methods and the extent of the research prior to commencement. The researcher also obtained their informed consent in writing in the format given in the appendix. According to Creswell (2009), research should, as far as possible, be based on participants' freely volunteered informed consent. This implies a responsibility to explain fully and meaningfully what the research is

about and how it will be disseminated. Participants should be aware of their right to refuse to participate; understand the extent to which confidentiality will be maintained; be aware of the potential uses to which the data might be put; and in some cases be reminded of the right to re-negotiate consent. According to Min (2005), a consent form is intended to protect the participants throughout the research and to remind the researcher of accountability towards the participants.

3.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 covers the discussion of the methodology of data collection, data analysis and data presentation. The researcher used the qualitative approach to collect and analyse it. It provides exactly methodologies which were followed during the research process. Chapter 3 fully explains the purpose of the study and how data were collected and analysed. It acknowledges ethical issues of all respondents. Interviews were conducted with different participants and observation method was also used.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher presents qualitative data where different participants were interviewed in the forms of interviews as well as through observations. The following four interview questions were asked:

- To what extent do grade R teachers understand the use of play as a teaching strategy?

Secondary questions:

- How do grade R teachers plan, incorporate and utilise play in their teaching?
- How do grade R teachers identify an appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcomes?
- What understanding do teachers have about the role of a teacher in a play-based approach in grade R?

The following themes were gathered from the analysed data:

Main question:

- ✓ To what extent do grade R teachers understand the use of play as a teaching strategy?

A shortage and non-utilisation of CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) documents existed. These are the documents that every educator/practitioner should be using in teaching and learning of every learner from grade R-12 since they direct and guide educators/practitioners (grade R's in this case) on the proper understanding of play.

Sub-questions

- ✓ How do grade R teachers plan, incorporate and utilise play in their teaching?
 - ✓ How do grade R teachers identify and appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcomes?
 - ✓ What understanding do teachers have about the role of the teacher in a play-based approach?
-
- Indoor equipment versus the number of grade R learners in schools. These are the resources that should be used inside the classroom whenever grade R teaching and learning is taking place in order to be play-based in terms of the holistic development of the young child.
 - Non-availability of ideal grade R classrooms. These are the classrooms that are suitable for grade R in terms its structure and package (furniture, indoor and outdoor resources, classroom layout and security.) were promised by the government;
 - Shortage or non- availability of outdoor equipment: These are the resources/equipment like swings that should be used by young learners outside the classroom for the development of gross motor muscles;
 - A lack of support and capacitation by School Management Teams (SMTs) and District Officials: This refers to the skills that Grade R teachers should receive from the School Management Teams as well as ECD District Officials;
 - Involvement of stakeholders: Stakeholders are people with an interest or concern in the teaching and learning of grade R's and who are willing to offer assistance and support in a variety of ways;
 - Exclusion of unqualified/underqualified grade R educators from Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS): These educators are underqualified educators who are holding Matric and ECD L1-5 qualification.
 - Unqualified educators-educators who are only Matric or Standard 8 certificates
 - Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS): This is an evaluation that is done to teachers for their development as well salary progression.

- Overcrowding in grade R classrooms: This is when children in the classroom are more than the expected number, that is, thirty (30) which the maximum and acceptable number is.

4.2 Themes

4.2.1 Shortage and non-utilisation of CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy) documents

CAPS documents are the most important documents that the teachers should use in their teaching since they guide and tell the teacher what to teach since it is a single, comprehensive and concise document which is known as the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12. It builds on the previous curriculum but also updates it and aims to provide a clearer specification of what is to be taught and learnt on a term-by-term basis. Grade R educators are therefore bound and compelled to utilise these three documents(Home Language, Mathematics and Life Skills) including two assessment documents in their teaching. This means that the teachers, regardless of the grade they are teaching are forced to use these documents in their teaching.

During observation and interviews, the researcher found that three out of seven participants had and were utilising CAPS documents in their teaching whereas others were just using long experience and general knowledge that they acquired from crèches. When one of the participants was asked why she was not using her CAPS documents, she responded as follows:

Respondent E

“I don’t use CAPS documents in my teaching, reason being I didn’t receive it but due to the experience that I have, I do not encounter any problem in teaching without them. Play is a reaching strategy that comes naturally and I do not have to learn about it only from documents.”

In other schools you find that the teacher was appointed whilst she was unqualified. Once she qualifies or receives a qualification, she will just quit ECD

without an official handing over of the documents like CAPS, as well as Modules 1-4 and this is what one participant said:

Respondent B

“When I arrived at the school I only found two policy documents for Home Language and Life Skills and was told that the teacher that I replaced only left one document and nobody bothered to question about the one for Mathematics.”

Another participant responded to the question like this:

Respondent F

“I am not using CAPS documents because I know all themes that are a core of my teaching. I know how to use play as a teaching strategy. When the researcher asked her where she got those from, she said, “I got them from the Annual Teaching Plan usually known as Work Schedule from a colleague who also teaches Grade R in a neighbouring school.”

Non- utilisation of CAPS documents by some teachers in other schools is caused by the increased Grade R learners which lead to the appointment of a new/ additional Grade R teacher yet the documents were issued only after CAPS implementation 2012 and we are now towards completion of 2015. This is proved when one Respondent A responded like this:

“I was appointed at this school as an additional Grade R teacher in 2014 and I was never given any policy document to use and I have never seen my colleagues using them. I have always focused on play as a teaching strategy as a mother I know that children learn through play.”

All the above responses prove that other Grade R educators are not aware of the importance of using CAPS documents in their teaching and that activity like play activities that young learners should be engaged with are ignored as the teachers think they know enough without consulting the CAPS document.

