

**READING DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY LEARNERS IN THE
FOUNDATION PHASE IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN MAKAPANSTAD**

by

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DECLARATION

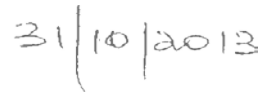
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I, **BELLA DUDULA HLALETHWA** declare that the dissertation **READING DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY LEARNERS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN MAKAPANSTAD** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.



SIGNATURE

(HLALETHWA B.D.)



DATE

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ABSTRACT

Literature indicates that there is a national outcry about learners who read below the required levels and that poor matriculation results are, in part, due to the low levels of learners' reading skills. The focus of this study is reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in inclusive schools in Makapanstad.

The researcher used a qualitative method for the study. The case study research design was adopted for the study. Three schools in Makapanstad were sampled for the study. Empirical investigation was conducted through literature study, observations, interviews and document analysis.

There is a worldwide concern with regard to learners' low reading levels. The study explores the extensive models, methods and theories on reading, the strategies that could be used to teach reading in the Foundation Phase to alleviate or improve reading difficulties experienced by learners, as well as the findings and recommendations towards minimising the reading difficulties in primary schools.

KEY CONCEPTS

Inclusive education; learners with reading difficulties; teaching reading; qualitative research; Foundation Phase; reading level.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APO	Area Project Office
CAPS	Continuous Assessment Policy Statement
COLTS	Culture of Learning and Teaching Services
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District Based Support Team
DoE	Department of Education
FFL	Foundations For Learning
FP	Foundation Phase (Grade R – 3)
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head Of Department
ILST	Institutional Level Support Team
LAIP	Learning Attainment Improvement Programme
LTSM	Learner Teacher Support Material
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NRS	National Reading Strategy
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SANLI	South African National Literacy Initiative
SES	Subject Education Specialist

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

For most people living in today's modern world, reading is an everyday ordinary task to which little thought is given, yet it is one of the most important skills that learners acquire at school as it forms the foundation for all further learning. Unlike the ability to speak, the one to read is not inborn, and a learner does not acquire it simply by watching and listening to others reading. Many of our day-to-day tasks require reading, and a person who can read well can function more effectively in everyday activities, yet for an illiterate person, many of life's seemingly mundane and ordinary tasks which many literate people take for granted can become insurmountable hurdles (Darrel, 2005:4).

Reading is a technical process because we read letter by letter and word by word. It is automatic information processing, for we decode each word and comprehend it as we build understanding of the sentence through combining their individual meaning. It is a linguistic process, as we are engaged users of language. It is a transactional process as the reader brings meaning to the text and constructs personal meaning through exchange with the author. It is an active search for meaning that involves the relationship between thought and language, and a cultural process in that what counts as acceptable reading practice is culturally defined (Davenport, 2002:5).

Oberholzer (2005:2) describes 'reading' as the basic life skill and a cornerstone for a learner's success at school and throughout life, whilst for Johnson, Bohlman & Pretorius (2002:205), it is an essential learning tool which if learners have not properly mastered will handicap their potential for success in a learning context. Nel & Nel in Nel, Nel & Hugo (2012:89) define reading as comprehending, interpreting, and applying textual material. In the context of this study, the term 'reading difficulties' refers to a lack of reading development that could be expected in a learner with normal vision, hearing, and normal or above normal intelligence.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to Oberholzer (2005:2), reading is a cornerstone of the child's success at school and throughout life. Vaughn, Bos & Schum (2000:313) point out that learners who struggle to read or to master reading concepts in the elementary school years (early grades) are often discouraged in the world of school and eventually dropout without mastering basic skills. These learners are led to believe that success in school is beyond their reach. Early and sustained failure in reading can have devastating consequences regarding schooling for the lives of poor readers and their families, and for the socio-economic life of the community (Vaughn, Bos & Schum, 2000:313). The researcher has observed that most learning at school depends largely on reading competence, which is a challenge to most learners in schools.

Despite the perceived importance of reading and considerable efforts of teachers and other stakeholders across the country, research findings indicate that there are many learners who experience reading difficulties. For some, letters and words create confusion rather than meaning, for others a failure to develop the prerequisite skill and knowledge prevents them from becoming good readers (Johnson, Pool & Carter 2013:1; Martin & Carvalho, 2008:114).

As a full-time Foundation Phase teacher in a school in a rural area of Makapanstad, the researcher has observed that most learners in the area experience reading difficulties and as a result drop out of school. In some schools the learners have to attend extra classes on Saturdays to compensate for their deficit in their reading skills. Locally, the problem is often raised in principals' meetings, teacher forums, union meetings, in-service trainings/workshops and in the media. At school level, intermediate phase teachers blame Foundation Phase teachers for not teaching learners the basic reading skills. At a meeting organised by the Northwest Provincial Coordinator of Foundations For Learning (FFL) and Quality assurance (QLTC) in Moretele Area Project Office (APO) for professional support, held in 2013, Foundation Phase teachers from Makapanstad Central stated that they were confused and no longer knew what, how or when to teach reading. This motivated the researcher to conduct this study on the Foundation Phase, where basic reading skills should be inculcated.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Baatjies (2003:1) states that the most important element of high quality education is literacy and that without the ability to read, learners are denied pertinent information about health, social, cultural and political issues, as well as sources of pleasure and enrichment. Reading is important for learning as it gives learners independent access to a vast world of information as well as fulfilment and enjoyment (Gunning, 2007:3). The national Department of Education (DoE) acknowledges that reading is part of nation-building and that it is the most important linguistic skill that needs to be developed in young learners (DoE, 2008(a):5). For Schmidt, Rozendal & Green (2002:131), the ability to read is a critical component of school success and a strong correlation exists between poor reading ability and school failure. Reading is essential for learning and if learners have not properly mastered the skill their potential for success in the learning context is hampered (Bohlman & Pretorius, 2002:205; Martin & Carvalho, 2008:114).

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand supported the notion that every child in every country should have the chance to obtain at least primary education (Bruns, Mingat & Rakotomalala, 2003:1). The United Nations' Education For All (EFA) is fundamentally committed to ensuring that children, youth and adults gain the knowledge and skills they need to improve their lives and to play a role in building more peaceful and equitable societies. For quality learning to occur, reading and reading achievement are amongst the basic requirements (Wagner, 2011:15 & 18), yet in some schools this remains simply an ambition.

Internationally, research indicates that there is a growing concern in many countries around the world that learners lack the necessary reading abilities to make success of their academic years at school and at tertiary levels institutions. In the United States of America (USA), 40% of children experience significant problems in becoming competent readers, and 40% of fourth graders and eighth graders fail to read at the level considered basic to grade-level school work (Hugo, le Roux, Muller & Nel, 2005:210). In Francophone Guinea only one out of ten learners knew the entire alphabet by the end of grade 2, and the average learner could read only four of the 20 words presented. From samples in Peru it was found that only 25% of grade 1 and 45% of grade 2 learners were able to read single alphabets and simple words (Abadzi, 2008:4). According to Houtveen & Van de Grift (2007:405), in an international comparative study of reading comprehension, Dutch students achieved a higher average performance level than their European counterparts, with only 7% unable to read well enough to function independently in wider society compared to the European average of just over 17%.

Research in South Africa indicates that, in general, learners' reading skills are poorly developed, and this applies from primary school through to tertiary level (Pretorius & Machet, 2004:47). Research reports indicate that many young learners have a reading problem and that there has long been a misunderstanding about the role of the teacher in teaching reading, whether with Curriculum 2005 or the National curriculum Statement (NCS). Many teachers have believed that they do not have to "teach" reading but simply "facilitate" the process, believing that learners would teach themselves to read. Also, many simply did not know how to teach reading (Hugo, 2010:133; DoE 2008(b):5, 8).

South Africa participated in an international assessment study of reading literacy that investigated how well grade 4 learners read and made a nationwide comparison of their achievement. The results suggested that they were struggling to develop the competencies necessary to make a successful transition to using reading as a tool for learning and academic success (Zimmerman, Howie & Smit, 2013:218). In 2001 and 2004, two national systemic evaluations to establish literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools showed low levels of reading ability across the country (DoE, 2008(b):4), whilst a further one, in 2008, based on the results of 1,000 grade 3 classes, indicated that eight out of every 10 learners obtained less than 50% for language skills and mathematics, and 35% of Grade 3 learners countrywide obtained between 0% and 34% for literacy, which included reading (Hugo, 2010:133).

In the latest Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), conducted in 2006, in which 40 countries participated, South Africa's score was the lowest. The findings highlighted concerns about reading literacy teaching quality in South African primary schools (Hugo, 2010:133). According to Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Sherman and Acher (2007:218), only 13% of the Grade 4 learners reached the low international benchmark, in stark contrast to the 94% internationally. Therefore, 87% did not reach any of the benchmarks. Analysis also showed that more than half of the English and Afrikaans speaking learners, and over 80% of African language speakers, did not reach the low international benchmark, meaning they lacked basic reading skills and strategies to cope with academic tasks. The results imply that primary schools in South Africa face great challenges in assisting learners towards attaining optimum development of their reading abilities.

In response to the reports, the Minister of Education barred South African schools' from participating in all surveys for a period of four years (that is from 2008-2011), while engaging in several campaigns to remedy and improve the current situation, such as the *ithuteng* 'ready to learn' campaign; the culture of learning and teaching services campaign (COLTS); the South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI); and *Masifundesonke*, the National Reading Strategy and the Foundations for Learning campaign; and others.

For this study, the researcher will focus on the following specific campaigns:

- **Foundation for learning Campaign (FFL):** launched in 2008 as a four-year campaign to create a national focus to improve the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children, it aims to improve the rate of literacy and numeracy skills to no less than 50%, that is an improvement of between 15-20%, and culminating at the end of 2011 with a national evaluation to assess the literacy and numeracy levels of Grades 3 and 6 learners in South African Schools (*Government Gazette*, 2008:4). The campaign proposes that learners and teachers must be engaged in the exercise of ceasing all other activities and reading for 30 minutes daily in schools (DoE, 2008a:1).
- **Quality Improvement Development Support and Upliftment Programme (QIDS-UP):** an affirmative action programme targeting and serving high - poverty school communities in which the quality of education is compromised due to lack of resources, both human and physical, and improvements are ensured through support and provision of resources (DoE, 2008b:1).
- **Culture of Learning Teaching and Service (COLTS) campaign:** launched in 2009 with the intention of ensuring quality teaching and learning was implemented for all the learners in the communities (Baatjies 2003:2).
- **National Reading Strategy (NRS):** launched in 2008, was intended to promote reading across the curriculum, to inculcate a reading culture amongst learners and teachers by providing support and resources, and to promote a nation of lifelong readers (DoE, 2008a:5).
- **Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC):** launched in 2009 with the intention of ensuring quality teaching and learning for all learners in the school communities (DoE, 2008(c):3).

- **Learner Attainment Improvement Plan (LAIP):** introduced in 2005 by the Northwest Department of Education as an effort to deal with the underperformance of schools and the high failure rate of learners (DoE, 2010:2).
- **Department of Basic Education's Action Plan for 2014:** clearly explains the 27 national goals at the heart of a plan which deals with the attainment of better school results (DoE, 2012:4).

These campaigns were meant to improve the reading proficiency levels of South African learners, however, the researcher has realised that amidst the governmental initiatives to improve the reading levels the problem is still rife, especially in deep rural areas in which the researcher is located. The researcher has also observed that learners who experience reading difficulties often fall behind their peers, to the point that their reading difficulties become intractable, hence the study.

The value of reading is so much part of modern society and well integrated into the country's education system that educational success is almost synonymous with reading success. A sound reading ability is the gateway to the acquisition and expansion of knowledge, however, there are learners for whom reading is a struggle. These learners are referred to in this study as 'learners who experience reading difficulties'. The researcher's passion and interest as a Foundation Phase teacher provides further motivation to investigate reading difficulties experienced by learners in selected primary schools in Makapanstad. The study will explore the causes and factors affecting reading levels, efficient and effective ways of helping learners to read well during their elementary years i.e. beginning school years (Foundation Phase) of schooling, and strategies to help improve reading levels.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Bohlman and Pretorius (2002:205) infer that reading is essential for learning and that if learners have not properly mastered this learning tool their potential for success in the learning context is handicapped. Given the pivotal role reading plays in and out of school and the cumulative long-term cost of deficiencies in literacy, intervention is critical, especially at the Foundation Phase. Learners who do not learn how to read during their elementary school years have difficulty in navigating the school curriculum during upper grades (senior, high school & senior grades) upper grades (Schmidt, Rozendal & Green, 2002:131).

International research indicates that in most developing countries illiteracy is a severe problem and more than half of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have no literacy skills (Hugo, le Roux, Muller & Nel, 2005:210 and Abadzi, 2008:4). Various reports on systemic evaluation conducted by the DoE and international research bodies on learners' reading levels indicate that South African learners are reading far below age-appropriate expected levels (DoE, 2008(a):2).

Hugo et al. (2005:210) point out that there is a growing concern nationally that South African learners lack the necessary language and reading abilities to achieve success in their academic years in schools and tertiary institutions. Those who have experienced Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) are either reading far below the average or cannot read at all; they are weak and cannot express themselves well in writing; OBE is missing the 'three Rs' (i.e., 'Reading, writing and arithmetic').

Vaughn, Wanzek, Woodruff & Thompson (2007:11) argue that learners who do not learn to read in their first and second grades are likely to be at risk of academic failure and dropping out of school. It is therefore important to analyse reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase if these learners are to be helped to venture into learning without hindrance or fear. It is against this background that I wished to understand **reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in Makapanstad primary schools.**

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to explore reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in Makapanstad primary schools. The secondary objectives of this study are to:

- explore the causes of reading difficulties and factors influencing reading difficulties;
- determine the models, methods and approaches used to teach reading;
- explore the strategies that can be used to alleviate reading difficulties experienced by learners in Makapanstad primary schools.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given the general concerns about learners' low reading levels in this study, my main research question is:

- **What reading difficulties are experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in inclusive schools in Makapanstad?**

The secondary research questions are as follows:

1. What are probable causes of reading difficulties in the selected primary schools in Makapanstad?
2. What factors affects learners' reading levels?
3. What models, methods and approaches are used to teach reading?
4. What are the theories for teaching reading?
5. What are the strategies that can be used to alleviate reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in Makapanstad primary schools?

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The researcher chose a qualitative approach for this study, recommended by McMillan and Schumacher (2006:315) to be followed in "an enquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their setting". It describes and analyses people's individual and collective beliefs, social actions, and the meaning that they assign to them. Creswell (2008:20) describes the research design as a specific procedure involved in the research process, whereas for De Vos (2005:268) it comprises the decisions a researcher makes in planning a study.

The researcher selected a case study design, which Creswell (2008:465) defines as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection", and an important type of ethnography that provides insight into an issue or theme. For De Vos (2005:273) it is "the observation of a process, activity, event, programme or individual bound within a specific time and setting. According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:41), a case study design is employed to gain an-in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The researcher employed interactive qualitative methods which use face-to-face techniques to collect data from people in their natural

setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:26). The research design employed was an instrumental case study, which according to De Vos (2005:273) aims at acquiring a better understanding of a social issue. It deals with a case that provides insight into a theme or issue, studied with the purpose of illuminating it (Creswell, 2008:465). The issue in this study is: reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in Makapanstad primary schools.

1.7.1 Sampling

In qualitative studies, non-probability sampling methods are utilised and, in particular, purposive sampling techniques. In purposive sampling, a specific case is chosen because it illustrates a process that is of interest for a particular study (De Vos, 2003:374). The researcher employed purposive sampling, whereby participants from three primary schools in Makapanstad were selected according to their accessibility and relevancy, e.g., schools with remedial classes were preferred as they related to the research problem. Only one teacher per grade was selected in the Foundation Phase for the study, due to their relevance.

1.8 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In addition to literature review, the following methods were used to collect data:

1.8.1 Observations

The researcher conducted observations of reading lessons in the classrooms in order to enhance my understanding of the methods and strategies employed by teachers of reading. These qualitative observations provided detailed descriptions of the events, people, and actions in natural settings. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:40), observation consists of direct, eye-witness accounts of everyday social actions and settings in the form of field notes. In this study I gathered field notes by conducting observations and interviews, first as an outsider then as a participant and observer, in order to analyse the methods used by teachers of reading in the Foundation Phase, and to assess their relevance and efficacy.

Participant observation is fundamental to all the research methods and is typical of the qualitative research paradigm). It implies that data cannot be reduced to figures, therefore, ethnographers attempt to be both emotionally engaged participants and coolly dispassionate observers in the lives of others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:673; De Vos, 2005:278-279). The researcher used participant observation to determine the extent of reading difficulties in the classified schools and to explore their possible causes and different models and approaches used to teach reading.

