EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN A RURAL CIRCUIT OF VHEMBE DISTRICT

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Abstract - Foundation Phase (Grade R-3) teachers carry the responsibility of building a strong foundation in the learning of English, especially in Grade 3 because it is an exit grade to the Intermediate Phase. This paper aims to explore the experiences, identify the challenges and determine strategies to enable competent and effective teaching of English First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase. The paper adopted a qualitative design. The population comprised all the Foundation Phase English First Additional Language teachers in the primary schools in a circuit. A purposive sample of eight primary schools in the circuit was used and one educator from each identified school formed part of the study. An open-ended questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Data were analysed according to the emerged themes. The study found out that most of the English First Additional Language teachers were not English Home language speakers; therefore, teaching English FAL in the Foundation Phase proved to be challenging to them. It was also found out that teachers' lack of English content knowledge and understanding make them to solely depend on textbook materials. The paper recommends that the Department of Basic Education organises credit- bearing courses for Foundation Phase English First Additional Language teachers. Adequate resources and more efficient and effective in-service teacher trainings should be provided.

Key words - competent,credit-bearing,in-service training, proficient