4.2.2 Indoor equipment/resources versus the number of Grade R learners

Grade R teaching and learning only becomes effective if the teachers fully engage their learners by providing them with sufficient equipment and allowing them to choose their activities. Although the majority of participants had indoor resources to be utilised by learners, the researcher observed that some did not have enough especially those with large number of Grade R learners/classes. Two participants, that is, Respondent A and C in the same school were sharing a classroom and responded to the above issue like this:

“Our learners are suffering during second and third sessions when they have to be fully engaged in activities that need them to have enough resources because they have to share/ take turns in using these. The reason is that this was last received when the school had only one Grade R class.”

Respondent D was using resources/ books that are not in the LoLT (Language of Teaching and Learning). When the researcher asked why she was using resources that are not relevant, she responded like this:

“These are the only books that I received and therefore I decided to use them since they had nothing to use.”

In other schools, the equipment and resources used for teaching play are available but teachers do not know how to integrate them with the lesson for example, if the theme is about vegetables, the teacher should display things like veggies, play stoves, blunt knives, bowls, aprons and old wigs in the fantasy corner so that learners will be able to pretend to be chefs cooking in the kitchen. When I questioned the Respondents E and F about this they said:

“We do not have a clear understanding of this, as we need to display resources that are related to the theme of the week. Our understanding of this was that in the fantasy area we need to display everything including resources for example cars, dolls, animals, kitchen utensils.”

What was also noted was that the resources in other schools are available but they are not utilised during teaching but they are just kept in the boxes meaning that the teacher is only theorising the lesson and do not engage the learners in

play activities. The statement below from Respondents Band G proves that the resources are available but not utilised:

“We did not display anything related to the theme on the corners because there are no relevant resources.”

To the researcher’s surprise, the resources were there in a big container and teachers were not aware that the resources they needed were available. The above statement bears evidence that some Grade R educators are not doing justice when teaching young learners and that they are depriving them since engaging young learners in indoor play activities is the only correct way of teaching them, because it is where their small muscles are being developed.

4.2.3. Non- availability of ideal Grade R classes

Grade R learners are best taught in an environment that is conducive to their teaching and learning. This means that the Grade R class should have a carpet to be utilised during morning ring and story time, suitable Grade R material i.e. coloured chairs and tables, sink for washing hands after creative activities, suitable toilets appropriate to their size, enough space for activities and for children to be able to move around confidently and comfortably.

During observations, the researcher noted that everything that was mentioned above was only found in one school. Even that school was supposed to have received two classrooms instead of one because of Grade R enrolment. The following responses from Respondents A and C prove that the issue of non-availability of ideal Grade R classes is thorny and educators are dissatisfied about the situation if they respond like this:

“It would be better if the department can build us new and ideal classrooms and provide us with suitable furniture, because our learners only use old benches that are placed around the walls or else these three carpets. There is no suitable furniture for them where they engage themselves with a variety of activities and you can see that they get tired from sitting on these benches doing nothing and decide to sit on carpets.”

Respondent F said:

“Learners cannot engage in activities freely if they are overcrowded i.e. learners sharing one classroom. I wish that the department fulfils its promise it made in the media that all schools with Grade R would receive ideal Grade R classes”.

And **Respondent E** said:

“It is worse if a four and a half or five year old learner is sharing a toilet with a twelve or even fifteen year old learner who doesn’t care what mess he/she has left in the toilet. Others need to be assisted in order to reach the toilet since they were not built for them. This really traumatises them”.

Respondent D elaborated:

“The Grade R daily programme clearly stipulates that learners should be taken out for 60 minutes for outdoor play during the sixth session and this is impossible if the school does not have an ideal Grade R structure since the outdoor area and its equipment is also provided.

Respondent B and G:

“We did receive one ideal classroom which is not enough since we have two Grade R classes. We have decided to take turns on a quarterly basis in terms of using the classroom so that all learners get a chance of enjoying the classroom.”

These responses/comments demonstrate that the Department need to prioritise the issue of providing all primary schools with ideal Grade R classes.

4.2.4. Shortage or non-availability of outdoor equipment

Outdoor equipment is a must have for each and every school with Grade R learners because it stimulates or encourages their gross motor muscles. Therefore schools need to have sufficient, securely fenced play areas with lockable gates. The equipment should also be age and developmentally appropriate to learners.

During observation, the researcher noted that the schools had outdoor areas except for two that totally did not have any. The play area is considered to be conducive to development allowing for play if it has suitable equipment like swings, apparatus to balance, apparatus for water play, sand play, and balls for interactive play and skipping ropes. The researcher also understood that the area targeted was in the remote area of the district. These (outdoor play equipment) were last delivered and installed to some schools by the Qids up project.

The responses from **Respondents E and F** to this issue were:

“We do not have outdoor equipment due to the fact that Grade R allocations are a problem in all schools. Orders are being placed during requisition time but no equipment is being delivered.”

Another responses from **Respondents A and C** were:

“During outdoor time I only provide my learners with balls and home-made skipping ropes since those are the only resources available in the school”.

One participant did not bother about going out with his children during outdoor time. When she was asked why she said:

“There is no outdoor equipment for my learners. I only tell them to go and run outside and I see no reason why I should go out with them because they play behind their classroom where it is easy for me to watch/observe them”.

Play activities should also make provision for learners with barriers in the school, so that they are not deprived of the right to play. A learner with physical disability was told to remain in the class during outdoor time. When the Respondent G was asked why she said:

“The activity that I have prepared is about throwing and catching a ball and since my learner is having a sight problem, I decided to exclude him from the activity.”