1.8.2 Interviews

Interviewing is the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research (De Vos, 2005:292). The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with the participants and used a voice recorder so that the interviews could later be transcribed. The researcher used an interview guide, semi-structured, and open-ended interviews to inform the research questions and to elicit participants' perspectives on the research problem. These interviews helped the researcher to understand the world of the participants, to appreciate the severity of reading difficulties experienced in their schools, to identify support systems in place and to provide guidelines for teaching reading efficiently.

1.8.3 Document analysis

The researcher analysed school documents such as records of assessment, progression and retention schedules, learners' portfolios, intervention forms, workbooks, graded reading books, and progress reports in order to understand the severity of their reading difficulties.

1.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher transcribed data, arranged transcriptions of it into file folders for easy access, then used a coding system as well as themes and sub-themes to analyse it. The researcher used field notes accumulated during observations and recordings made during the interviews to analyse the data, quoting the participants' responses verbatim in order to confirm or make a statement and to give substance to the findings. The researcher also recorded details of the context surrounding the problem, including the physical environment and any factors (historical, economic and social) with a bearing on the situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:135, 139). In order to get an overall picture of the

severity of the problem, the researcher analysed the official documents including recording sheets/continuous reading assessments, interventions forms and quarterly analysis of results.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited to schools in semi-rural areas in Makapanstad Central. Only three primary schools were selected, mainly because of their poor accessibility and financial constraints. Schools with remedial classes were preferred, and the research was confined to Foundation Phase learners because research indicates that most of the reading difficulties are observed and experienced in that particular phase.

1.11 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.11.1 Inclusive education

Nel, Nel & Hugo in Nel, Nel & Hugo, (2012:11), define Inclusive education as “a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners, irrespective of their race, class, gender, religion, culture, sexual preferences, learning styles and language” while Nutbrown & Clough (2006:3), define inclusion as “a drive towards maximal participation in and minimal exclusion from early years setting, from schools and from society.

In the past, learners with special intellectual, physical or emotional needs were largely excluded from the curriculum. Changes in educational policy for learners with special needs are the results of public awareness. Public schools are required by law to provide “appropriate educational experiences” for all learners, including those with emotional, physical, intellectual, and /or cognitive processing problems (Gillet, Temple, Temple & Crawford, 2012:429).

According to Thomas & Vaughan (2004:132), the traditional pattern of most National Educational system has been to divide education into regular and special provision in ways that were usually to the disadvantage of learners with disabilities or learning difficulties. They further state that Inclusive education is about rejecting segregation or exclusion of learners for whatever reasons, it is about maximising the participation of all learners in the school of their choice, and making learning more meaningful and relevant for all, particularly those learners most vulnerable to exclusionary pressures and lastly, it

is about restructuring practices in schools and learning environments so that diverse learning needs can be met (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004:132).

1.11.2 Learners with reading difficulties

The Oxford dictionary explains the word “learner” to be a person who is learning to do something. In the context of this study, learner refers to school beginners and children between the ages of 6-12 at primary school level. According to the World Book Encyclopaedia (1994), “reading” is an act or process of getting the meaning of written or printed words and the word “difficulty” as a thing that is hard to do or understand and “reading difficulties” refers to problems associated with reading which can either be the mechanical skill of the reading process or the comprehension of what is being read. In this study, learners experiencing reading difficulties are those who are not reading at the required or expected levels for their chronological age, and those who often fall behind their peers in terms of reading requirements and expectations.

Rowling in Lerner & Johns (2009:381) infers that reading is so critical to success in our society that reading difficulties, not only constitutes an educational problem but also give rise to public health problem and further states that, it is critical to identify learners with reading difficulties early and provide them with appropriate intervention as early and timely identification of these learners are essential for maximising success in reading acquisition skills.

1.11.3 Teaching reading

A contentious issue regarding approaches for teaching reading involves the controversy between the whole language reading instruction (also known as the literature-based instruction) and skills based reading instruction that includes phonics. The underlying philosophy of the whole language reading instruction approach was that learners should learn to read in the same way they learned to talk and that by being involved in numerous books and stories and having many experiences listening to stories, they can learn to read in a natural way whereas skills –based reading instruction requires learners to recognise words and, that words are made of speech sounds (phonics that refers to the relationship between printed letters and sounds). Phonics involves learning the correspondence of language sounds to written letters and applying that knowledge in recognizing words and reading. Learning word recognition skills early, lead to wider reading abilities in school and out of school. Learners who are taught phonics directly and systematically in the early grades, receives higher scores on reading achievement

than learners who do not receive this instruction (Rowling in Lerner & Johns, 2009: 387 & 404)

Learning to read is not a natural process like other developmental achievement, but it is a lengthy process that takes several years and requires careful instruction and learner's perseverance. Reading is a basic skill for all academic subjects and failure in school can be traced back to inadequate reading skills (Rowling in Lerner & Johns, 2009:382).

1.11.4 Reading level

According to Shanker & Cockrum (2009:2), all learners should be taught, and should practice, reading at an appropriate level of difficulty so that they can experience frequent success and that, all too often, learners are expected to read material that is much too difficult for them and from these experiences they learn only frustrations instead of learning how to read successfully. Lapp et al in Nel, Nel & Hugo (2012:101), state that a number and types of errors a learner makes during oral reading, is an indication of the learner's reading level and that learners come to class with different levels of readiness, interest and learning profiles and for educators to improve the learner's reading levels, the reading material need to suit the learner's reading level.

1.11.5 Foundation Phase

The term "Foundation Phase" refers to the early stages of formal learning. In the context of this study, the term 'Foundation Phase' refers specifically to early grades of schooling, namely grades 1, 2 and 3 (National Education Policy Act 27 Of 1996: A-32)

1.11.6 Qualitative Researcher

McMillan & Schumacher (2006:315), define qualitative research as "an enquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their natural settings. Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. With qualitative research, the researcher interprets phenomena in terms of the meanings that people that people assigns to them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:315).

1.12 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

In order to make sure that the findings and interpretations throughout the data collection and analysis are accurate, credible and trustworthy, I employed the following strategies. To help evaluate or increase legitimacy I prolonged engagement by conducting the study for a time sufficient to obtain an adequate representation of the voices under study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006:239). I also used triangulation for purposes of credibility, which is using different methods to corroborate evidence (Creswell, 2008:25,267; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006:239). The researcher checked the findings with participants in the study and used a tape-recorder to provide accurate data and evidence (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:326). Where possible, participants were quoted verbatim, with translations and clarification in order to give substance to the findings.

1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Most ethical issues in research fall into four categories: protection from harm, informed consent, right to privacy, and honesty with professional colleagues. The researcher did not expose research participants to any harm or subject them to stress. Permission to conduct research was sought from the DoE Northwest (Moretele APO), from the principals of selected schools and was granted (See Appendices). Participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the study so that they could make informed judgements on whether or not to participate. They were duly informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they could pull out from the research any time they wished without repercussions.

Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' privacy and I assured them that the data collected would not be disclosed without their permission. The researcher has reported the process in a completely honest fashion without misleading professional colleagues about the findings. The participants were requested to complete informed consent forms (See appendix) in which they agreed to partake in the research and were informed that they could withdraw from participating in the research whenever they wished.

1.14 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation has been divided into five chapters.

Chapter One has provided a brief introduction to the topic, the background and rationale for the study, supported by the preliminary literature review. It presented the problem statement, research aims and objectives, research methods and designs, data collection and analysis, concluding with a brief discussion of measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the study, ethical considerations and a brief summary of the chapter.

Chapter Two will review the literature relevant to the study, the international perspectives on reading difficulties, the levels of reading in South Africa as well as the probable causes and factors affecting reading; models and methods used for teaching reading; the approaches of teaching reading and the theories of teaching reading; and initiatives by the DoE to alleviate reading difficulties in the selected schools.

Chapter Three will explore the research design of the study, including the research methodology, population and sampling, data collection strategies and analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the research, including descriptions of the schools that participated, the culture and attitude towards teaching and learning in them, the methods of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase, and discussion of the findings.

Chapter Five is an overview of the study, with findings and recommendations for strategies that can be used to teach reading.

1.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the problem statement and the rationale for the study, followed by the research aims, methodology and design and lastly the limitations of the study and ethical considerations. In the next chapter the researcher will provide a discussion on the literature review to learn about the contributions of other scholars on reading difficulties and to get a better understanding and clarifications on the project under study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter provides a brief introduction of reading concepts, the current state of reading internationally, in African and locally, the factors influencing reading, the models and approaches for teaching reading as well as theories. Lastly, a brief summary concludes the chapter.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

According to Nel, Nel & Hugo (2012:89), being a proficient reader is a fundamental requirement to succeed in life and since reading is a basic skill for all the academic subjects failure in school can be traced back to inadequate reading skills. In a formal school situation much of school learning takes place in the form of reading, whether from the chalkboard, the textbook or the media, and being a proficient reader is a fundamental requirement in life. Nel *et al* (2005:89) and Gunning (2007:3) state that reading is 'magical' as it is an opening to a vast world of information, fulfilment and enjoyment, and after having learned to read a person is not the same.

2.2.1 Reading difficulties

Lovett, Steinbach & Frijters (2000:335) state that a reading difficulty is an individual's failure to acquire rapid, context-free word identification skills, whilst for Shaywitz & Shaywitz (2004:8) it is characterised as an unexpected obstacle in reading for children who possess the intelligence, motivation and education necessary for developing accurate and fluent reading. The term 'reading difficulties' is, in most instances, equated or used synonymously with 'reading problems', and in the context of this study the former refers to problems associated with reading, whether it be the mechanical skill of the reading process or the comprehension of what is being read.

Many young people in South Africa are led to believe that success in school is beyond their reach. Learners who struggle to learn to read are often discouraged in the world of school, eventually dropping out without mastering this basic skill (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2000:313). This among others spurred the researcher's curiosity of

investigating the causes of and factors influencing the reading difficulties. According to Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana (2002:342), a learner may have difficulty in perceiving visual differences between similar letter shapes, for example b/d or their specific order, for example seeing “girl” and not “girl”. He/she may have difficulty in perceiving auditory differences in the sounds that these letters represent, for example that b= “b” and not “d”, or their specific sound order. There might be a difficulty in finding the right sound(s) to relate to the letter(s), or in blending different sounds together into whole words (th +i + nk + s = thinks). All the skills mentioned require adequate visual and auditory perception, as well as memory.

Information on the grammatical structure of the language needs to be understood, particularly the flow of written language and its grammar, if learners are to progress beyond reading isolated sounds or bits of words without connection to each other. Lastly, information from the meaning of the material helps the learner to recognise individual words, to put phrases and sentences together holistically and to comprehend all of what he/she is reading (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:342 & 343).

When a student has difficulty with vocabulary or wider concepts and meaning, the reading progress becomes severely restricted or hampered (Donald et al., 2002:343). Given the pivotal role reading plays in and out of school and the cumulative long-term cost of literacy, intervention is critical, especially at the Foundation Phase, so the educational programme has great potential as an asset for promoting the success of the nation’s children. It provides a measurable return on the public’s investment (Pianta, Cox & Snow, 2007:7).

2.3 CURRENT STATE OF READING INTERNATIONALLY

It is difficult to obtain an undistorted or complete picture of reading difficulties around the world, as much of the literature is in the home languages and data bases tend to be national and of limited accessibility. For years the media have published complaints about the poor state of reading in American schools, stating that there are learners who are struggling to learn to read across the USA, whilst legislators, businessmen, parents and teachers are searching for ways to address the dilemma, with others recommending that reading specialists be employed to work with struggling readers, as well as to provide support to classroom teachers (Bean, 2004:1).

2.3.1 The United States

On the International Educational Achievement study, American nine-year-olds scored second in the world, surpassed only by children from Finland. Fifteen-year-olds tied for fifth place behind New Zealand, France, Sweden and Finland. The study indicates that 40% of the fourth graders could not read at this basic level, even in narrative text under the supervision of teachers, and that for black learners and Hispanic learners results were even worse, with 69% of black fourth graders and 64% of Hispanic fourth graders unable to read at basic levels. In higher grades, 30% of the eighth graders and 25% of the twelfth graders on the 1996 NAEP survey lacked the basic reading ability (Temple *et al* 2005:4).

Mathes, Torgesen and Mor, cited in Hugo *et al* (2005:210), state that 40% of children in the United States of America (USA) experience significant problems in becoming competent readers, and more than 40% of fourth and eighth graders fail to read at the level considered basic to performing grade-level schoolwork. In 2002, the United States Department of Education reported that of the 2,887,217 school-aged children receiving services for learning disabilities, the majority of whom were identified as having a learning disability because of the developmental delays in reading (Martin Carvalho, 2008:113). The estimated prevalence rates of reading difficulties in the USA, Britain and New Zealand ranges between 13% and 17%, and vary according to the definitional criteria used. Even with appropriate early interventions, approximately 4-6% could still be expected to experience reading difficulties (Torgessen, 2000:56, 63).

The large-scale national assessment of learner's reading skills in the United States indicate that, a substantial percentage of learners were not acquiring or maintaining grade-level reading skills. This is reflected in the National Assessment of Educational Progress' results conducted by the National Centre for Education Statistics (2010-2011), with 33% of fourth grade learners, 24% of eighth grade learners and 26% of twelfth grade learners scoring below the basic levels in reading. They further indicated that the reading below the grades was the highest in learners from the low-income group. The results indicate substantial continuity between early reading skills and later reading skills, suggesting that efforts to improve learner's reading skills should focus on the development of learner's early reading skills (Lonigan, Purpura, Wilson, Walker & Menchetti, 2012:112).

2.3.2 The Netherlands

Dutch students achieved high average performance levels in an international comparative study of reading comprehension conducted in 2001, but these high average performance levels hide some significant undesirable differences. About 7% of Dutch fifteen-year-olds could not read well enough to function independently in wider society. The European's average for the same category was just over 17% (Houtveen & Van de Grief, 2003:405). This is an indication that reading difficulties experienced by learners are issues of international concern and warrant undivided attention and focus.

2.3.3 New Zealand

Although New Zealand fares well in international comparisons of reading achievement and was ranked fourth behind the USA, Sweden and Finland, it also demonstrates a relatively widespread range of reading scores in comparison to other countries. For example, in the Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS), New Zealand was ranked 13 out of 35 countries and 16% of the national learner's scores were in the bottom quartile (Tumner, Chapman & Prochnow, 2004:127).

According to Baker (2008:192), the majority of learners identified as having reading difficulties in early grades will continue to have reading difficulties in later grades if these learners do not receive appropriate interventions and remediation to prevent reading difficulties, and the overall academic success in later grades can be predicted with reasonable accuracy using reading outcomes in earlier grades.

2.4 CURRENT STATE OF READING IN AFRICA

It is argued that the reading situation in Africa (South Africa included), constitutes a serious educational crisis. Every year there is a public outcry over the low grade twelve marks and poor pass rates of secondary school learners. Although the reading skills of these final school year learners are not stated, their high failure rate suggests problems in their reading. Many of these learners then apply to study at tertiary institutions and yet because of their poor reading and English proficiency levels, they are poorly equipped to cope with the demands of study at tertiary level. (Howie, *et al* 2007:218).

2.4.1 Nigeria

Nigeria is a multilingual society with about 250 different languages, accompanied by many dialects. Such situations make for a comfortable adoption of the English language as the official language of instruction in schools. Nigerian children are faced with a complex task of learning to read in their home language and then the second language. In some schools, reading instruction in both languages is carried out simultaneously. Reading difficulties are inevitable as learners might become confused and frustrated when learning to read. It is the learner's first language that provides a rich foundation for second language learning. Nigerian primary school children are about three years behind their British or American counterparts and over 30 million Nigerians have graduated from high school with poor reading skills (Aina, Ogugbeni & Adigun, 2011:5).

2.4.2 Namibia

Namibian children learn to read formally in their mother tongue but learn English as a second language from grade one with an intention of developing strong literacy skills in English. However, when children enter grade four, they cannot read well in either their home language or English. This is confirmed by the report of the South African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) which found that grade six learners were unable to read texts with understanding, and that Namibia recorded the lowest reading performance in the South African Development Communities (SADC) region. The picture was even worse with only 25% of learners reaching the desired levels of reading competence (Mutenda, 2008:2).

2.4.3 Uganda

According to Nalusiba (2010:2), the first schools in Uganda were established by the Catholic and Protestants missions who aimed at training catechists. The education system underwent various reforms from mission schools to privately owned schools, until in 1997 when the Republic adapted the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme. Schools were characterised by overcrowding, unqualified teachers, lack of resources and instructional materials, and reading materials which were few and of low levels. Nalusiba (2010:3), further indicated that most learners in UPE Ugandan schools hardly read outside the school, since reading was not part of the curriculum and this impacted negatively on the learner's performances in and out of school, both in the language taught and other academic subjects.

2.4.4 South Africa

In South Africa there are many students studying at tertiary institutions whose levels of literacy are not in line with the academic standards demanded by their studies. In a research project conducted by the Students' Service Bureau of the University of the Orange Free State, the reading level of 60 first-year students was tested, not one being higher than grade eight, and 13 only able to read at grades one and two levels (Hugo *et al* 2005:211).

In another study conducted by the Unit for the Development of Language Abilities at the University of Pretoria, it was found that the language ability of 2,000 out of 6,000 first-year students was on the same level as or even lower than that of grade 7 learners. Some students also had poorly developed reading and writing skills, thus it is clear that there are many students in South Africa who might have the potential to study successfully at tertiary level but lack the necessary literacy skills, including reading, to guarantee academic success (Hugo *et al* 2005:211).

In 2001 and 2004 the national Department of Education (DoE) conducted two national systemic evaluations to establish the literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools. The findings of the evaluations revealed that 54% of grade 3 learners were not on par regarding reading competency. The surveys showed low levels of reading ability across the country. The average score for reading and writing of 52,000 grade 3 learners from 1,400 mainly urban schools was 39%. These statistics would be far worse in rural areas (DoE, 2008:4; Hugo *et al* 2005:210-211).

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) conducted an Annual National Assessment (ANA) in September 2012 on learners in grades 1-6 and grade 9 in Language and Mathematics. According to the diagnostic report, key findings were that learners could not read with comprehension, wrote words and sentences that were incoherent, and lacked the ability to make inferences from the given information in a text or to spell frequently used words correctly. The most striking weakness is the inability of learners to read with understanding (DoE, 2012:5).

The 2012 Annual National Assessments' qualitative analysis indicates that the North West province was the worst performing province in the country for literacy and numeracy levels in grades 3, 6, and 9. This is a challenge which compelled the provincial department of education to incorporate intervention activities through programmes such as LAIP (Learner Attainment Improvement programme) and QIDS-UP (Quality Improvement Development Support and Upliftment Programme), in an attempt to overcome and address the challenges and to help learners improve their performance (NWDoE), 2013:6).

2.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING READING

South African studies of academic achievement consistently find a strong and positive correlation between socio-economic background and academic performance. Children from poor families tend to perform poorly in tests of reading and mathematics and 25% of achievement is explainable in terms of the social background of the learners (Taylor, Fleisch & Shindler, 2008:2). Davin & Van Staden (2005:66-67), refer to the following as factors influencing reading namely the neurological factors, systemic factors and socio-economic factors, Language factors, personality factors and learning styles. For this study, the researcher focussed on the following factors:

2.5.1 Socio-Economic factors

Studies have shown that there are many different and usually very complex factors affecting learners' different reading levels, some of which are beyond the school influence (Geske & Ozola, 2008:72). Socio-economic factors exacerbating reading difficulties in South African schools are: family conditions, poverty, instability, resources, teacher competence, attitude towards education, working parent/s, collaboration of parents and their young ones (DoE, 2008:9, 28; Geske & Ozola, 2008:72).

2.5.1.1 Poverty

Family poverty can potentially impact negatively on students' academic performance. Students whose families live in poverty often come to school without their basic needs being met. The limitations poverty places on families are likely to negatively affect students' performance in school, for example with learners from poverty stricken families not being exposed to extra leisure reading as parents might not afford to buy books. Although the students' level of poverty does not automatically determine success or failure at school, a disproportionate number from low income families are less successful

in school and eventually drop out (DoE, 2008:28). Sadker & Sadker (2005:36), state that a learner who is hungry and tired will not learn as effectively as a well-nourished or rested one.

Washington (2001:217) notes that children from homes characterised by poverty are subject to high levels of environmental stress that can affect their functioning at school and can in turn affect their performance in reading. Geske and Ozola (2008:72) infer that the number of children in the family greatly influence the learner's reading level.

2.5.1.2 Family Instability

Many families experience changes, whether due to divorce, family mobility, lack of a permanent home, drug abuse, health, violence, parents who are at work most of the time, and/or parent illiteracy, but some changes in these families can be hazardous to students' emotional and physical wellbeing and to their progress in school (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2003:319-320; DoE, 2008:28). Learners from these environmental backgrounds who do not get enough support and guidance from parents, who are not exposed to books and are not motivated to read, are likely to develop a positive attitude towards reading. Collaboration between parents and children in reading story books and visiting a library together at a pre-school age already positively influences their reading levels (Geske & Ozola, 2008:72).

2.5.1.3 Resources

The findings of studies by Pretorius & Mampuru (2007:41) and Makoe (2007:60) attest to claims that South African schools are not well resourced with libraries and when they do exist most are without books. Learners therefore have little opportunity to read and spend most of their time in a print-poor environment. Learners from these environments are unable to acquire reading levels similar to or on par with their peers and often feel inferior or do not perform to the expected level.

2.5.2 Language factor

In South African schools, home language instruction is encouraged in the first four years of formal schooling (DoE, 2004:1), however, this is not always achieved as South Africa is a multilingual country and as a result learners are taught in a language which is either a second or third language. In such instances learners are unable to use the richness and

depth of their mother-tongue knowledge to enhance the reading experience and this affects reading efficiency.

Learners' level of language development is an important factor in their ability to read. Language skills are directly related to achievement at school and are divided into the following categories: vocabulary, language comprehension, correct language usage, correct sentence construction, reading and spelling. The home language education policy stipulates that learners should start learning at school in their home language until grade three. In most schools, the language of instruction changes from African languages to English, which means that more than 80% of South Africans learn in a language different from their home language (Howie, Venter & Van Staden, 2008:551). Hinkel (2005:566) states that for second language reading to take place the reader must have developed proficiency in that language.

2.5.3 Educational Factors

Parents' level of education influences learners' reading level. For example, A learner whose parents are educated is exposed to more books at home sees parents themselves reading and also becomes motivated to read. He or she also receives guidance and support from them, unlike learners whose parents are not well educated and have little or no interest in books (Geske & Ozola, 2008:72). Educational factors, such as exposure to print, opportunities to engage in literacy activities, quality of early reading instruction and opportunities for appropriate instruction, are identified as some of the factors that influence reading (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2003:347).

2.5.3.1 Teachers and the system

Research reports, according to Adler & Reed (2002:4) indicate that the most critical challenge to teacher education in South Africa is the limited "conceptual knowledge base" of many teachers. Teachers face increasing difficulties of being expected to deal supportively with learners whose lives are constituted by poor socio-economic conditions, who live with poverty, suffer from violence and AIDS, and have to rise above the challenges of diversity and inequality whilst being held responsible and accountable for their learner's performances in various kinds of high-stakes testing (Adler & Reed, 2002:5).

South Africa has an intriguing educational history. To enable scholars to gain deeper understanding of the study the researcher provides a brief historical glimpse into the state of education in South Africa in the post-apartheid era and recent developments in the education system. When the new government took office in 1994 it was faced with a number of tasks in dealing with the legacy of a fragmented, segregated, bureaucratic, authoritarian and inefficient system of education (Adler & Reed, 2002:33).

The South African government engaged in various educational changes (intended to redress the social injustices of the past regime) which focused on the integration of the syllabi to a single national core syllabus, and the change from a content-based to outcomes-based curriculum, which was adopted from various countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA (Bantwini, 2011:6).

The process was followed by the launch of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) in March 1997. In the year 2000, C2005 was reviewed and revised by an appointed task team which then launched Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2002 (Bantwini, 2011:6). The RNCS was also amended and later referred to as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), representing a policy statement for learning and teaching in schools. This was then followed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which should be regarded not as a replacement to NCS but as an extension that forms the basis, to determine minimum outcomes and standards as well as the processes and procedures for the assessment of learner achievement applicable to public and independent schools (DoE, 2011:2).

These rapid transformations and innovations led to confusion and uncertainty amongst most teachers and exacerbated low reading levels amongst South African learners (DoE, 2011:2). The NCS envisions teachers who are qualified, dedicated, competent and caring, and who would be able to fulfil various roles outlined. According to the observations by the researcher, most teachers do not meet these requirements and this negatively influences quality teaching and learning, which may result in reading difficulties and low reading levels (DoE, 2011:2).

There has been a misunderstanding about the role of the teacher in teaching reading in C2005 and the NCS, the latter requiring teachers to develop their own learning programmes according to the learner needs. This leads to frustration for most teachers who do not know what is expected or required of them. Learners cannot acquire reading proficiency when teachers themselves do not know how or when to teach reading. The employment of under-qualified teachers has had a negative influence on the quality of teaching and learning (DoE, 2008:9).

2.5.3.2 Schools

South African schools are not well resourced with libraries and most are without books. Pretorius & Mampuru (2007:47) claim that only 27% of schools have libraries and the Department of Education has noted that some learners are enrolled in schools that are ill equipped, overcrowded, and in desperate need of renovation. Crowded and dilapidated classrooms hinder the implementation of the individual attention to learners experiencing reading problems. High learner-teacher ratios with poor physical conditions and inadequate facilities for teaching and learning, schools with neither library nor print-rich environments will make reading a difficult task for learners (DoE, 2008:9).

2.5.3.3 Teacher competency and attitudes

Mgaga (2013) reports that a study by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) revealed that South Africa's teachers bunking classes and absenteeism were a cause of poor academic achievement. The study also revealed that some teachers bunked classes because they did not like teaching or were not confident about teaching certain subjects. The researcher has observed that there are teachers who object to educational innovations, are critical, judgemental, and sarcastic and are not prepared to acknowledge diversity in their schools or classroom. According to the researcher's perception, this can have a negative influence on the motivation of learners in their classroom, influence their performance in class and affect the learners' reading levels.

Many teachers in South Africa have an underdeveloped understanding of teaching reading and most do not know how to teach reading. Too often teachers know and use only one method of teaching reading, which may not suit the learning style of all learners. Reading difficulties will be experienced if diversity is not observed and learners are not supported. This also includes the negative attitude of teachers towards inclusive education, parental recognition and involvement, resistance to curriculum innovation and moral degeneration (DoE, 2008:28), hence the learners' low reading level.

2.5.4 Textual factors

The language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in the early primary school is to be the learner's mother tongue. The researcher has observed that due to a shortage of African authors most books are translated to indigenous languages, some with many direct translation and errors which are misfits or irrelevant. Textual factors such as the reading levels, type of text, vocabulary use and control, clarity of writing style and the complexity of writing affect the learners' reading competence (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2003:347). The researcher has also observed that most South African schools do not use the same graded books. Each school makes its own choice yet the assessment standards are the same for everyone and this negatively affect, and does not provide a true reflection of learners' performances in comparison to others. Most schools, specifically in rural areas, are without libraries and learners are not exposed to print-rich environments. As a result their reading level will be lower than that of their peers in advanced and well-resourced schools.

2.5.5 Emotional factors

Learners bring different levels of motivation to learning and the intensity level of this motivation is a critical determinant of learning. That includes, among others values, attitudes, emotions, the ability to tolerate and overcome frustrations and the willingness to take risks (Sadker & Sadker, 2005:36).

Ghanaguru, Liang & Kit (2010:22) include the following as emotional factors that constitute barriers to effective reading: a lack of prior knowledge, lack of confidence, poor motivation, bad reading habits and an unstable environment. "For reading readiness, self-confidence and emotional adaptability are essential. If learners are forced to read prematurely (that is, being pushed to do academic tasks beyond their readiness or to begin with the reading process before acquiring reading readiness stage), they may develop negative attitudes towards reading (Lerner & Johns, 2009:153). The researcher has observed that learners' inability to read may lead to fear, anxiety and low self-esteem.

2.5.6 Cognitive factors

Intellectual impairment causes problems and difficulties in all spheres of learning and learners affected in this way show a low performance in all aspects of language, reading included (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2003:347). According to Sadker & Sadker (2005:36), individual learners have different ways of perceiving, organising and retaining information. Some prefer to learn by reading and looking, others to listen and hear information, whilst some learn best kinaesthetically. Some learners focus attention narrowly and with great intensity, others pay attention to many things at once.

2.5.7 Personality factors

Personality factors such as motivation and persistence, sense of personal competence, ability to work in groups, willingness to ask for help and perceived value of reading can also affect learners' reading ability (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2003:347). A highly motivated learner develops positive self-esteem which in turn improves academic performance. Research findings reveal that learners with higher self-esteem showed higher intrinsic motivation and better academic performance (Patil, Saraswathi & Padakannaya, 2009:91).

2.5.8 Learning styles

Many teachers believe that students have preferred learning styles, for example those who learn best by seeing information (visual learners), by hearing (auditory learners) and by doing (also referred to as tactile or kinaesthetic learners), and that teaching according to these preferred styles could increase educational performance, including learner's reading skills and reading performance (Sadker & Sadker, 2005:38).

2.5.9 Hereditary and Neurological factors

If one or other parent or a grandparent experience a specific learning (reading) ability, there is a chance one of the children or grandchildren may also do. Neurological factors may include specific congenital factors, specific developmental problems, birth problems, the effects of specific illnesses or infections, untreated or uncontrolled epilepsy and head injuries (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:341).

According to Baatjies (2003:1), the important element of quality education is literacy. Without the ability to read, people are denied access to pertinent information about health, social, cultural and political issues as well as sources of pleasure and enrichment. Gunning, (2007:3) states that reading enables one to act creatively and critically in a world which is ever-changing and competitive. It promotes confidence and provides rapid, ready access to new information and knowledge that will help individuals in lifelong learning.

2.6 READING MODELS

Landsberg, Kruger & Nel (2005:140), Norton (2007:8), Joubert, Bester & Meyer (2008:88-89) have identified three models of reading that influence the way it is taught, as follows.

2.6.1 The Bottom-up Model (Text-based Model)

Norton (2007:8) concurs with Landsberg, Kruger & Nel (2005:140) and Joubert, Bester & Meyer (2008:88), that the bottom-up model (also known as the part-to-whole approach) for teaching reading begins with the sound of letters and progresses upwards from the single letters to the combination of letters that form words, and that the point of departure is to teach letter-sound relations and then sounds and say the words. In this model rules for word pattern and sounding out words are more important than understanding longer texts.

Proponents of this model state that if readers are able to carry out the process successfully they will automatically understand what they are reading. Norton (2007:8) explains that according to this model learners first learn the letters and then analyse words. The written words are then encoded in their sound components, he further argues that this form of reading is very abstract because the letter-sound connections are abstract; therefore, readers are unable to attach meaning to what they are reading from the start.

Norton (2007:8) explains the bottom-up model of the reading process as a text-based model because of its focus on the information provided by the text rather than the input from the reader's experiences or previous knowledge. In this model, reading begins with the sound of the letter and progresses upward from a single letter to the combination of the letters that form words and the words sentences. He adds that according to this approach the reader first learns the letters and then how to analyse words. The written words are analysed and encoded in their sound components and then synthesised to

spoken words. This form of reading is very abstract because the letter-symbol connections are abstract and readers therefore are unable to attach meaning to what they are reading from the start. It accentuates the development of sub-skills, which gradually lead to ostensibly complex reading skills. The readers move from the text to its meaning. Letters and words are perceived, analysed and decoded and only thereafter is the reading material comprehended. Reading skill is intimately linked to sound recognition and the reader's ability to make sound-symbol associations (Norton, 2007:8-9).