The above comments really show that learners are being deprived from their rights and that nothing is being done by the schools to meet learner’s demands. Play as teaching and learning strategy seemed to be neglected at the detriment

of the foundation Phase learners. No interactive play as part of constructivist development could take place all due to a lack of equipment and neglect.

4.2.5. Lack of support and capacitation by School Management Teams (SMTs) and District Officials.

Effective grade R teaching and learning relies on proper availability and use of daily programme/ weekly lesson planning which is done according to National Curriculum Statement, integration of three subjects, that is, home language, mathematics and life skills, proper planning for a range of activities support play-based approach and according to daily programme these should be monitored by the school management teams(SMTs), that is, Foundation Phase Heads of the Department(HODs) as well as the District Officials.

During interviews and observation, the researcher discovered that grade R educators were underperforming, not implementing all the above effectively especially the presence of seven corners in the classroom where learners should be engaged. These corners are of great importance in the Grade R class since it is where a range of activities that support a play-based approach should be taking place.

When the teacher

were asked why their learners were not engaged in play, **Respondent A and C** responded like this:

“We are not regularly developed and capacitated on these by SMTs and District Officials. We rely on the assistance and capacitation that we get from our fellow colleagues during our own cluster meetings.”

Other participants raised the issue of School Management Teams and Heads of the Departments in their phases not being hands on in terms of capacitating them on the grade R issues and on curriculum issues even during the School Development Workshops or planning workshops. On this issue, Respondent B and G commented like this:

“We are being excluded from School Management Workshops and we are told that the Grade R programme and its planning is different from that one of Grades 1-3.”

This clearly shows that even Schools Management teams, that is, Foundation Phase HODs in some schools do need to be capacitated on grade R curriculum in order for them to be able to offer proper guidance and assistance to grade R educators. ECD District Officials are also not sufficient to do school visits for the purpose of providing curriculum support to these educators.

4.2.6. Involvement of stakeholders

One of the principles of grade R is that their teaching and learning is always play-based, hence teachers need to have sufficient resources in order to implement this principle effectively. The only means of achieving this is through government subsidy called norms and standards where a certain amount of money allocation is given to schools or grade R classes to purchase Grade R resources. This depends on a number of grade R learners admitted to the school, that is, if the number is too small then the allocation will also be too little, hence schools with the small grade R enrolment are being disadvantaged.

The only solution to this problem is the involvement of all stakeholders like parents, local shop owners, religious groups, business people, and builders in grade R teaching and learning since grade R teaching is part of an extended environment. The teacher should therefore build a good relationship with all these stakeholders by involving them wherever possible. The relationship with these stakeholders can provide an excellent resource of support and assistance such as collection of waste materials likes, magazines, cardboard boxes, computer papers, materials. They can also assist in the cutting of grass and keeping the outdoor area and equipment clean and safe. They can also assist in the building of outdoor material, fundraising, donations as well as in the collection of waste material.

During observations, the researcher noticed that the indoor and outdoor resources were insufficient in most schools and was very keen to know the motif of this during interviews. The responses were as follows:

Respondent E and F

“We were told that the schools allocation is too small hence the school cannot afford to purchase more than what is allocated.”

And:

Respondent B

“When I ask my learners to collect resources like magazines from their homes, their parents will say they do not have money to buy them.”

Respondent A and C

“We do try to invite our learner’s parents to meetings but they do not honour the invitations.”

The above excerpts show that these educators were beginning to lose interest in teaching these learners since no support was offered.

4.2.7. Exclusion of unqualified/underqualified Grade R educators from Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS)

The Integrated Quality Management System is a performance management system for school-based educators, designed to evaluate the performance levels of individuals in order to achieve high levels of school performance. Its purpose is to determine levels of competence, enhance educator efficiency, effectiveness and good performance as well as to provide a basis for paying salary progression, rewards and other incentives.

The appointment of grade R educators is twofold: those appointed as State Paid educators (qualified) and those appointed as grant educators (unqualified/underqualified). State Paid educators in grade R are the only educators who are being evaluated. During interviews, most participants could

not produce this evaluation due to the fact that most of them were grant educators since they had not yet received any qualification and the researcher feels that this contributes to the low levels of performance in terms of proper implementation of CAPS and that they were being deprived because IQMS was designed not only for salary progression but for the development of educators as well.

Respondent A

“I was told that I am not entitled to IQMS if I am not qualified and I feel this is not right since IQMS was meant to develop all educators.”

Respondent E and F

“Our colleagues always talk about attending IQMS meetings but we are never invited to those meetings.”

Respondent G

“My HOD told me that my turn will come only when I have received a qualification and am appointed as State Paid Educator.”

Responses such as these show that grade R educators, especially the unqualified and underqualified are still being undermined discriminated and will not be able to understand the importance or the proper way of teaching young learners.

4.2.8 Overcrowding in Grade R classrooms

As per the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Early Childhood Development Implementation Strategy towards the realisation of the policy target for 2014, Section 4.2.1 states that a class size should accommodate a maximum of 30 learners. During the observations and interviews, the researcher discovered that 80 to 90 and even more learners share one classroom that is supposed to occupy at least 30 to 40 learners, hence teaching in such classes becomes ineffective.

In school A, four teachers were sharing two classrooms, that is, two teachers with about 95 learners were sharing one classroom. Both learners and teachers could not move freely and comfortably in the classroom, areas could not be displayed, there was no space for the carpet to be used during story time and for music or movement and drama performances, hence the teaching and learning environment was found inadequate and did not support learning through play. When participants were asked about this, they responded like this:

Respondents A and C

“There is nothing that we can do since all classrooms in our school are having the same problem.”

Whereas **Respondent B and G** commented like this:

“We did receive one grade R classroom, but it was not big enough to accommodate 90 learners. We then had to get another class room, a park home which is too hot during summer time and not conducive to teaching and learning.”