Landsberg, Kruger & Nel (2005:164) state that teachers using this approach for reading instruction can use a synthetic approach in which letters, sounds and syllables are used to build meaning. The bottom-up model or approach can be illustrated as follows

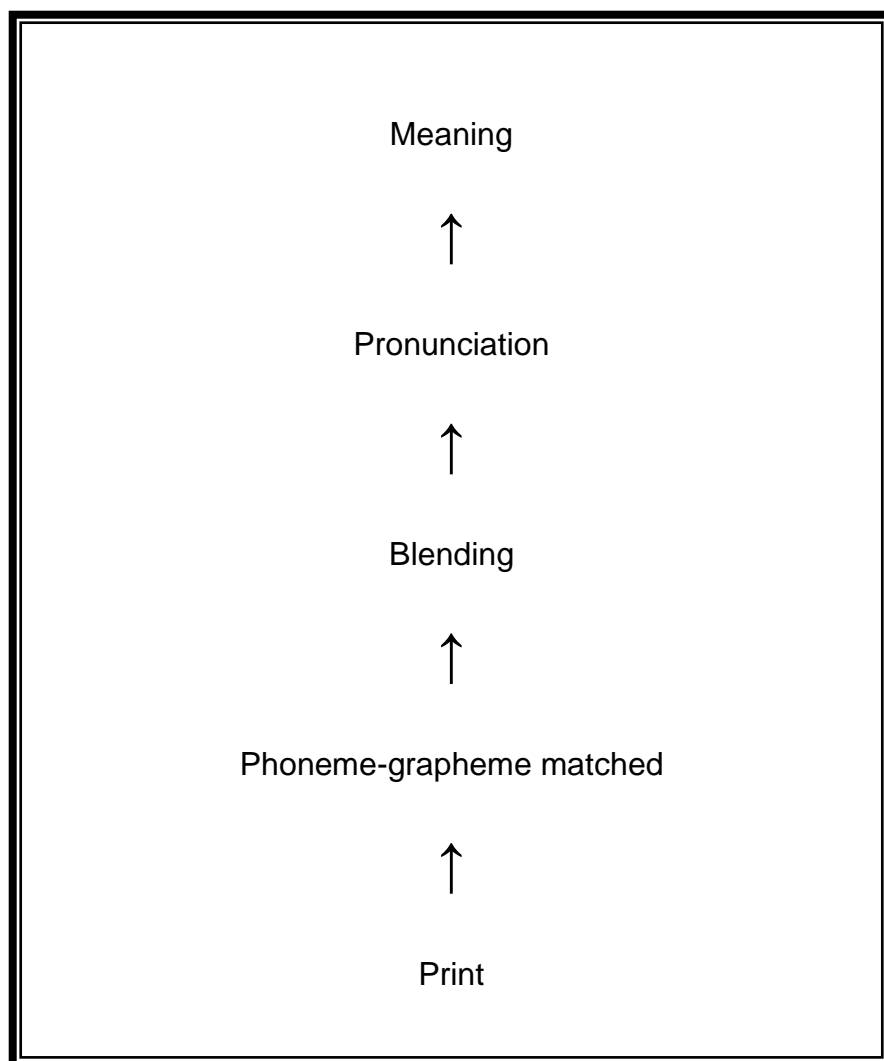


Figure 2.1: The bottom-up model or approach (Norton, 2007)

2.6.2 The Top-down Model

According to Joubert *et al* (2008:88) this model (also known as the meaning-giving-theory) is based on the premise that reading forms a meaningful whole in which meaning and sense lie at the foundation. This model concentrates mainly on the learners' association with real books and authentic texts and on reading for meaning. Norton (2007:9), concurs that the top-down model of the reading process is a reader-based model because the reader brings his or her own knowledge, culture and experiences to the interpretation of the text. In this model, concepts held in the mind of the reader trigger information during reading. Readers' knowledge and expectations of language as well as their prior experiences help them to comprehend the material.

Landsberg, Kruger & Nel (2005:140) state that the point of departure in the top-down model is to teach learners to identify whole words and to read sentences without sounding the words and that the readers become aware of the phonemes and letter-sound relations while they are reading and that the top-down model is concept-driven, the reader being more important than the text being read, and the reader has pre-knowledge which gives him or her an indication of its meaning. Readers' pre-knowledge therefore influences their understanding of the text, which is less important and the decoding action serves only to determine whether the meaning the reader assigns to the text is correct or not. Readers read complete sentences and consequently attach meaning to what they have read. Learners see words as a whole and learn to recognise them on sight. According to Landsberg, Kruger & Nel (2005:164), teachers using this model employ a synthetic approach for reading instruction, such as the language experience approach. Norton (2007:15) refers to this approach as the whole language approach.

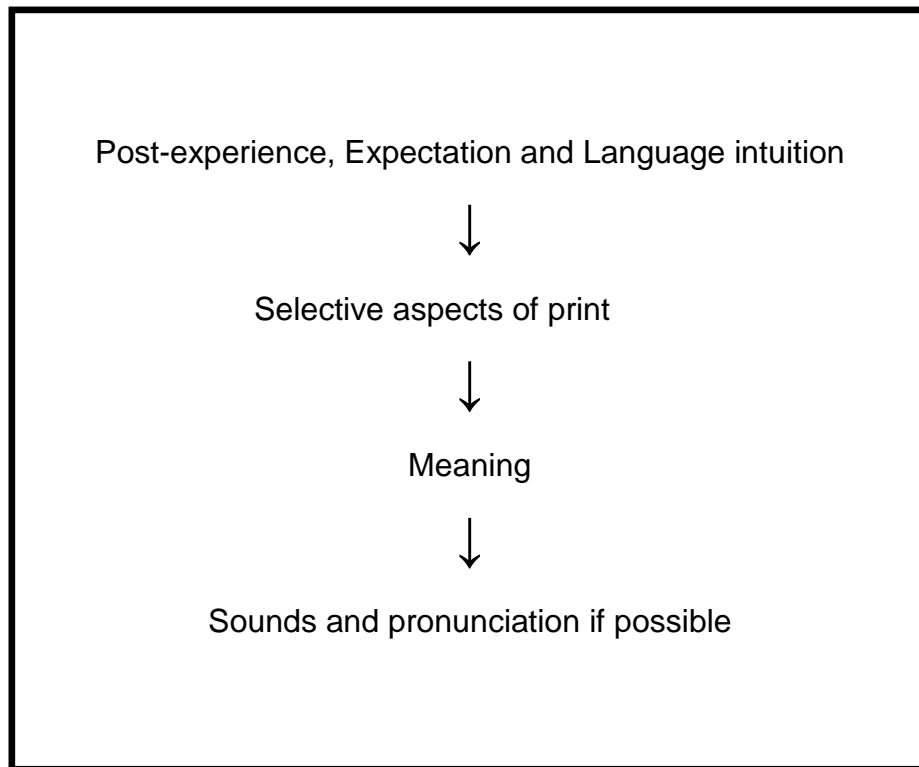


Figure 2.2: (Illustration: Top-down model)

2.6.3 Interactive Model

Norton (2007:10) and Sethosa (2000:5) share the same views on this approach, which is a combination of several methods of reading instruction. They state that reading is simultaneously text-driven and concept-driven. The text and the person interact to extract meaning from the text, with readers understanding the text by simultaneously decoding it and relating it to their previous knowledge.

The interactive model emphasises sound recognition, sound-symbol association and reading comprehension. It takes the view that the reader continually shifts his/her attention between the text (i.e., analysis of specific letters and words) and reading comprehension (i.e., thought content of the reading material). According to this model the reader will use the top-down approach when the reading material is known and the bottom-up approach when the reading material is not known, and as the reader's skill increases more attention is given to reading comprehension and less to word recognition and analysis of individual letters (Norton, 2007:11).

According to Landsberg, Kruger & Nel (2005:140), the interactive model became popular because of the limited success of the bottom-up and the top-down models. Rumelhart (in Norton, 2007:10) states that the top-down and the bottom-up models of processing occur simultaneously and that most researchers agree that a combination of the two models is necessary for the successful teaching of reading and for reading comprehension. Teachers who use this model for reading instruction use an eclectic approach in which the strengths of both methods are used to acquire reading proficiency (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:140). Norton (2007:11) refers to this approach as the “balanced approach”, and points to the sub-skill approach to reading in which teachers using this approach believe that there is a set of sub-skills that have to be mastered for learners to read proficiently, for example sight words and word attack. These sub-skills include a set of identifiable skills that are considered the building blocks for reading.

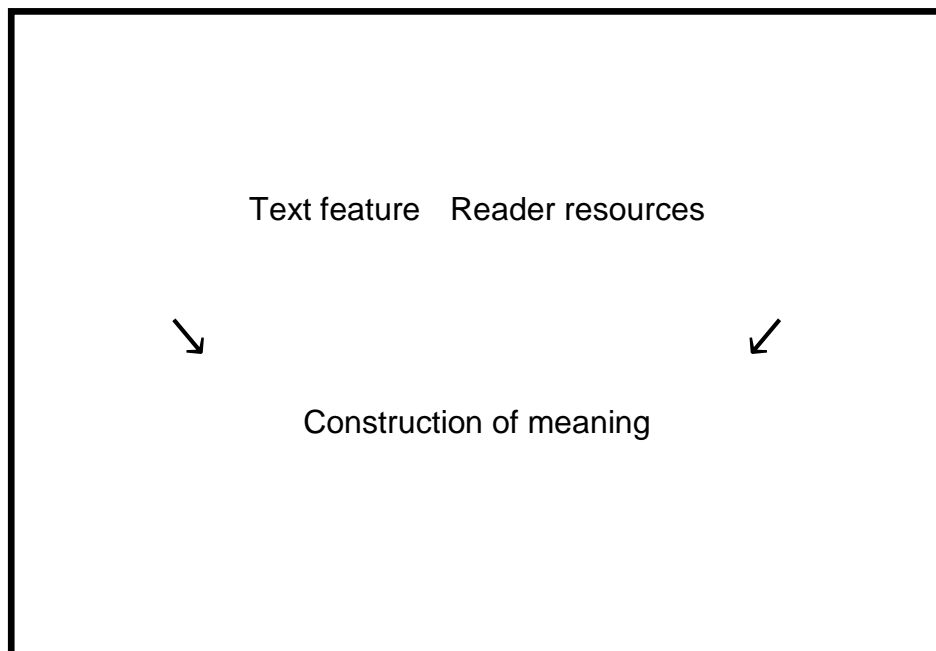


Figure 2.3: (Illustration of an interactive model)

2.7 MODELS FOR EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION

Part of the teacher's challenge is to know which model of instruction to choose for particular educational purposes. The researcher selected, amongst others, four models as they relate to teaching reading, outlined in this section as follows.

2.7.1 Direct Teaching Model

The direct teaching model emphasises the importance of structured lessons in which presentation of new information is followed by learner practice and teacher feedback. In this model the role of the teacher is that of a strong leader, one who structures the classroom and sequences the subject matter to reflect a clear academic focus. The model is helpful during the first stages of learning new and complex information (Sadker & Sadker 2005:96). According to Gillette, Temple, Temple & Crawford (2012:452), integrating multi-sensory experiences with direct systematic and sequential instruction model can be an effective means for learners with reading difficulties to learn fundamental language skills including reading and to improve their reading skill.

2.7.2 Cooperative Learning

In cooperative learning, learners work on activities in small heterogeneous groups and often receive rewards or recognition based on the overall group performance. In cooperative learning, learners depend on one another and work together to reach shared goals. During the cooperative learning method a team's work is not completed until all learners in a team understand the material being studied and rewards are earned when the entire team achieves the goals set by the teacher. Learners tutor one another so that everyone can succeed (Sadker & Sadker, 2005:98).

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory describes learning as a social process, wherein everything is learnt first through integration with others and then by way of an individual's mental structure. A teacher or a more experienced peer is able to provide the learner with 'scaffolding' to support the learner's development of complex skills. Vygotsky views interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies (Vygotsky, 1978:57). The researcher opines that an effective use of the model would drastically reduce reading problems experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in inclusive schools the selected area of study.

2.7.3 Mastery Learning

Mastery learning programmes require specific and carefully sequenced learning objectives. The first step is to identify a specific skill or academic task to be mastered, after which learners are taught the skill and tested to determine if the objective has been reached. Learners who complete the task successfully go on for acceleration or enrichment while those who fail to demonstrate mastery of the subject receive corrective instruction and are re-tested (Sadker & Sadker, 2005:99). The model relate to outcomes based education (OBE), which is learner-based and learner-paced, and is aimed at ensuring maximum individual potential development with the employment of proper intervention strategies and reassessment to ensure quality teaching and learning. Rowling in Lerner & Johns (2009:381 & 382), state that appropriate, proper and timely intervention strategies are essential for maximising treatment of reading difficulties as reading problems of adolescents and adults, reflect reading difficulties that were not resolved during their early years.

2.7.4 Problem based Learning

Problem-based learning focuses on authentic or real life problems. In this instructional model, a crucial aspect of the teacher's role is to identify activities that fuel students' interests. While the features of problem-based learning (PBL) have been around for a long time, in its current form it is both a comprehensive and demanding approach that develops real intellectual skills in learners. They work together to explore authentic contemporary issues, attempt to solve problems and receive impetus into the adult world before they are adults (Sadker & Sadker, 2005:101).

2.8 PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION

The list of possible educational philosophers considered has not been exhausted but the researcher confined the study to five schools of thoughts, namely, essentialism, perennialism, social reconstructionism, progressivism and existentialism, as they present strong frameworks for the project under study. For the purpose of this study they will be grouped and discussed under teacher-centred and learner-centred philosophies.

Teacher-centred philosophies emphasise the importance of transferring knowledge, information and skill from the older generation to the younger ones, with the teacher's role being to instil respect for authority, perseverance, duty and practicality. When students demonstrate through test and writings that they are competent in academic subjects and traditional skills, have disciplined minds and adhere to traditional morals and behaviour, then both the school and the teacher have been successful. These philosophies view the purpose of the school as "passing the cultural baton". The major teacher-centred philosophies of education are essentialism and perennialism (Sadker & Sadker, 2005:332).

The above mentioned philosophies both advocate teacher-centred classrooms, tolerate little flexibility in the curriculum, implement rigorous standards and aim to sharpen learners' intellectual powers and enhance their moral qualities. Essentialists strive to teach learners knowledge through core courses in the traditional academic disciplines, aiming to instil them with the 'essentials' of academic knowledge, patriotism and character development whereas perennialists believe that the goal of education should be to develop rational thoughts and to discipline the minds to think rigorously. They see education as a sorting mechanism to identify and prepare the intellectually gifted for leadership while providing vocational training for the rest of the society (Sadker & Sadker, 2005:332).

Learner-centred philosophies are less authoritarian, less concerned with the past and the training of the mind and more focused on individual needs, contemporary relevance and preparing learners for a changing future. Learners are placed at the centre of the educational process whereby teachers and learners determine what should be learnt and how best to learn it. Schools are seen as institutions that work with youths to improve society or help students realise their individuality (Sadker & Sadker, 2005:333).

The latter, encourages active learner participation while ensuring maximal effective teaching and learning which will drastically reduce reading difficulties experienced. It also relates to the South African curriculum that emphasises integrated knowledge in which subjects are combined into learning areas and taught thematically whereby focus is placed on the competence demonstrated by learners at the end of a learning process rather than on subject expertise, with emphasis on the knowledge learners bring to class, on everyday knowledge and on the relevance to everyday life and learning is not passed from one person to the next but, understanding must be constructed by each individual through his or her experiences and reflections (Nel, Nel & Hugo, 2012:29).

2.9 READING THEORIES

For many decades educational psychologists have grappled with the problem of how reading occurs, which to date has proved to be much more complex and intriguing than previously thought, as reflected by theorists in various theories on reading (Jansen, 2003:2).

2.9.1 Definition of Theory

Schunk (2008:3) defines theory as “a scientifically acceptable set of principles offered to explain a phenomenon”. Correlating with Schunk’s definition of a theory is the explanation of Sadoski & Paivio (2007:337) that a theory is a set of interrelated constructs, definitions and propositions that presents a systematic view of the phenomena with the purpose of predicting and explaining the phenomena.

Mergel (2011:2) infers that theories provide frameworks for interpreting environmental observations and serve as bridges between research and education. According to Jansen (2003:1), a theory is about thinking and reflecting; it is an initial idea or model that needs to be tested to determine its validity and to provide an explanation for a specific phenomenon. Overall (2007:3) states that formal theories used to explore how children learn and develop have to be reliable, valid and true in order to be useful and theories will only be valid and reliable up to a point, as human beings are involved. A number of theories of learning and their connection to instructional designs are briefly outlined below.

2.9.1.1 Psycholinguistic Theory

Psycholinguists hold the view that readers use knowledge of their language and their environment to make sense of what they read. According to the psycholinguists, reading is a process that goes from the whole to the parts (top-down model) (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:84).

THE PSYCHOLINGUISTIC VIEW ON READING

According to psycholinguists, reading is global and all the skills are implemented simultaneously to make sense of the written text. Reading is comprehension driven, with the reader bringing prior knowledge to the text, as learners make predictions and question the text. Meaning is most important and forms a foundation for reading. Learners

continue to learn to read throughout their lives, with no end point. Silent reading is essential for reflection and comprehension (Joubert, Bester, & Meyer, 2008:85). Teachers that follow the psycholinguistic view on reading regard reading as a holistic process in which readers' aims and expectations determine what they read and how they read. The process is not fragmented but comprises a meaningful whole. Attaching meaning to and understanding the text are the foundations for reading. Reading readiness in this context is seen as the immediate introduction and exposure to books. Learners play with books and discover that the written text has meaning. Learners' own sentences, written down by the teacher, are often the first text that is "read" and a variety of reading matter is used, for example, advertisements, recipes, riddles, jokes, and brochures (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:85).

The learners work individually, in pairs or in groups, randomly selected and not according to their reading ability. They read to each other, to the teacher or to anyone willing to listen. Much silent reading is done but the book is also discussed. New words have to be learned before a book is tackled. Attention is also paid to phonics and sight vocabulary but it is more important to speak to learners about making meaning from the text (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:86).