It is clear that the Department infrastructure section should prioritise the implementation of the above-mentioned strategy; otherwise no effective teaching and learning can take place under these conditions.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter looked at the findings of Foundation Phase teachers' understanding of play in the teaching of grade R in the Empembeni Circuit Schools. The information presented in this chapter shows that play was not fully recognised in grade R teaching. It has also revealed that some Foundation Phase teachers, especially grade R's do not fully understand that teaching and learning in smaller classes is always play-based.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, the researcher discusses qualitative data where different participants were interviewed in the form of interviews and observation. The following four interviews questions were asked:

- To what extent do grade R educators use play as a teaching strategy?
- How do grade R educators plan, incorporate and utilise play in their teaching?
- How do grade R educators identify an appropriate play to achieve lesson outcome?
- What understanding do educators have about the role of an educator in a play-based approach?

5.2.1 Teacher's use of play as a teaching strategy

Concerning the teacher's use of play as a teaching strategy, the participant's views were as follows: Respondent 1 said that learners should be given a chance to engage themselves in both indoor and outdoor activities by the department providing them with resources for playing. She also mentioned that learners should be engaged in a variety of activities. They further indicate that children should depend largely upon the play materials, equipment and role models available to them. Respondents 2, 3, 4, and 7 are also supporting this idea. Respondent 1 elaborates that the teacher should see to it that she observes that all learners get a chance to or take turns to play and is supported by Hoisington (2008), when he clearly explains that learners should be observed whilst playing in both indoors and outdoors. Respondent 2 mentions that she will play with her learners and those that are experiencing problems will be given more time and are sometimes encouraged to choose their own play activities. She (Respondent 2) clashed with what the CAPS policy is

saying when she mentioned that there should be no integration of subjects but admitted that she was aware that teaching in grade R should always be play-based and that the teacher should sometimes engage herself in learner's play. Respondent 4 voiced her opinion by saying that the teacher should carefully plan and explain the activity. She is also supported by Barblett (2009), when he says the teacher should plan carefully how to use play-based activities as one tool to promote learning that will achieve the early years learning framework outcomes.

Respondent 5 talked about dividing a class into manageable groups, that is, if a class consists of 30 learners, the learners would be divided into groups of six. Respondent 6 said that her strategy was one of letting herself to participate fully and being polite and ensuring that she was operating on the learners' level. Joubert (2013) says talking to children using pleasant and calm voices and simple language and greeting children warmly when they come into the classroom with their parents or from the buses help establish secure relationships between the teacher and children. Respondent 6 further pointed out that the teacher should use teaching and learning resources that made the learning atmosphere positive and successful in order for learners to enjoy the lesson. Respondent 7 pointed out that the teacher should organise play activities that make learners gain certain knowledge and skills. She further said play should make learners feel eager to cooperate fully.

5.2.2 Planning, incorporation and utilisation of play in Grade R teaching

Answers to the question of whether planning for play in Grade R teaching was viable, respondents were expected to mention documents that they used and had to explain clearly how they went about with them. The first important document that the teacher should use when planning is the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document. According to Hoisington (2008), teachers will want to plan specific activities that extend learning in to the domains maths, language and literacy. All Grade R educators did have CAPS documents but only 43 % used these documents when planning. Other documents that they needed to use when planning were daily programmes

which give guidance on time allocation, number of sessions per week, type of session as well as the activities, work schedule, lesson plan indicating the what to be done by the teacher and learners during the week, as well as workbooks that contain activities to be done by learners.

They should also not forget that their teaching will not be effective without play material to be used by learners when they are in different corners, (seven areas) where learners will be engaged with different activities. Implementing play effectively also requires teaching aids to be used by the teacher efficiently to integrate the three subjects (mathematics, home language and life skills) since subjects in Grade R are not taught separately. Further, the language of teaching and learning (LoLT of the school) also necessitates the application of the play-based approach. Although 71% of the participants did not mention anything about using daily programmes, they seemed to be familiar with all the other documents. Respondents 1 and 3 pointed out that they needed to be strict on the age policy, that is, a Grade R learner should be five years or four and a half turning five before the 30th of June of that year.

On the issue of incorporation and utilisation of play, Respondents 2, 4 and 7 admitted to incorporate and utilise play in their teaching. With respondents 3, 5 and 6, play activities were only done during outdoor sessions meaning that they did not observe the play-based approach throughout the day. Respondent 3 mentioned very little about introducing play into her teaching. Niland (2009) pointed out that the teacher needed to prepare a curriculum that would include songs that related to children's interests and that allowed for a range of playful responses. Educators should also develop children's musical skills through play. All participants supported this issue, not only during music ring session but throughout the day.

5.2.3 Identification of appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcome

Respondents 1 and 3 indicated that in order to identify the appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcome, play activities should correspond or tally with the lesson, for example, if the theme of the lesson was my body, dolls and puppets should be brought or used. According to Wood and Attfield (2005) practitioners

should develop an informed understanding of play through the processes that link playing and learning. Respondents 5 and 6 emphasised the point of carefully explaining play activities after having identified the appropriate play activity by means of songs, dramatization and rhymes. Playing together with them and later allowing them to play on their own under her supervision were time consuming. This is supported by Barblett (2009), when he says children need large blocks of time to develop themes and ideas. Respondent 7 addressed the issue of providing play activities that would develop learners holistically especially during free play outside. The Early Years Education Good Practice Guide (2012), says the teacher should ensure that sufficient time and a variety of materials should be available as they should plan for children's holistic learning using the learning outcomes. Nothing was said by Respondent.

5.2.4 The role of a teacher in a play-based approach

With regard to the role of a teacher in a play-based approach, the participants responded like this. Respondent 1 mentioned that the teacher should plan different kinds of play activities for playing. This is supported by Barblett (2009) when he says the teacher together with the families should plan carefully on how to use play-based activities as a tool to promote the learning that will achieve early years learning framework outcomes. She (Respondent 1) also pointed out that the teacher should observe her learners whilst they play. This was also mentioned by Respondent 5 when she said the teacher should observe learners and make sure that they all cooperated. Respondent 1 further stated that the teacher should sometimes play with her children and this was supported by Respondent 3 when she said the teacher should play with learners especially in Mathematics corner where they talk, argue and later reach an agreement. According to Hyvonen (2011), teachers need to be playful as well. He says playful teachers are creative and innovative when adapting to technological innovations in this work. Respondent 4 and 5 were in agreement with this statement but Respondent 5 also added that the teacher had to encourage learners' strengthening their gross motor muscles. According to Nikko and Ugaste (2012), teachers should consider play as the main way for

carrying out teaching activities and help children develop and learn different things. Respondents 3 and 4 said the teacher should engage learners into different activities throughout the day, that is, from session 1 to session 9 including routine times. The DoE (2011), reveals that teachers should create physical environments that support a range of activities both indoors and outdoors. Respondent 4 said that the teacher should act as a facilitator and should give herself enough time to explain and demonstrate the relevant play activity that is given to children. The teacher must be knowledgeable about play so that she can make an appropriate decision about providing adequate opportunities and time for all children to play. Respondent 4 also indicated that she would pay attention whilst her children were playing in order to identify their needs. Respondent 6 indicated that the best teacher should play a role of being a role model and this is supported by Legget and Margot (2013) when they comment on the five roles of a teacher including that one of being a role model in order to direct children towards outcomes for learning. Respondent 7 stated that the most important role of a Grade R teacher is to arrange seven corners as per CAPS policy and different types of play activities accordingly in order to enhance their learning. She (Respondent 7) also pointed out the teacher should ascertain that every play activity is relevant and understandable by learners. She further said she would encourage learners to participate fully in play activities.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of the study reveal that some grade R educators in the UMkhanyakude district do not have a clear understanding of play in teaching of grade R in terms of the themes mentioned above. The researchers recommend the following:

- Prioritisation of the filling of ECD Education Specialist posts at the district level;
- Provision of ideal grade R classrooms in all primary schools with grade R;

- Reduction of distances to the district office for the officials to be able to provide support in schools;
- Principals to place orders timeously for ECD Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM);
- District Officials to monitor schools to ensure that they have the resources at the commencement of the academic year;
- District Officials to ensure that resources are well-kept;
- Foundation Phase Heads of Department(HODs) and District Officials to provide on-going monitoring and support to schools in terms of proper curriculum implementation;
- Inclusion of all grade R educators(unqualified/underqualified) in Integrated Quality Management Systems(IQMS);
- Involvement of all stakeholders in Grade R teaching and learning processes.

5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

Doing additional research in the application of play as a teaching strategy in the Intermediate phase seems a viable option especially in the light of the development of modern technology. The value of connecting with learners via modern and innovative play-based strategies seems to be a realm of research that needs to be investigated.

More research should be done on the governmental provision of play-based equipment and the financial constraints on the provision of the needed teaching material.

The effectiveness of play as teaching strategy on academic achievement is also another possible field of research that might yield interesting results.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at the findings of the Foundation Phase teachers' understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R in the Empembeni Circuit Schools. The information provided in this chapter indicates that grade R

educators do not have a full understanding of play in their teaching and that there are various challenges that hinder the understanding of play in grade R teaching.

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Annexures

- Annexure A** - **Candidate's Originality Declaration (Research Papers, Mini-Dissertations, Dissertations and Theses)**
- Annexure B** - **Interview Questions (IsiZulu & English)**
- Annexure C** - **Observation sheet**
- Annexure D** - **Participant informed consent**
- Annexure E** - **Principals letter requesting permission**
- Annexure F** - **Letter to invite participants' clearance**
- Annexure G** - **Ethical Clearance Certificate**

ANNEXURE A: CANDIDATE'S ORIGINALITY DECLARATION (RESEARCH PAPERS, MINI-DISSERTATIONS, DISSERTATIONS AND THESES)

ORIGINALITY DECLARATION

Full Names and Surname	Mzimela Hildagard Sizakele Mzimela
Student Number	19962056
Title of dissertation/thesis	The Foundation Phase Teachers understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R at schools at UMkhanyakude District

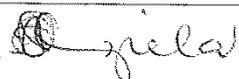
I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's policies and rules applicable to postgraduate research, and I certify that I have, to the best of my knowledge and belief, complied with their requirements.

In particular, I confirm that I had obtained an ethical clearance certificate for my research (Certificate Number UZREC 171110-030-RA-Level 02 PGM 2014/142.....) and that I have complied with the conditions set out in that certificate.

I further certify that this dissertation is original, and that the material has not been published elsewhere, or submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university

I declare that this dissertation is, save for the supervisory guidance received the product of my own work and effort. I have, to the best of my knowledge and belief, complied with the University's Plagiarism Policy and acknowledged all sources of information in line with normal academic conventions.

I have/have not subjected the document to the University's text-matching and/or similarity-checking procedures. *(One could indicate that this process applied only to some chapters or that it occurred during the course of the research and not in respect of the final product.)*

Candidate's signature	
Date	03-03-2016

ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: ISIZULU VERSION

QUESTION 1

To what extent do Grade R educators use play as a teaching strategy?