2.9.1.2 Behaviourism

Behaviourism is based on observable changes in behaviour and focuses on a new behavioural pattern being repeated until it becomes automatic. It concentrates on the study of overt behaviour that can be observed and measured, viewing the mind as a blank box in the sense that response to stimuli can be observed quantitatively while ignoring the possibility of thought processes occurring in the mind (Mergel, 2011:3). According to Schunk (2008:73, 75), behaviourist theorists explain learning in terms of environmental events and mental processes are not necessary to explain acquisition, maintenance and generalisation of behaviour. Practice is needed to strengthen responses and complex skills can be accomplished by shaping progressive small approximations to the desired behaviour. Instructions should have clear measurable objectives, proceed in small steps and deliver reinforcements. The behaviourist theorist postulates that conditioning occurs in an automatic, unconscious way and does not involve any cognitive processes.

Behaviourist theorists stipulate that learners learn to read by being taught a sequence of skills that form the building blocks of reading. They also believe that a student can be taught to perform any task successfully if the unit of learning is small enough. Behaviourist theory has influenced teachers who adhere to the bottom-up model of the reading process in which learners learn to read by proceeding from the parts to the whole (Norton, 2007:20).

THE BEHAVIOURIST VIEW ON READING

According to the behaviourists, reading is a process that moves from the parts to the whole (bottom up). One first learns separate letters and their characteristics, then diphthongs and other letter units that represent sounds, thereafter single words, phrases and sentences, and lastly the meaning of the text. The reader must first master the mechanical and technical aspects of written language before attention can be paid to comprehension and understanding, and once the learners have mastered these skills they will be able to read (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:71).

Teachers who subscribe to the behaviourists' view with regard to reading are of the opinion that reading aloud is essential for reading beginners. They regard reading as a complicated skill made up of sub-skills, and reading readiness programmes need to be implemented before a learner can be allowed to read. The teachers use a series of graded readers to teach learners to read, after they first master the sounds of words, develop sight vocabulary words and thereafter read aloud to the teacher and peers. The learner's reading ability is assessed on the basis of his or her ability to read single words as well as sounding letter combinations correctly. Repetition of the same word in a text is a common way of addressing word recognition (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:71), and according to Schunk, (2008:32), reinforcements and rewards encourage good behaviour.

2.9.1.3 Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory of knowledge that argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. It is based on the premise that learners construct their own perspective of the world through individual experiences and schema, and this enables them to solve problems in ambiguous situations (Mergel, 2011:2). A major influence on the rise of constructivism has been the theories of and research into human development of Vygotsky (Schunk, 2008:235).

Vygotsky's theory forms the cornerstone of the constructivist movement, posited on the role of social mediation of knowledge construction that is central to many forms of constructivism. His theory lies in a dialectical constructivist perspective which holds the idea that knowledge derives from interactions between persons and their environments. Constructions are not invariably bound to the external world or wholly the workings of the mind, but rather knowledge reflects the outcomes of the mental contradictions that result from one's interaction with the environment. This dialectical view is useful for designing interventions to challenge learners' thinking. A social constructivist view (Vygotsky's) stresses that social group learning and peer collaboration is useful and that learning and development cannot be dissociated from their context (Schunk, 2008:241).

According to constructivists, learning should be situated in realistic settings; testing should be integrated with the task and not be a separate activity and learners should be actively involved. Lastly, teachers should not teach in the sense of delivering instructions to learners; rather, they should facilitate learning. Constructivism underlies the emphasis on the integrated curriculum in which students study a topic from multiple perspectives (Schunk, 2008:241).

For this study, the researcher used constructivism as a philosophical framework. An epistemology or philosophical explanation about the nature of learning, it is a philosophical perspective contending that individuals form or construct much of what they learn and understand. It reveals a shift away from environmental influences towards human factors as explanations for learning. With constructivism, researchers have shifted focus to how learners construct their knowledge rather than on how knowledge is acquired and how environmental factors influence learning, which are central theories related to behaviourists and cognitivists (Schunk, 2008:237).

Constructivism has influenced educational thinking about the curriculum and instruction. It underlies the emphasis on the integrated curriculum in which learners study a topic from multiple perspectives and where teachers use teaching and learning materials in such a way that learners become actively involved (Schunk, 2008: 237 & 241). It contends that knowledge is constructed from experience, that learning is a personal interpretation of the world and an active process in which meaning is developed on the basis of experience, where learners must actively construct knowledge and understanding for themselves. It is based on the assumption that conceptual growth comes from the negotiation of meaning, the sharing of multiple perspectives and the changing of internal presentations through collaborative learning (Schunk, 2008:237).

The Constructivist perspective has important implications for instruction and curriculum design, based on an assumption that teachers should not teach in the traditional way but rather structure learning in such a way that learners are actively involved and provide support and guidance rather than lecturing. It places emphasis on reflective teaching, stressing that social group learning and peer collaboration are useful because as learners model for and observe each other they acquire not only skills but also experience higher self-efficacy for learning (Schunk, 2008:241). Similarly, OBE is learner-centred, emphasising integrated curricula and active learner participation, with teachers acting as facilitators. It is also an educational process that is designed to promote problem-solving skills, to develop learners' critical thinking through exploration and experimentation, and to promote social interaction (DoE, 2001:4).

CONSTRUCTIVIST ASSUMPTION WITH REGARD TO READING

A constructivist assumption is that teachers should not teach in the traditional way but rather should structure reading lesson such that learners are actively involved, provide support and guidance rather than lecturing, and place emphasis on reflective teaching. They stress that social group learning and peer collaboration are useful because as learners model for and observe each other they teach and learn not only skills but also experience higher self-efficacy for learning (Schunk, 2008:237-241).

Constructivists assume that knowledge is first constructed in a social context and is then appropriated and owned by the individual. Constructivists view reading as an active process through which learners discover concepts. According to the constructivists individual learners make meaning of learning through interaction with each other and with the environment in which they live (Schunk, 2008:237-241). These principles are similar to those outlined in the outcomes-based system of education that also encourages group work and interaction amongst learners.

2.11 METHODS USED IN TEACHING READING

Various authors state that, just as there is no single type of child in the reading classroom, there is also not only one approach to the teaching of reading, but rather instruction needs to match the learners' academic needs (Darrel, 2005:4; Norton, 2007:5). Russell and Santoro (2007:190, 194) maintain that carefully designed instruction is required to help learners at risk of academic failure to attain grade-level expectations. The researcher's inclusion of methods of teaching reading in the study is to understand the methods used

to teach reading and to investigate whether learners experience reading difficulties because they are incapable of learning to read or because of the poor methods and approaches used to teach reading that exacerbate reading difficulties. The researcher indicates critical elements in teaching reading as adapted from Bos and Vaughn (2002), taught through an integrated balanced approach and not in isolation.

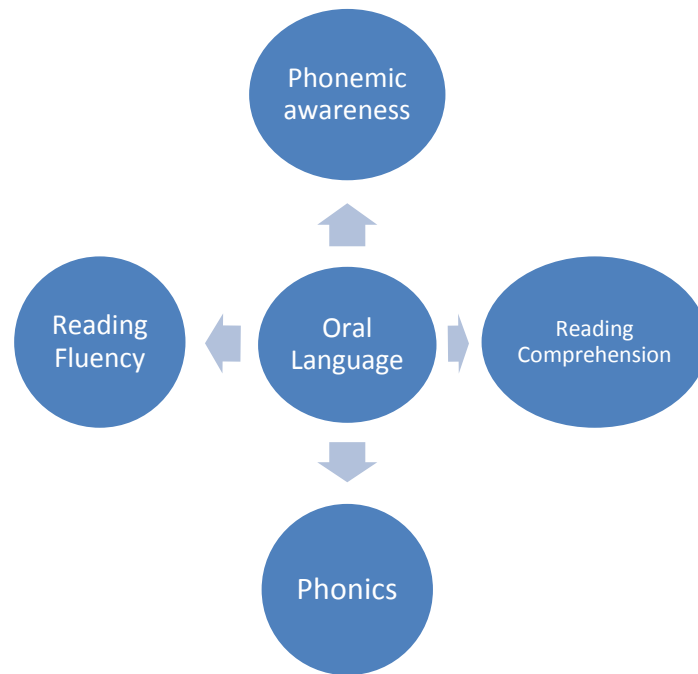


Figure: 2.4: Critical elements in teaching reading

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development highlight the following as five essential components of effective reading instruction:

1. Phonemic awareness- instruction designed to teach learners the ability to focus on, manipulate and break apart the sounds (or phonemes) in a word.
2. Phonics- instruction designed to help readers understand and apply the knowledge of how letters are linked to sounds (phonemes) to form letter-sound (grapheme-phoneme) correspondences and spelling pattern
3. Fluency- instruction primarily through guided oral reading that reinforces the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.
4. Vocabulary- instruction both explicit and implicit in order to increase both oral and print knowledge of words, a critical component of comprehension and reading.
5. Comprehension- instruction that teaches students to actively engage with, and derive meaning from the text they read (adapted from section III: conceptual framework and research foundation).

According to Nel & Nel in Nel, Nel & Hugo (2012:90), phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words and the specific understanding that they consist of sequenced phonemes (speech sounds that influence meaning) blended together. Through phonemic awareness, learners understand that letters represent sounds in words, which is fundamental to emergent literacy. Phonemic awareness is recognising that speech consists of a sequence of sounds and being able to recognise these individual sounds, how they make words and how these words can make sentences. Phonemic awareness is an instruction designed to strengthen learners' ability to focus on, manipulate, and break apart the sounds (phonemes) in words (DoE, 2011:12).

Reading requires the learners to see the symbols, their shape and their visual sequence. Phonics involves associating the speech sounds of letters with their written symbols. It is a method of teaching learners to read. Phonic skills in the Foundation Phase include letter identification, segmenting and blending (Nel & Nel in Nel, Nel & Hugo, 2012:92). According to the DoE (2011:13), 'phonics' refers to the sounds in words and the symbols (letters of the alphabet) used to represent them. Phonics instruction is designed to help readers understand and apply the knowledge of how letters are linked to sounds to form letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns.

Fluency instruction, primarily guided through oral reading reinforces the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy and proper expression. Reading is described as fluent when learners phrase correctly, and use correct pronunciation without any omissions, repetitions, substitutions, inversions or insertions, word guessing or voicing. Automaticity is necessary for reading fluency. When teaching fluency, one starts with the texts that are too easy for the learner that he or she understands (Nel & Nel in Nel, Nel & Hugo 2012:95).

Nel et al. (2012:96) describe vocabulary instruction as teaching about words and their uses, giving learner's time to think about what they are learning as well as using complex words and enhancing language production and output. The aim of teaching vocabulary is to support learners in their thinking and to articulate this to other people. Reading will not be successful for learning if there is no comprehension. Nel & Nel in Nel *et al* (2012:97) state that comprehension is the most difficult part to teach in primary schools, and teachers need to use a "gradual-release-of-responsibility" approach. When teaching reading comprehension, the responsibility of comprehending must move slowly from the teacher to the learner. Comprehension instruction teaches learners to actively engage with and derive meaning from the text as they read (DoE, 2011:14).

In grades 1-3, reading and writing takes place in specific focus time, set aside for reading and phonics is three hours and twenty five minutes per week. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for the Foundation Phase divides the requirements for reading into shared reading, group guided reading, paired and independent reading, phonics and writing. In shared reading, the teacher works with the whole class for 15 minutes using a single enlarged text with learners being introduced to stories, poems, rhymes and other devices. With group guided reading all members in a group read the same text under the supervision and direction of the teacher, and lastly, in paired and independent reading, learners reread their group readers, simple fun books or supplementary readers on their own (DoE, 2011:9-11).

It is a concern for the researcher that amidst the initiatives on different methods of teaching reading, the diagnostic report compiled by the Department of Basic Education in 2012 still indicates, among other factors, that many learners cannot read with comprehension and lack the ability to make correct inferences from the given information in a text (DBE, 2012:5). This created a need for the researcher to investigate reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in Makapanstad primary schools.

2.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed in detail the levels of reading locally and internationally, the causes and factors affecting reading, various reading campaigns initiated to help improve learner's reading levels, theories on learning and the different methods and models that could be used for teaching reading, and reading theories as well as strategies used to teach reading. The next chapter provides information on the design used for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an outline of qualitative research methodology and design (see diagram below), a detailed description of the approach selected for this study and the justification for the choice. The remaining sections of the chapter focus on philosophical assumptions, research design, data analysis strategies and ethical considerations.

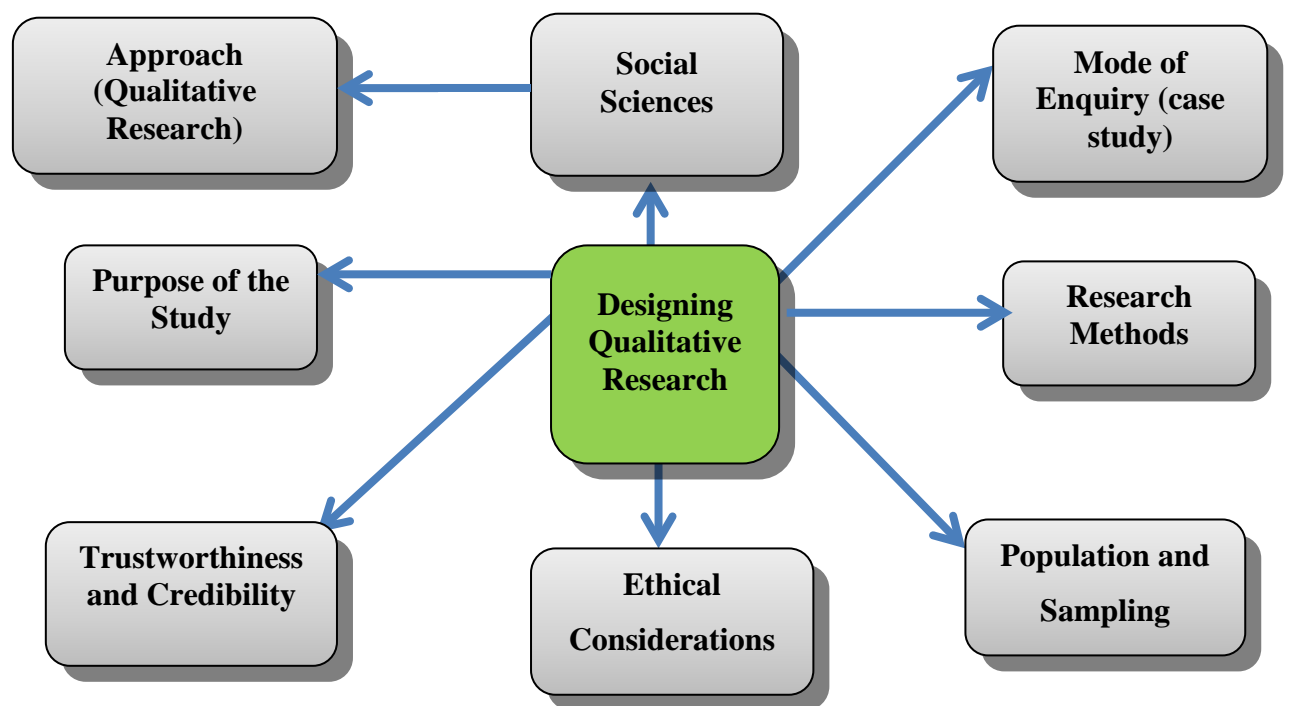


Figure 3.1: A diagram of a qualitative research design

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Rodolo (2008:15) defines research methodology as “a study of a research process in all its broadness and complexity”. It embraces the various methods and techniques that are employed, the rationale that lies behind the use of such methods, the limitations of each technique, the role of assumptions and presumptions in selecting methods and techniques, the influence of methodological preference on the type of data analysis employed and the subsequent interpretation of findings.

The paradigm of qualitative research is based on the social sciences which, according to De Vos et al. (2005:41), involve the study of people. It is defined as a collaborative human activity, in which social reality is studied objectively with the aim of gaining a valid understanding of it. Social science research is reputed to be the systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of social phenomena, guided by theory and hypotheses about the presumed relations between such phenomena (De Vos *et al* 2005:41).

The researcher adopted a qualitative research approach for the study, defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2006:315) as of use in when researchers “collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their setting”. Creswell (2008:46) defines qualitative research as a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of the participants, asks broad and general questions, collects data consisting largely of words or text from the participants, then describes analyses and conducts an enquiry in a subjective, biased manner.

Qualitative research describes and analyses people’s individual and collective social actions, beliefs, and the meaning that people assign to them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:315; Creswell, 2008:46). Maykut & Morehouse (2001:4) further infer that qualitative research generally examines people’s words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways, more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants. Qualitative research presents an alternative to the traditional form of quantitative research, which relies more on the researcher’s views than those of the participants (Creswell, 2008:46).

De Vos (2005:74) states that qualitative research stems from an anti-positivist, interpretative approach, it is idiographic and holistic in nature and it aims to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. It is concerned with understanding and subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider. Burck (2005:242) and Babbie in Mouton (2007:49-53) state that qualitative research is inductive in that it is data-driven; findings and conclusions are directly drawn from the data; and research data is considered as constructed within a particular context rather than as an objective reflection of reality.