- (a) Yiziphi izindlela ongazisebenzisa ukwenelisa abafundi bakho ukuzibandakanya emsebenzini wangaphakathi nangaphandle kwekilasi?
Uzokwenza kanjani ukubafaka bonke?
- (b) Uma kudlalwa, ubanakekela kanjani abafundi abaphila nokukhubazeka njengokukhubazeka komzimba, kwengqondo, komoya njll?
- (c) Uma uhlela izinhlobo zemidlalo ezizodlawa ngabafundi, yiziphi izindlela ozisebenzisayo ukuqiniseka ukuthi bonke abafundi bazothuthuka olwazini lwazp ngokuphelele?

QUESTION 2

How do Grade R educators plan, incorporate and utilise play in their teaching ?

- (a) Uyibandakanya kanjani imidlalo njengezifundo uma ulungiselela umsebenzi wasekilasini ubusebenzisa u-CAPS (indlela entsha yokufunda nokufundisa okuyiyona esisetshenziswa)?
- (b) Njengothisha, uzibandakanya kanjani emidlalweni oyenzele abafundi ngokwendlela entsha yokufundisa nesisetshenziswa emgudwini wokufundisa?
- (c) Uzimisele ukuyifaka kanjani imidlalo ohlelweni lwakho lwansuku zonke (Daily programme)? Lokho uzokwenz kanjani?

QUESTION3

How do Grade R educators identify an appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcome?

- (a) Yimiphi imizamo ongayenza njengothisha ukuze ukwazi ukuchaza imidlalo ngendlela ezokusiza ukuze ukwazi ukuthola lokho okulindele ngesifundo sakho?
- (b) Uzokwenza kanjani ukuthi kube khona ukuzibandakanya esimwei sokufunda okuphapheme ekilasini lakho ukuze ukwazi ukuthola umphumela wesifundo sakho? Uzobe ukwenziswa isiphi isizathu?
- (c) Yimuphi umthelela ocabanga ukuthi isifundo sakho singaba nawo uma umbandakanya abafundi bakho ukusiza emidlalweni ezoba sesimweni esilingisa/ esihambisana nabo ukuze ukwazi ukuthola okuhlosile ngesifundo sakho?.

QUESTION 4

What understanding do educators have about the role of an educator in a play – based approach ?

- (a) Njengothisha, ungazinikela ngokwenzani uma kuza ezinhlotsheni zemidlalo?
- (b) Uma usekilasini lakho nabafundi, yiliphi iqhaza kumbe ingxenye oyithathayo emdlalweni?
- (c) Ucabanga ukuthi kubaluleke ngakanani kuwe njengothisha ukungenelela noma ukuthatha ingxenye uma kudlalwa?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GRADE R EDUCATORS: ENGLISH VERSION

The foundation phase teachers' understanding of play in the teaching of grade r in the uMkhanyakude circuit schools.

Thank you for being willing to answer these questions. The information asked is for research purposes only and will be treated with confidentiality.

SECTION A: PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Initials and surname

: _____

Contact number

: _____

Name of school

: _____

No. Of Grade R learners

: _____

Academic qualification

: _____

Professional Training

: _____

Date

: _____

SECTION B

QUESTION 1

To what extent do Grade R educators use play as a teaching strategy?

- (a) Which strategies do you use to accommodate all your learners to participate inside and outside the classroom? And how do you engage them?

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- (b) How do you cater for learners who are learning with disabilities e.g. physically challenged, mentally disturbed, emotionally disturbed, etc. when it comes play?

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- (c) When formulating play activities, which strategies do you select as the most suitable to develop your learners holistically i.e. emotionally, socially, intellectually etc.

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QUESTION 2

How do Grade R teachers plan, incorporate and utilise play in their teaching?

(a) How do you involve play as the lesson into CAPS when do lesson planning?

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(b) How do you engage yourself into play activities that you have delegated to your learners based on the curriculum as the transition during your teaching process?

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(c) How do you intended to utilize play into your daily programme? And how does that occur?

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QUESTION 3

How do Grade R teachers identify an appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcomes?

- (a) What interventions do you think might be done by you as the teacher in order clearly identify play in such that will help you to achieve your lesson outcome?

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- (b) How will you put it into practice an active learning in your classroom in order to achieve your lesson outcome and why ?

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(c) How effective do you think your lesson will be if you engage your learners in order to enhance you to appropriate play that will be more suitable to help you achieve the lesson outcome?

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QUESTION 4

What understanding do teachers have about the role of a teacher in a play- based approach?

(a) How will you render your support as a teacher in a play – based approach?

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(b) How will you co-operate with your learners in the classroom on a play- based approach?

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(c) How significant do you think it is for you as the teacher to intervene or take part in a play based approach?

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5. General comments:

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ANNEXURE C: OBSERVATION SHEET FOR GRADE R EDUCATORS

Foundation phase teachers' understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R in the Empembeni Circuit Schools.

SECTION A : PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Name of school

: _____

No. Of Grade R learners

: _____

Academic qualification:

Professional Training

: _____

Years of Experience :

Date

: _____

SECTION B: QUESTIONS

No.	Item	Yes	No.
	Free play inside		
1.	Is the theme table/ topic visible ?		
2.	Are all areas/ corner displayed?		
3.	Is the classroom set up conducive to Grade R teaching and learning?		
4.	Is the indoor play material available?		
5.	Is the outdoor play material available?		
6.	Are all CAPS documents available?		
7.	Is play integrated in the lesson?		
8.	Is lesson plan available?		
9.	Is daily programme available?		