The researcher employed the qualitative research approach because it is based on a constructivist philosophy that assumes that reality is a multi-layered, interactive, and shared social experience interpreted by individuals. The qualitative approach is concerned with understanding the social phenomena from participants' perceptions, studies participants' perspectives with interactive strategies, and believes that human actions are influenced by the settings in which they occur and that qualitative researchers are immersed in the situations and the phenomena studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:315-316).

In this study, the researcher infiltrated the worlds of the participants, observed and described in detail what was happening in the environment while behaving as naturally as possible, listening to the accounts and narratives of participants and constructing explanations of events.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (2005:55) describes a research design as a plan or blueprint of how one intends to conduct research, whilst for McMillan & Schumacher (2006:22) it describes how the study will be conducted. It summarises the procedure for conducting the study including *when*, from *whom* and under *what* conditions the data will be obtained. It is also a general plan of how the research is set up, what happens to the subjects and what methods of data collection are used. Creswell (2008:297) refers to the research design as "distinguishing features used by the researcher to collect, analyse and interpret data using either a qualitative or quantitative approach.

The various designs used by qualitative researchers will differ, depending on the purpose of the study, the nature of the research questions and the resources available to the researcher. For this study the researcher employed a case study as a mode of enquiry. Creswell (2008:475) defines a case study as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection. In a case study, a particular individual, programme or event is studied in-depth for a defined time. Case study researchers may focus on a programme, event or activity involving individuals rather than a group (Creswell, 2005:465).

In a case study, the researcher collects extensive data on the individual(s), programme(s), or events(s) on which the investigation is focused. Such data often includes observations, interviews, documents, past records and audio-visual materials. The researcher may spend an extended time on the site and interact regularly with the participants, record details about the context surrounding the case, information on the physical environment and any historical, economic or social factors that have a bearing on the situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:135-136).

As part of the data collection process the researcher chose a multiple instrumental case study (also known as a collective case study) in which the researcher described and compared multiple cases to provide insight into reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in the selected primary schools in Makapanstad, to develop an in-depth understanding of the cases by collecting multiple forms of data and locating the 'case' or 'cases' within their larger context.

The multiple cases (i.e., different learners and teachers in the Foundation Phase from different schools) served to explore the extent of reading difficulties in the sampled schools and to develop insight into and an understanding of the causes of these reading difficulties and the strategies and models employed by teachers to teach reading. The findings were used as a basis for developing support programme or strategies that could be used to alleviate reading difficulties and to improve reading levels in the Foundation Phase in selected primary schools in Makapanstad.

3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The researcher adopted an interpretivist paradigm, which according to Benton and Craib (2011) is an alternative view to the positivist view of knowledge developed about social worlds as only obtainable objectively. The social worlds are not straightforwardly perceivable because they are constructed by each individual in a different way. It is different for each one of us, with words and events carrying different meanings in every case, and therefore they cannot be studied adequately using the methods of physics or chemistry. Interpretivism is interested in people and the way they interrelate.

De Vos (2005:242) states that qualitative research stems from an anti-positivist interpretative approach that is idiographic and holistic in nature, and that aims to understand the social life and the meaning that people attach to their everyday lives. It is concerned with understanding and subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider. Burck (2005:242) asserts that qualitative research considers research data as constructed within a particular research context rather than as an objective reflection of reality.

The researcher selected interpretivism as the paradigm for the study as it enabled immersion in the research context, talking to participants, observing them in their natural life world settings, and interrelating face to face with them while taking note of their thoughts, feelings and ideas so as to avoid miscues and construed information.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The criteria that the researcher used for site selection were related to and appropriate for the research problem and purpose. For this study, three schools were sampled from the Project Area Office of Moretele in Makapanstad (Moretele APO). Schools within inclusive settings were purposefully selected as they were deemed appropriate for tackling the research problem and meeting the purpose of the study. Learners in these schools did not have to be screened or write aptitude tests before they could be admitted and enrolled, and were admitted irrespective of their abilities or disabilities. The schools catered for all learners; hence they are referred to by the researcher as schools within inclusive settings.

Schools with remedial classes were preferred as they would provide information-rich informants who were likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena that the researcher was investigating (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:319). In some schools, learners experiencing reading difficulties are often referred to remedial classes for intervention by a qualified and experienced teacher. In most instances, teachers in the remedial classes have the expertise of supporting learners with learning problems, including reading difficulties.

The researchers selected schools because of their proximity and relevance, with an eye on cost-effectiveness to minimise financial constraints. The researcher confined the study to teachers and learners in the Foundation Phase in the selected schools. Permission to gain access to the sites was sought from the DBE) in Moretele APO through formal application to the area manager and site managers (See appendices). For ethical reasons, no investigation was conducted without formal authorisation (De Vos *et al* 2005:59).

De Vos *et al* (2001:328) explain that in qualitative investigations, non-probability sampling is used almost without exception, and theoretical or purposeful sampling techniques used. Purposive sampling is one of the sampling strategies whereby the researcher groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question. The sample size depends on the objectives of the study. Creswell (2008:215) states that in purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select participants and sites of use in learning or to understanding the central phenomenon. The standards used for selecting the participants and sites are whether or not they are information rich I chose purposive sampling for the study, which entails the researcher identifying the characteristics and then finding sites or individuals that display different dimensions of those characteristics.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

The following methods were used to collect data for the study.

3.6.1 Observations

Creswell (2008:221) defines observation as a process of gathering open-ended first-hand information through observing people and places at the research site. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005:145), observations in a qualitative study are intentionally unstructured and free flowing. The researcher shifts focus from one thing to another as new significant objects and events present themselves. Written notes are often insufficient to capture the richness of what one is observing. Therefore, I used various data recording strategies such as audiotapes and visited schools to acquaint myself with the principals, heads of department, teachers and learners, through discussions and engagements. I kept a diary and notepad to write about events and incidents that unfolded during the observation period. Creswell (2008:223) states that it is advantageous to shift or change roles, making it difficult to classify one's role as strictly participatory or non-participatory and so look around before slowly becoming involved as a participant.

3.6.2 Interviews

Leedy & Ormrod (2005:146) and Creswell (2008:225) write that interviews in a qualitative study are rarely structured but rather are either open-ended or semi-structured. Open-ended questions are asked so that participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspective of the researcher. De Vos (2003:302) is of the opinion that semi-structured interviews are used by the researcher to gain a detailed picture of participants' beliefs, perceptions or accounts about a particular topic.

The researcher compiled a set of pre-determined questions on an interview schedule (see appendix L and M), with the interview guided and not dictated by the schedule. I regarded participants as experts on the subject and allowed them opportunities to tell their story. I allowed participants to play a leading role in determining how the interview would proceed. After having obtained consent from participants (see appendix L and M), the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews. In order to reduce tension I gave the participants copies of the interview guide prior to the interviews so that they knew beforehand what would be expected in order to enable them to share their experiences and expertise and respond freely and confidently on what they know. The researcher worked at establishing and maintaining a rapport with them and was careful not to 'put words into their mouths'.

To ensure effective interviews I applied the following techniques (see appendix L and M) cited in De Vos, Fouche, Strydom & Delport (2005:293). I asked clear, single, brief open-ended questions one at a time whilst also avoiding sensitive questions; and the participants did most of the talking. I sequenced questions and funnelled them from the general to the specific and from broad to narrow, while encouraging free reign but maintaining control. I repeated key questions and conducted minimal probes throughout the interviews, allowing for pauses in conversation. I tried to avoid off the record information, to use minimal probes, not to interrupt a good story and to end interviews on time.

3.6.3 Document Study

Various authors cited in De Vos *et al* (2005:315) classify sources into primary and secondary. The former are seen as the original written material of the author's own experiences and observations, while the latter consist of material derived from someone else as the original source. The classification is based upon the nature and classification of a source, i.e., whether it is a personal document (such as learner's record, workbook or portfolio), official document (such as assessment record or schedule). In the current study I utilised personal and official documents.

3.6.3.1 Personal Documents

De Vos (2005:315) defines a personal documents as "one in which the human and personal characteristics of somebody who is in some sense the author of the document finds expression, so that through its means the reader of the document comes to know the author and his view of events with which the document is concerned". Holbrook (1995, as cited in De Vos, 2005:316) defines a personal document as "any first-person account of the whole or part of his or her own life or an individual's reflection on a specific topic or event", and states that personal documents may be solicited or unsolicited, limited or comprehensive, complete or edited. I used educators' personal documents such as student's records, personal files (portfolios), assessment records and schedules and learners' personal documents such as workbooks and portfolios for the study.

3.6.3.2 Official Documents

Official documents provide an internal perspective on the organisation, topic, issue or process. Institutions keep individual records on each student and employee (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:357). For ethical reasons it is not always possible to access these documents. It is of cardinal importance that the researcher evaluates the authenticity, or validity and reliability of the documents because the authors of documents sometimes harbour ulterior motives such as money or prestige (De Vos, 2005:317). For this study, official documents such as progression schedules, recording sheets, official reports (ANA results) were also used.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

McMillan & Schumacher (2006:364) describe qualitative data analysis as being primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among them. Furthermore, they state that data analysis is a continuing cyclical process that is integrated into all phases of qualitative research. De Vos *et al* (2005:340) state that the process of data analysis and data interpretation can best be represented in a spiral image whereby the researcher moves in analytical circles rather than using a fixed linear approach. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:150) concur that data analysis, as a spiral that is in view, is equally applicable to a wide variety of qualitative studies.

Below, I provide a schematic representation of the data analysis strategy used in the study to analyse data collected through observations, interviews and the scrutiny of documents. De Vos (2005:333) explains that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. The schematic presentation below indicates how data was analysed qualitatively to transform it into findings.

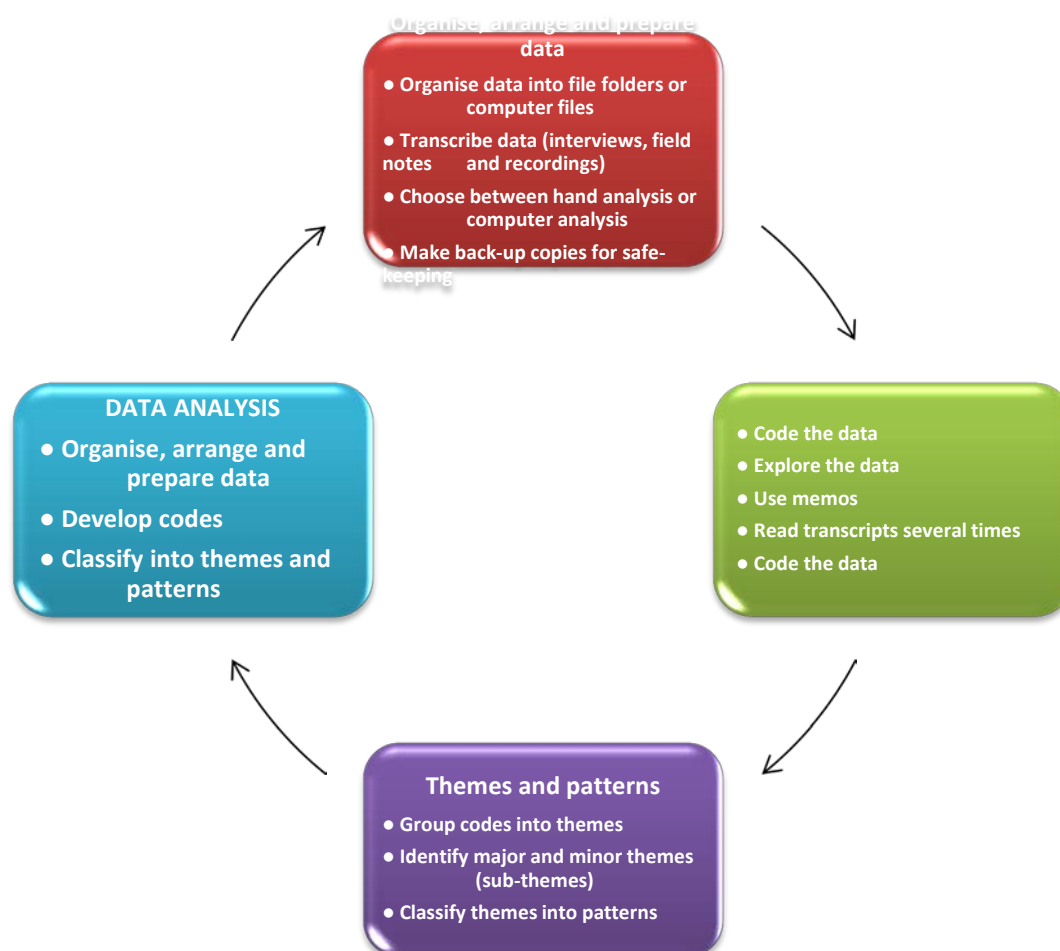


Figure3.2: Schematic representation of the data analysis strategy

The steps followed for analysing the data have been adapted from De Vos *et al* (2003:340), Creswell (2008:238) and McMillan & Schumacher (2006:367). First, the researcher organised the data into file folders and developed a table of sources to help organise the materials by type, site, location and participant. I kept duplicate copies of all forms of data. To facilitate analysis, the researcher recorded data in a systematic manner through labelling audiotapes, finding quiet places for note-taking and planning ahead for colour coding those notes. The researcher transcribed the data obtained through interviewing and observations, converting audio-tape recordings and field notes into text data. In order to make sense of the text data the researcher used the steps below, as recommended by Creswell (2008:251).

The researcher tried to gain a sense of the whole by reading all transcriptions and field-notes carefully, jotting down in the margins some ideas as they came to mind. Thereafter, the researcher went through one document at a time, asking questions and considering the underlying meaning then wrote it down in the margin in two to three words, drawing a box around it. The researcher then divided the text into segments of information and labelled them with code-words or phrases that accurately described the meaning the text segment. Codes can address many different topics, such as the setting and the context, perspectives held by participants, processes, activities, strategies, relationships and social structure.

De Vos *et al.* (2005:243) wrote that in the coding process the researcher divides the text data into text or image segments, labels the segments with codes, examines the codes for redundancy and overlap and then collapses these codes into broad themes. The process I followed was similar, making a list of all code words, grouping similar codes and looking for redundant codes in order to reduce them to a smaller manageable number.

The researcher generated themes and patterns by reducing the list of codes to get five to seven themes that would enable me to write a qualitative report. According to Creswell (2008:248), themes are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the data base. They form a core element in qualitative data analysis. The researcher used themes to reduce the excessive number of codes. I was guided by these steps to analyse data empirically, and allocated keys to common statements which were then clustered under various themes as they emerged. Themes were layered into major and minor themes and I checked on how these interrelated and interconnected (Creswell, 2008:252).

3.8 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Credibility is, according to De Vos (2005:346), the alternative to internal validity in which the goal is to demonstrate that the enquiry is conducted in such a manner that the subjects are accurately identified and described. In order to make sure that the findings and interpretations throughout the data collection and analysis are accurate, credible and trustworthy, the researcher employed the following strategies to help evaluate or to increase legitimation because, according to Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2006:239), there is no method that is guaranteed to yield valid data.

The researcher used prolonged engagement by conducting the study for a sufficient time to obtain an adequate representation of the voice under study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006:239). I triangulated the different data sources to enhance the accuracy of the study and used different methods to obtain corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2008:258, 267; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006:239). I returned the findings to the participants and asked them about the correctness of the report in order to determine its accuracy (Creswell, 2008:267; McMillan & Schumacher 2006:326). In addition, the participants were quoted verbatim in order to give substance to the findings. I used a tape-recorder to provide accurate data and evidence (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:326).

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The fact that human beings are the object of study in the social sciences brings unique ethical problems to the fore which would not be relevant in the natural sciences. For researchers in the social sciences, the ethical issues are pervasive and complex, since data should not be obtained at the expense of human beings (De Vos, *et al* 2006:56). Ethical considerations are inseparable from a researcher's everyday interactions with research participants and the data. The distance between the researcher and the participants does not make a study more conducive to meeting ethical standards; however, a neutral stance in itself can be construed as an ethical issue because it can lead to objectification of others. A large area of ethical consideration and discussion in qualitative research therefore concerns the nature of the relationship with research participants. The development of an ethical code is important as a guide for people doing field research (Glesne, 2006:129, 132). Different authors have identified different broad ethical issues but the researcher opted to use the ethical considerations as espoused in De Vos *et al* (2006:58-66) and Glesne (2006:132-143).

3.9.1 Informed Consent

I wrote a letter to the department of education authorities at Moretele APO (see appendix A) and was granted permission to conduct the research (see appendix B) as gatekeepers of Makapanstad Central schools and to the principals of the schools selected for the study (See appendix. I) provided the department of education officials with information on the goals of the investigation and the procedure that would be followed in the research.