10.	Is daily programme followed?		
11.	Is lesson plan aligned to CAPS?		
12.	Is play incorporated in her lesson?		
13	Does the teacher have an observation book?		
14.	Did the teacher receive any training from Modules, RNCS, and CAPS etc?		
15.	Is the teaching child – centred?		
	Free play outside		
16.	Is the outdoor area available?		
17.	Is the indoor play material?		
18.	Are outside activities planned?		
19.	Are they included in the lesson plan?		
20.	Are learners supervised during free play outside?		

What is happening here?

General Comments:

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INTERVIEW – SUGGESTED ANSWERS

QUESTION 1

1. (a) Ngokuthi uma uhlela umsebenzi wosuku ubhekele bonke abafundi kusukela kwabafunda nokukhubazeka kuze kuyofikax kwabasheshayo ukuqeda ukufunda nokubhala (abakhaliphile)

(b) Kwabaphila nokukhubazeka ngengeza isikhathi sokuqeda umsebenzi kwabahlakaniphile kakhulu ngilungisa izifundo azozenza ukuze angaphazamisi abangakaqedi.
2. Kulabo abaphila nokukhubazeka ngibenzela imidlalo engadingi basebenzise amandla noma umqondo kodwa kuhambisane ngokwezidingo zabo.
3. Ngokubheka imvelaphi yontwana, ulwazi abanalo ngemidlao kanye nendawo abahlala kuyo (play equipments/ resources available in that area).

QUESTION 2

- (a) Ngokufaka imidlalo kusukela kussesson yokuqala kuze kufike kweyokugcina, eminye idlalwe bukhoma eminye ibhalwe phansi ihambisane nendikimba yaleloviki.
- (b) Ngidlala nabo nami ngithathe ingxenye ngibe kwabadlalayo ngenze konke abakwenzayo
- (c) 1. Izovela imidlalo kuwowonke amasession njengothi kweyokuqala kuze kufike kweyokugcina 9daily programme).
2. Iphinde ivele ohlelweni lokufundisa (lesson plan) kubonakale ukuhlelwa kwemidlalo.

QUESTION 3

- (a) Ukuzakhela izinsiza kufunda nokufundisa (uma kungokuthi ziyashoda), ngokwakha kumbe kuletha izinto zangempela ukusiza abafundi ukuba baqonde okulindeleke kubo.
- (b) Ukusebenzisa amaqoqo ekilasi ngiqinisekise ukuthi wonke umfundi uthatha ingxenye eqoqweni.
Lokhu ngizobe ngikwenzela wonke umfundi ukuthi akwazi ukuzazi lapho enekhono baphinde bakwazi ukuzethemba nokuzimela.
- (c) Kuba nokuthuka kolwazi ngendikimba yeviki.
Ukuthuka kwezinga lokufunda
Ukuthuka kwezinhlobo ezehlukene zamakhono

QUESTION 4

- (a) Ukuhlela ngokucocphelela ukubheka izidingo vzabo bonke abafundi.
Ukuzibandakanya ngokuthi udlale nabo.
Ukuzakhela izinsiza kufunda nokufundisa imidlalo
- (b) Ube ngumholi emidlalweni ukukhombisa okumele bakwenze.
Ukwehla ube sezingeni labafundi, udlale kanye nabo imidlalo ize iphele.
- (c) Kubaluleke kakhulu ngoba kuqinisa kuphinde kukhulise ubudlelwano phakathi kwakho nabafundi naphakathi kwabafundi bebodwa.
Kubuye kusize abafundi bagqugquzeleke ngokuthi babe nothando lokudlala.
Kubenze babone ukubaluleka komdlalo kubo uma nothisha edlala.

ANNEXURE D: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(Participant)

Project Title The foundation phase teachers' understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R at schools in the Umkhanyakude District

Hildagard, Sizakele Mzimela (Name of researcher/ person administering the research instrument) from the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above – mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project to.....
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards **(state expected value or benefits to society or individuals that will arise from the research)**
4. I will participate in the project by **(state full details of what participant will be doing)**
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out – of pocket expenses will be reimbursed. **(Should there be compensation, provide details)**
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that.

- a. The following risks are associated with my participation..... (state full details of risks associated with the participation)
 - b. The following steps have been taken to prevent the risks:.....
 - c. There is a% chance of the risk materialising
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of a dissertation. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that names and identity of the participants will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
 9. I will not receive feedback / will receive in the form of a dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
 10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Hildagard, sizakele Mzimela, cell-phone number: 0604718647/0825048381.
 11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
 12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept.

I, have read the above information/ confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's content. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above mentioned project.

.....
Participant's signature

.....
Date:

ANNEXURE E: LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

P.O. Box 78374
Empangeni
3880
07 June 2014

The principal
X Primary School
P.O. Box
Hlabisa
3937

Dear Sir/ Madam

APPLICATION FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN YOUR IN YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Hildagard Sizakele Mzimela. I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Zululand. As part of my MEd Degree, I am intending to do research on the Grade R teachers' understanding of the importance of play in their teaching. The supervisor of the study is Dr J.N. Mashiya and the co-supervisor is Dr S.C.B. Xulu. The title of the study is: Foundation Phase Teachers Understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R in schools in the Umkhanyakude District.

The aims and objectives of this study are:

- To establish the extent to which Grade R teachers use play as a teaching strategy;
- To find out how Grade R teachers plan, incorporate and utilise play in their teaching;
- To ascertain how Grade R teachers identify an appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcomes; and
- To explore the teachers' understanding of the teachers' role in a play based approach.

I would like to request your permission to conduct interviews with educators and do observations as well. Permission to conduct this study has been obtained from the Department of Education. To preserve confidentiality of interviews, I will do the following:

- Names and identity of the participants and the school will be kept confidential.
- All data from this study will be kept secure.
- Participation in the study is voluntary, participants have the right to withdraw at any time and there is no penalty for that.

I will very much appreciate if given the opportunity to do the research.
Thank you for your attention.

Yours Sincerely

Signature.

ANNEXURE F: LETTER TO TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

P.O. Box 78374
Empangeni
3880
7 June 2014

Umkhanyakuse District
Hlabisa Circuit Management
Empembeni Circuit

Dear Educator

My name is Hildagard Sizakele Mzimela. I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Zululand. As part of my MEd Degree, I am intending to do research on the Grade R teachers' understanding of the importance of play in their teaching. The supervisor of the study is Dr J.N. Mashiya and the co-supervisor is Dr S.C.B. Xulu. The title of the study is: Foundation Phase Teachers Understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R in schools in the Umkhanyakude District.

The aims and objectives of this study are:

- To establish the extent to which Grade R teachers use play as a teaching strategy;
- To find out how Grade R teachers plan, incorporate and utilise play in their teaching;
- To ascertain how Grade R teachers identify an appropriate play to achieve the lesson outcomes; and
- To explore the teachers' understanding of the teachers' role in a play based approach.

I would like to invite you to participate in the study by answering interview questions and giving permission to be observed in your classroom. Permission to conduct this study has been obtained from the Department of Education. To preserve confidentiality of interviews, I will do the following:

- Names and identity of the participants and the school will be kept confidential.
- All data from this study will be kept secure.
- Participation in the study is voluntary, participants have the right to withdraw at any time and there is no penalty for that.

I will very much appreciate if given the opportunity to do the research.
Thank you for your attention.

Yours Sincerely
Signature.

H.S. Mzimela (Researcher)

.....

Signature

.....

Supervisor's Signature

Educators' consent

If you agree to participate please indicate by filling in your details below:

Surname and initials :

Persal No.

: _____

Signature

: _____

ANNEXURE G: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

**UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**
(Reg No: UZREC 171110-30- RA Level 02)



RESEARCH & INNOVATION
Website: <http://www.unizulu.ac.za>
Private Bag X1001
KwaDlangezwa 3886
Tel: 035 902 6887
Fax: 035 902 6222
Email: ManqeleS@unizulu.ac.za

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Certificate Number	UZREC 171110-030-RA Level 02 PGM 2014/142			
Project Title	Then foundation phase teacher's understanding of play in the teaching of Grade R at schools at schools in the uMkhanyakude district			
Principal Researcher/ Investigator	HS Mzimela			
Supervisor and Co-supervisor	Dr JN Mashiya		Dr SCX Xulu	
Department	Education			
Nature of Project	Honours/4 th Year	Master's	x	Doctoral
				Departmental

The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project proposal and the documents listed on page 2 of this Certificate.

- Special conditions:**
- (1) The Principal Researcher must report to the UZREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.
 - (2) Documents marked "To be submitted" (see page 2) must be presented for ethical clearance before any data collection can commence.

The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this Certificate, using the reference number indicated above, but may not conduct any data collection using research instruments that are yet to be approved.

Please note that the UZREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the UZREC
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

Classification:

Data collection	Animals	Human Health	Children	Vulnerable pp.	Other
X					
Low Risk		Medium Risk		High Risk	
		X			

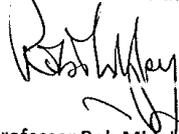
The table below indicates which documents the UZREC considered in granting this Certificate and which documents, if any, still require ethical clearance. (Please note that this is not a closed list and should new instruments be developed, these would require approval.)

Documents	Considered	To be submitted	Not required
Faculty Research Ethics Committee recommendation	X		
Animal Research Ethics Committee recommendation			X
Health Research Ethics Committee recommendation			X
Ethical clearance application form	X		
Project registration proposal	X		
Informed consent from participants	X		
Informed consent from parent/guardian			X
Permission for access to sites/information/participants	X		
Permission to use documents/copyright clearance			X
Data collection/survey instrument/questionnaire	X		
Data collection instrument in appropriate language		Only if necessary	
Other data collection instruments		Only if used	

The UZREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Certificate if
 - Any unethical principles or practices are revealed or suspected
 - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
 - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require
 - The conditions contained in this Certificate have not been adhered to
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting the research.


 Professor Rob Midgley
 Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation
 Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee
 10 December 2014

CHAIRPERSON
UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND RESEARCH
ETHICS COMMITTEE (UZREC)
 REG NO: UZREC 171110-80

11 -12- 2014

RESEARCH & INNOVATION OFFICE

Certificate of editing

This is to certify that I, the undersigned, have edited the language of the following dissertation:

'THE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF PLAY IN THE TEACHING OF GRADE R AT SCHOOLS IN THE UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICTY' by Hildagard Sizakele Mzimela.

Mr J.F Magwaza


.....

BA: English and Linguistics

MA: African Languages and Linguistics (Wits)

Tel: 035 9026877

Cell: 0712061565

19/02/2016

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Proof Of Registration

No : 19962056
04-MAR-2015Name: Mrs HS Mzimela
P O Box 78374EMPANGENI
3880

Qualifications And Subjects

Code		Amount	
306ZZZ	M. Ed	0.00	D
ECI700	CURRICULUM & INSTRUC STUDIES-M	0.00	D
306ZZZ	M. Ed	0.00	D
ECI700	CURRICULUM & INSTRUC STUDIES-M	0.00	D

Ref Other Transactions

306ZZZ	REGISTRATION FEES/LEVIES	1453.00	D
306ZZZ	REGISTRATION FEES/LEVIES	1345.00	D

Total For This Registration		2798.00	D
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This only reflects costs for this registration.
This is not a statement of the account.

Student Does Not Have a Record In The Card System,
Or Record Has an End Date.