Babbie (2001), Neuman (2003) and De Vos (2006:59) call informed consent “voluntary participation”, and through this (See appendix D) participants were made aware that participation in the study was voluntary, that they could freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study, and that written consent would be required. Written consent would also eliminate all unobtrusive field observations and informal conversations.

The possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed as well as my credibility as researcher were explained to the subjects. The participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the project whenever they wished and to decide not to answer questions that they felt they were not comfortable with. Confidentiality among participants was assured, ensured and practised. I did not expose participants to any physical harm or humiliation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334-335; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:101-102).

3.9.2 Violation of privacy, anonymity or confidentiality

According to Glesne (2006:138) and De Vos et al (2005:61), participants have a right to expect that when they give the researcher permission to observe and interview them the researcher will in turn protect their confidence, respect their privacy and preserve their anonymity. I respected the participants' confidentiality by not discussing with anyone the specifics of what I heard or said. I considered and protected the rights of participants to privacy and anonymity by using pseudonyms or labels of alphabet letters, and participants were not exposed to any risks.

3.9.3 Reciprocity

Glesne (2006:142) defines 'reciprocity' as the exchange of favours and commitment, the building of a sense of mutual identification and a feeling of community. As research participants willingly open up their lives for researchers, researchers become overjoyed with the data they are gathering but are worried about their inability to adequately reciprocate. The researcher reciprocated by organising lunch for the participants, in cases where participants had sacrificed their time.

3.9.4 Avoidance of harm

De Vos et al. (2006:58) state that subjects can be harmed in a physical or emotional manner. In the social sciences, harm to subjects will be mainly of an emotional nature, but is difficult to predict and to determine, with far-reaching consequences for respondents. To avoid harm to the participants I informed them beforehand about the impact of the investigation and offered them opportunities to withdraw if they so wished.

3.9.5 Debriefing the respondents

A debriefing session is one during which subjects have the opportunity to work through their experiences and its aftermath after the study. I debriefed the respondents by discussing with them their feelings about the study. This took place in a supportive and therapeutic environment.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a description of the approach selected for the study and the justification for selecting the approach, the modes of inquiry that were used to obtain data, i.e., observations, interviews and document study, the sampling strategies that were used, ethical considerations, theoretical frameworks and data analysis procedures. In the next chapter the data collected will be transcribed and analysed.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter deliberated on the research methodology that was used to conduct this study. In this chapter I present empirical findings based on the key purpose of the study, namely understanding the reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in inclusive schools. The aim is to make new factual discoveries and to confirm the existence of previously hypothesised phenomena. I therefore employed inductive generalisation, which involved applying inferences from specific observations, such as a sample of cases, to a theoretical population. According to Mouton (2005:117), inductive generalisation is a form of statistical inference in which one generalises from a sample to the target population.

I present the interpretations and analysis of data that accrued from observations, interviews and document study. De Vos et al (2003:340) says that data interpretation and data analysis can best be represented in a spiral image whereby the researcher moves in analytical circles rather than using a fixed linear approach. The presentation commences with an organogram and brief description of the North West Department of Education. Secondly, characteristics of the schools that participated in the study are tabulated, followed by observations on those based in their physical settings or location, according to accessibility and infrastructure, conditions and availability of resources, the culture of teaching and learning in the schools and observations of reading lessons. Lastly, the discussion of the findings obtained from the interviewed participants are explored and analysed

NORTH WEST DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

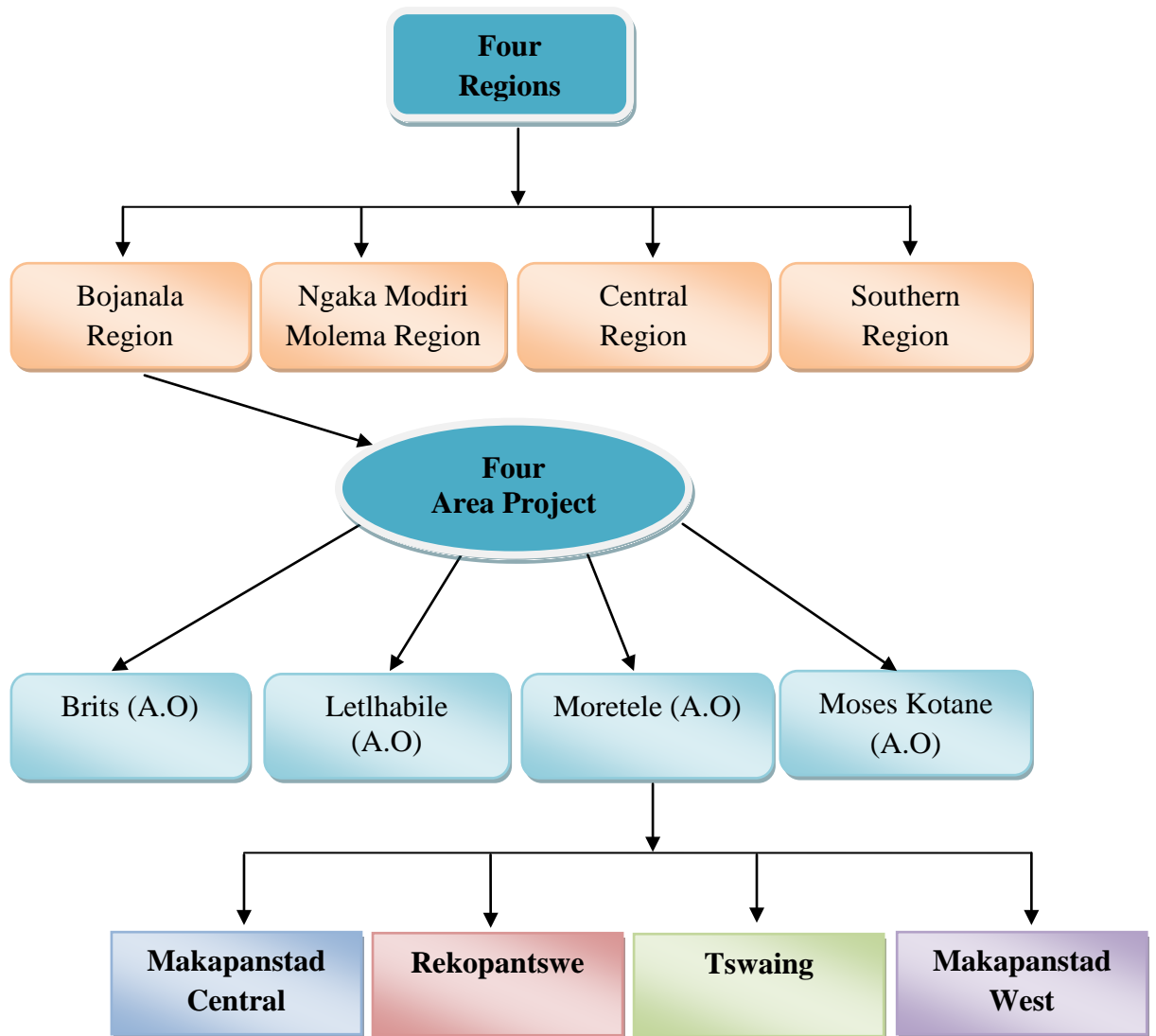


Figure 4.3: Organogram of the North-West Department of Education

The (NW DoE) embodies all the nine provincial Departments of Education in South Africa, with the provinces developing their own structures of education in line with the national one. A brief outline of the background of the structure of the North-West Department of Education will provide a context and further clarification of the study. Based in Mafikeng (Mahikeng) it is made up of four regions, Bophirima, Bojanala, Central and Southern. This study is confined to the Bojanala region, based in Rustenburg, sub-divided into four Area Project Offices (APOs) known as: Moretele, Brits, Letlhabile and Moses Kotane. The schools selected for conducting the project are in Moretele (APO) which is located about 160Km from Rustenburg. Moretele APO is further divided into four clusters, i.e., Makapanstad Central, Rekopantswe, Tswaing and West.

The cluster for the research is Makapanstad Central, located in the Makapanstad area in the North-West Province about 30 Km from Tswaing Crater Museum and the Gauteng border. The area consists partly of deep-rural and semi-rural settings, with nine primary schools, three middle schools, currently in the process of being phased out, and three high schools.

4.2. OBSERVATION OF SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY

Observations made of the schools are presented in this section.

4.2.1 School A

Location

School A is situated in Moretele Local Municipality, in the eastern part of Bojanala region in the North West province. The municipality consists of a number of rural and semi-rural areas, including Makapanstad, which is a semi-rural area in which school A is located. The school is about five kilometres from the area Office of the North West Department of Education, known as the Area Project Office (APO).

Infrastructure

School A is a primary school comprising two phases, namely the *Foundation Phase*, which includes grade R (also known as reception class) up to grade three, and the *intermediate phase*, which comprises grades four to six. The school has three blocks with four classrooms each (one for the Foundation Phase, one for the intermediate phase and one for a library, media centre, remedial class and science laboratory. The school has an administration block, which is at the centre of the three blocks and consists of the principal's office, the administrative assistant's office and the staffroom.

The buildings of the first two blocks are very old but are well looked after and have been renovated. The classes are neatly kept with bulletin boards on the walls, a steel cupboard, a chalkboard and a basin with a clean towel in front of each class. The school surroundings are neat. There are two large playgrounds for boys and girls and a schoolyard that is fenced with palisade fencing and running water. There are attractive flower gardens in front of the classrooms and a vegetable garden at the back of the schoolyard with a steel car port at the front next to the main entrance.

Human Resources

The school has an acting principal, who is an acting manager of the school, two departmental heads who serve on the school management team, and nine teachers (three male teachers and nine female teachers). The school has an enrolment of 410 learners, 8 members of the school governing body (SGB), including two teacher representatives and two non-educator staff. The school has a remedial teacher who attended workshops arranged by the North West Department of Education to train specific teachers on remedial teaching and learning in order to support learners with special educational needs. The teacher has a national diploma on Learners with special Educational Needs (LSEN).

The culture of teaching and learning

Teachers report at the school 15 minutes before the morning devotion, which lasts for 15 minutes. Foundation Phase learners assemble in front of their block and the intermediate phase assemble in front of the principal's office. Learners sing religious songs or choruses followed by a scripture reading, or motivational talk, a prayer and the singing of the national anthem, after which learners march in orderly fashion to their classes. Teachers disperse to their various classrooms and the normal routine of teaching and learning ensues.

The language used for teaching and learning is Setswana in the Foundation Phase and English in the intermediate phase. The teacher-pupil ratio is 1:35. The environment is very quiet during lessons. The Foundation Phase learners' contact time ends at 13H00 and at 14H00 for intermediate phase. Teachers finish their working the school at 14H30, having ensured and assured that preparations for the next day are in order.

The Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM)

School A has enough furniture for both the learners and the teachers, the DBE workbooks are observed in classes in the cupboard. Teaching aids are observed on the wall, which is labelled according to different learning areas in the Foundation Phase; a library is available at the school but is under-resourced in terms of facilities. There are computers at the school but very few. Learners are on the National School Nutrition Programme serves learners daily with healthy and nutritious food.

4.2.2 School B

Location

School B is situated in Moretele Local Municipality, in the eastern part of Bojanala region in the North West province, comprising a number of rural and semi-rural areas that include Makapanstad, a semi-rural area. School B is located in a remote area in the southern part of Makapanstad, part of Makapanstad Central cluster and about 25 kilometres from the area Office of the North West Department of Education, known as Moretele APO.

Infrastructure

School B is a primary school comprising two phases, namely the Foundation Phase, which includes grade R (also known as reception class) up to grades three and the intermediate phase, which comprises grades 4 to 6. The school has two blocks with four classrooms each (one for the Foundation Phase, the other for the intermediate phase). It has an administration block, which is the first small block seen on entering the school premises from the main entrance, and consisting of the principal's office and the administrative assistant (AA)'s office. There is no staffroom or library at the school.

The buildings of school B are not very old, the neat but without bulletin boards on the walls. Built in-cupboards were observed in Foundation Phase classrooms, a chalkboard, a basin with clean water and a bucket of water in the classrooms. The school surroundings are neat but very dry and dusty without flower gardens or lawn. There are two blocks of pit toilets for boys and girls, two large playgrounds for boys and girls, a windmill pump that supplies water for the whole within the school premises and the schoolyard that is fenced with mash wire fencing. There are no vegetable gardens at the school.

Human Resources

The school B has one principal, who is referred to in this study as the 'manager' of the school, one head of department (HoD) and one senior teacher who serve on the school management team (SMT), and nine teachers (three male and nine female). The school has an enrolment of 208 learners, 6 members of the SGB, including one teacher representative and one non-educator member of staff. The school has a remedial teacher, who attended workshops arranged by the North West Department of Education to train specific teachers on remedial teaching and learning in order to support learners with special educational needs, but no relevant qualification to that effect.

The culture of teaching and learning

The school commences at 7H45, with morning devotion that lasts for 15 minutes. All learners assemble in front of the administration block for morning devotion. In the morning devotion, learners chant choruses, followed by a prayer and the singing of the national anthem. Thereafter, learners march to their classes whilst educators meet at the manager's office for control of the time register and announcements. Contact time between teachers and learners starts at 8H00 and ends at 13H30 for Foundation Phase learners and 14H00 for the intermediate phase. The teacher-pupil ratio in this school is 1:30. The language used for teaching and learning is Setswana in the Foundation Phase and English in the intermediate phase. Teachers finish work in the school at 14H45, earlier than normal due to transport problem.

The Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM)

School B has enough furniture for both the learners and the teachers, and steel shelves are observed in Foundation Phase classes. There is no bulletin board. Few teaching and learning aids are observed on the walls in the Foundation Phase as teachers said that they were falling off the wall when glued. Only the DBE workbooks are observed in classes on the steel shelves, with number of few reading books. There is no library at the school. The few computers available were congested in the AA's office. Learners are on the National School Nutrition Programme, which serves them daily with healthy and nutritious food. The school has a special class known as an LSEN, which caters for learners with severe impairments.

4.2.3 School C

Location

School C is also situated in Moretele Local Municipality, in the eastern part of Bojanala region in the North West province. The municipality made up of a number of rural and semi-rural areas, including Makapanstad, which is a semi-rural area. School C is located in a rural area, about 15 kilometres southwards from the area Office of the North West Department of Education, Moretele APO. The school is located in a rural area characterised by unemployment and poverty.

Infrastructure

School C is a primary school that consists of two phases, namely the Foundation Phase, which includes grade R (also known as reception class) up to grade 3, and the intermediate phase which comprises of grades 4 to 7. The school has four old blocks with five classrooms each, two for the Foundation Phase, two for the intermediate phase, including the manager's and the AA's office, and a staffroom which is being used as the deputy's office.

The buildings of the four blocks are very old but are well looked after and have been renovated. The classes are neatly kept with bulletin boards on the walls, a modern wooden cupboard in each class, modern classroom furniture, wooden shelves, a chalkboard and a basin with a clean towel in front of each class. The school surroundings are neat with flower gardens at the front of each class. There is running water in the school yard and a vegetable garden at the back of the schoolyard. There is a large carport next to the main entrance. The school has a high enrolment of learners and Foundation Phase classes are overcrowded. However, major renovations of school buildings were observed at the school. There is one large playground for boys outside the school yard and one for girls inside a school yard that is fenced with mesh wire fencing.

Human Resource

The school has a principal, who is referred to as the manager of the school in this study, two deputy principals, three HoDs, three senior teachers who serve on the SMT and 14 teachers (two male and twelve female). The school has an enrolment of 927 learners, 11 members of the SGB, including two teacher representatives and two non-educator staff. The school has a functional Institutional Level Support Team (ILST) which is coordinated by well-informed committee members who are mostly specialists in LSEN. The ILST committees were instituted after the adoption of the inclusive education policy in mainstream schools. The District-based Support Team (DBST) in Moretele APO trained

educators on inclusive education and how to support, guide and assist learners with special educational needs. The ILST is school based and consists of nine committee members, including relevant stakeholders.

The culture of teaching and learning

At school C, teachers start at 7H30, 15 minutes before learners, the time which is used for reports, announcements and control of the time register. The school starts at 7H45 with morning devotion that lasts for 15 minutes. On Mondays, all learners assemble next to the principal's office for morning devotion. Learners sing religious songs or choruses followed by a scripture reading, or motivational talk, a prayer, observation of birthdays for learners and educators, a birthday song and, lastly, the singing of the national anthem. Thereafter, learners march in orderly fashion to their classes.

Teachers disperse to their various classrooms and the normal routine of teaching and learning ensues. The language used for teaching and learning is Setswana in the Foundation Phase. The environment is very quiet during lessons. Class timetables are available and observed by teachers. The classrooms are conducive to learning, very colourful with a print-rich environment. The Foundation Phase learners' contact time ends at 13H00 for grades 1 and 2 and at 13H30 for the grade 3 learners. Teachers finish working at the school at 14H30 after ensuring that marking has been done and preparations made for the next day. The teacher-pupil ratio in this school is 1:45.

The Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM)

School C has enough furniture for both the learners and the teachers, with only the DBE workbooks being observed in classes on the shelves. Teaching aids are observed on the wall and are labelled according to the different learning areas in the Foundation Phase. A library is available at the school. The media centre has a number of computers that are used by learners interchangeably according to grades. The school has enough copying and printing machines and extracurricular facilities. Learners are on the National School Nutrition Programme, which serves learners with healthy and nutritious food daily.

4.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THREE SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY

Below is a table indicating the characteristics of the three schools in comparison to one another.

SCHOOLS DEMOGRAPHICS AND GOVERNANCE	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
Number of learners	410	208	927
Number of educators	12	7	21
School Management Team	Acting principal, two Departmental heads and one remedial educator	Principal, one Departmental head and one senior teacher	Principal, three Departmental heads and two senior teachers
Number of SGB members	8	6	11
Number of phases at the schools	Two: i.e. Foundation Phase (Grade R-3) Intermediate phase (Grade 4-6)	Two: i.e. Foundation Phase (Grade R-3) Intermediate phase (Grade 4-6)	Two: i.e. Foundation Phase (Grade R-3) Intermediate phase (Grade 4-7)
Type and level of the school	Quintile 3: No-fee school	Quintile 3: No-fee school	Quintile 3: No-fee school
Student's representative body/council	None	None	Prefect system is in place

INFRASTRUCTURE	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
Number of classrooms	8	8	17
School library	The school has a well-resourced library.	The school has no library.	The school has a well-resourced library.
Administrative block	The school's administration block consists of a principal's office, a staff room and a computer room for the AA (administrative assistant).	The school's administration block consists of a principal's office, and a computer room for the AA (administrative assistant).	The school's administration block consists of the principal's office, a staff room, a computer room for the AA (administrative assistant), and the computer lab.
Security/Fencing	The school is well secured with palisade fencing.	The school is surrounded by a high fence and gate.	The school is well secured with a strong fence and steel palisade fencing.
Car-port	The school has a carport made of steel and corrugated iron.	No carport at the school.	The school has installed carport shades.
Location/site	Semi-rural area	Rural	Semi-rural area
Environment	Clean, tidy, has flower gardens and is conducive to teaching and learning.	Tidy, no flower gardens, cracked walls and floors.	Clean, tidy, has flower gardens and is conducive to teaching and learning.
Transportation	Accessible	Inaccessible. Common public transport used.	Easily accessible

RESOURCES	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
L.T.S.M	All learners at the school have access to the learner support material (textbooks) supplied by the GDE.	All learners at the school have access to the learner support material (textbooks) supplied by the GDE.	All learners at the school have access to the learner support material (textbooks) supplied by the GDE.
Teaching and learning aids	Well-resourced with teaching and learning aids.	Under-resourced with teaching and learning aids.	Well-resourced with teaching and learning aids.
Television	No television	No television	Has one big television
Computers	One computer	One computer	Twenty-two computers
Chalkboards	Good quality chalkboards installed in the classrooms.	Worn-out chalkboards in classrooms.	Good quality chalkboards installed in the classrooms.
School furniture	Sufficient for all learners at school.	Surplus furniture available at the school.	Insufficient furniture for the school.
Radios	None	None	Radios available at the school
Overhead projector	None	None	One overhead projector

LEARNER SUPPORT	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
Extra- & Co-curricular activities	Soccer, netball, music, soulbuddyz	Soccer, netball, music	Soccer, netball, music, soulbuddyz, chess, table tennis and softball
Academic support	Remedial class for learners with special educational needs.	A special class at the school for learners with severe challenges	ILST(Institutional Level Support Teams) and intensive intervention programmes
National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP)	School nutrition programmes are in full operation for all learners.	School nutrition programmes are in full operation for all learners.	School nutrition programmes are in full operation for all learners.

Table 4.1: Characteristics of the three schools involved in the study

4.4 COMPARISON OF SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

All the schools selected for the study are primary schools located in the vicinity of the Makapanstad cluster. They are all situated in rural and semi-rural villages around Makapanstad, not very far apart from one another. They are all old, under-resourced rural schools with two phases of learning, that is, the Foundation Phase and the intermediate phase. The selected schools are all classified as quintile three (no-fee schools) because the community in the area is mostly unemployed and impoverished. The schools comprise of the SMT and SGB, educators, learners and non-educator staff members. Two of the schools were selected by the North-West Department of Education as pilot schools for inclusive education.

In the sections below I provide a comparison of the schools that participated in the study in relation to the data collected, grouped under specific attributes. For ethical reasons the schools are referred to as School A, B and C and pseudonyms are used for participants interviewed.

Location/Accessibility: Schools A and C are both located in a semi-rural area next to essential services, accessible transportation and in the vicinity of other schools, whereas School B is located in a deep rural area that is not easily accessible and is in a secluded area. Travelling to and from the school is a tedious exercise, because much time is wasted on waiting for common public transport.

Physical setting and infrastructure: All the schools are well secured to ensure safety. The environment for Schools A and C is conducive to learning since they are marked by flower gardens, vegetable gardens and clean surroundings, whereas School B is without flowers or vegetable gardens and is marked by cracked walls and floors and a dull and unwelcoming teaching and learning environment.

Availability of resources (LTSM): All the schools receive the learner-teacher support materials from the DoE in the form of textbooks and workbooks that are enough for every learner at the school.

Teaching and learning aids: Data accrued from observations indicate that there is a vast difference in the distribution of teaching and learning aids in the three schools such as libraries and media centres. The data reflects that schools in rural areas (e.g., School B) are under-resourced and neglected, whereas a school in semi-rural and rural area (e.g., School A and C) are advantaged and resourced though not well-resourced.

Daily routine/activities: Both Schools A and C educators start at 7h30 with a morning briefing and a few extra minutes of preparations for the day's activities, whereas educators in School B start their day at the assembly with learners and hence the contact time of many is compromised.

Learner support and inclusivity: All the schools operate within an inclusive setting as all have learners with barriers to learning and different support structures to meet diverse learners' needs and develop the learners to their full potential. For example, in School A the remedial class caters for learners with special learning needs learners who do not perform at the required level of a specific grade. All learners at the school who are experiencing various problems are catered for in this remedial class at different times according to the timetable in School B the special class is instituted specifically for learners with severe intellectual disabilities, while School C uses the ILST and the DBST to support learners with various intervention strategies to ensure that learners develop to their full potential.

Observation of reading lessons: The educators in Schools A and C apply the constructivists' theory of teaching and learning whereby learners play an active role in knowledge acquisition which forms the basis of OBE. Educators use both the bottom-up and the top-down approach to teach reading. In School B educators neither teach reading nor writing as the learners in the special class are severely impaired and the class serves as a holding room to ensure their safety and protection. Effective teaching and learning cannot therefore be well achieved for these learners.

Teacher-pupil relationship: Educators from all the schools relate well with their learners and those in School B accept severely impaired learners as their peers and friends, and they socialise well. In addition the educators in Schools A and C provide learners with the necessary skills, support and guidance.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEW RESULTS

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005:135-136), the researcher in a case study may focus on individual(s), programme(s) or events. For this study, I employed a multiple instrumental case study and data was collected through focus group interviews (Foundation Phase educators and LSEN educators, that is, two from each school). Individual interviews were held with three school principals and a Foundation Phase education specialist.

Interviews were conducted in the home language (Setswana) and in English. I organised, arranged, grouped and transcribed the collected data from interviews into themes and sub-themes and patterns for analysis.

Themes	Sub-themes	
Theme one	Causes of reading problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum changes • Lack of resources (human and physical) • Discipline • Impairments
Theme two	Factors affecting reading difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum changes • Discipline • Poverty • Parents
Theme three	The impact of reading difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant failure • Inferiority complex • Anger, frustration and anxiety and bullying • School drop-outs
Theme three	Do educators get the required support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Negative
Theme four	Strategies employed for teaching reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a conducive environment • Teaching and learning aids
Theme five	Learner support measures in selected schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic programmes on teaching reading • Intervention strategies

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes

4.5.1 Theme 1: Causes of reading problems

In your view what do you think are the causes of reading problems in schools?

Sub-theme: Curriculum changes

De Vos et al. (2003:12) state that education in South Africa has long been influenced by the educational systems in other countries and has served a political purpose with opposing points of view. At no point in its history was education the spontaneous expression of the ethos of the South African people. Political factors have also led to repeated curriculum changes which have frustrated and disillusioned educators.

Managers from Schools A, B and C remarked that the DoE had embarked on many critical changes within a short time without ensuring proper and thorough training of teachers. They were negatively affected by these changes and as a result most teachers were not productive and good teachers exit the system.

Educators A1 & A2, B1, B2 & B3 and C1 & C3 responded that they were no longer sure what they were doing because instead of teaching learners they had to concentrate more on paper work: *“Rona matichere re fetogile di clerk gona le gore re rutebana”*. (Translation: Teachers concentrate more on administrative work rather than actually teaching learners).

The school manager from School B remarked that learners’ reading problems were in part related to curriculum changes that are often not well understood by educators. They are expected to implement them and some principals are also expected to lead the process: *“If only thorough consultations and research were conducted before changes in education were implemented, the current situation would have been avoided”*.

Educator B2 from School B alleged that learners’ reading difficulties are increased by a curriculum that does not say much about how and when reading must be taught or what to teach. There are no graded readers in schools so every individual educator teaches reading whenever s/he feels like it: *“Rona ga re satlhole re itse gore re ruteeng, neng le gone jaang.”*(Translation: As educators, we no longer know what is expected of us nor when and how to teach learners reading.)

Sub-theme: Lack of human and physical resources

Fleisch (2008:2) states that South African studies of academic achievement find strong and positive correlation between socio-economic background and academic performance, and that a full 25 percent of achievement is explainable in terms of the social background of pupils, that studies indicate that there is a strong relationship between poverty and performance, and that poverty is linked to underperformance.

All respondents from Schools A, B & C allege that a lack of resources, especially in rural areas, exacerbates reading difficulties, particularly in the Foundation Phase. "*Lesolege le yantweng le newaditlhabanotsalonatseo le tshwanelwang go di dirisamararonamaticherega re naditlabakelo le ditshwanelomme re tshwanelwake go rutangwana go bala.*" (Translation: For educators to function optimally and for effective learning to occur, they must be provided with teaching and learning aids (resources) such as subject policies, graded reading books, ready-made alphabets and phonic frieze charts, counting blocks.)

Most educators who are qualified with specific expertise often go for greener pastures as a result of which schools have to settle for under-qualified, underperforming and aged educators. The school manager from School A remarked that lack of dedication from educators, lack of interest from learners and parents exacerbate reading difficulties in schools. "*Matichere a bjaanong a itsepolotikifelagabakgathallebana.*" (Translation: Educators are no longer dedicated in their work as educators but rather politicise education to suit their personal interests.)

The school manager from School C remarked as follows: "*banagaba bale kagonnegabanathotloetso.*" (Translation: learners do not read at the required level because their educators also do not read, therefore the culture of reading is not instilled among learners.)

Sub-theme: Discipline

The South African Schools Act (SASA 1997:67) states clearly that corporal punishment may no longer be used in schools. In addition, section 12 of the Constitution states that everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way; the Education Labour Relation Council also states that no person may administer corporal punishment to a learner at school. Managers from the three primary schools remarked that some learners in their schools were un-controllable, doing as they pleased and hampering effective teaching and learning at schools, which influence low reading levels: "*Educators send offenders to the office, parents do not respond when called, it is just a mess,*

Maticherele onaga a batle go dirantle le kgapeletso, kekgomoyamosate.”(Translation: It is a difficult task at this time and era to ensure effective teaching and learning in schools.

In School C, educators C1, C2 & C3 responded that educators in the Foundation Phase classes were faced with overcrowding in their classrooms and were therefore unable to support learners individually to ensure effective teaching and learning: *“Barutabanabatlosiwafa, baisiwakwa, le fatotamaemo a sadumelelefapha la ronaga le kgathale”*. (Translation: Teachers are redeployed to other institutions even if schools become dysfunctional and redundant after their departure. The department is less concerned as they enforce law). Redeployment lowers the educator’s morale, enforces multi-grade teaching (that is teaching different learners of different grades in the same class at the same time) and a platooning (that is a system where learners attend morning and afternoon sessions alternately in the same class and grade) system in turn leads to educators being unable to maintain discipline and develop a culture of effective teaching and learning.

Sub-theme: Impairment

Educators from all the selected schools pointed out that in most instances learners experienced reading difficulties as a result of their impairments such as auditory, visual impairments and speech problems. Educators revealed that learners come to school with various impairments, which are sometimes discovered at later stages: “*metlhaefetogile ,banabajaanongkedipolasetikigabana guarantee le thutoyajaanong e fetogile*”. (Translation: Children of this day and age are all included in mainstream institutions/schools with major physical defects and need to be handled with care which is a challenge for most educators.

4.5.2 Theme 2 Factors affecting learner's reading levels

What factors do you think affect learner's reading levels?

Teacher A1, A2, A3, C1, C2 and B2 commented on the parent's lack of interest and supervision of their children schoolwork, including homework. Teachers A2, A3, C1, C3 remarked that some of the parents were working and spent less time with their children while some parents were unable to help their them as they themselves were not educated and did not understand what or how to help their children. All teachers unanimously agreed on lack of discipline and motivation as being the major factors of exacerbated reading difficulties as most learners do as they wish in the classrooms taking for granted that they will not be punished or reprimanded.

Teacher A2, C1, C2 and B3 cited poverty as one of the factor affecting learners reading levels and indicated that some learner get exposure to reading books only at school and only get the opportunity to read at the school only as there are no libraries in the area and this limits the learners explorations and reading practice. The managers from School A and C indicated that they have observed that educators are not observing the FFL campaign that states that learners must read daily and practice mental mathematics and counting for 30 minutes daily.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Impact of reading difficulties

What do you think is the impact of reading difficulties on learners?

Sub-theme: Constant failure

Darrel (2005:4) is of the opinion that early and sustained failure in reading has devastating consequences in the lives of low readers, their families and in the socio-economic life of the community. The National Protocol for Assessment Grade R-12 (DoE, 2010:5) states that promotion requirements from grade to grade through the Foundation Phase should be within the appropriate age cohort, and there should be no learner retention in the phase for a period of more than four years. That, according to educators' responses, leads to conditional promotions which negatively affect learners' performance and causes constant failures which later result, inter alia, in bullying and teenage suicides.

Many children who experience reading difficulties are unable to find appropriate ways of learning and overcoming their constant failures. According to Lerner & Johns (2009:18), constant repeated failures makes learners to become more conscious of their poor performance which ultimately results in emotional, social and self concept problems. Many of these learners end up being drawn to juvenile delinquency or become tempted to drop out of school.

Sub-theme: Inferiority complex

Selected educators from all three selected schools unanimously named the following as manifestations of learners with reading difficulties. They stated that such learners are withdrawn in the classroom. They are filled with fear and they do not participate in the reading activities for fear that they will be laughed at or scorned by other learners. They are afraid of making mistakes or to attempt reading anything and often engage in rote learning, lip-reading or mimicking as other learners are reading: "*Banabagababattle go dira le bangwekafaphaposimgmmeebilebabodipakagonnebatshabago tshegiwakebarutwanabangwekafaphaposimg.*" (Translation: Children do not want to

participate in the classroom activities and they tend to be stubborn as they fear being scorned or laughed by their peers).

Sub-theme: School drop-outs

In a report by the National Committee on Education Support (NCES) and the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET), one of their findings was that “the curriculum and the education system as a whole has generally failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, resulting in massive numbers of drop-outs” (White Paper 6, 2001:5). As the learner grades progresses to higher level, the tougher the curriculum demands on learners therefore, the challenges of learners experiencing reading difficulties also intensify. Learners with reading difficulties lack the requisite skills needed to meet academic expectations, they become passively involved academically and lack the motivation to learn hence they end up dropping out of the schools. Interviews reveal that even if learners are identified and supported at the Foundation Phase they are neglected as they progress to the upper levels, and as a result they regress, bunk classes and ultimately become drop-outs.

4.5.4 Theme 4: Support

Do educators get the support required?

Participants from Schools A (A1) and C (C1.C2, and C3) responded positively and commended the Department for their innovations: “*Nnatotakefitlhelathuso e ke e tlhokanggonnekegaufi le balefapha le keteloya bona mosekoleng e a nthotloetsa.*”(Translation: The support and regular visits by the department encourage me to work harder.)

An educator from School B (B2) responded negatively, indicating that she was ‘stuck’ with severely impaired learners with no help or guidance from the subject specialists or her superiors. “*Gakekgone go dirisabarutwanatiroyamatsogogonnegakenadidiriswamme ebilega go thuso e ke e bonanggotswa go balefapha la thuto.*”(Translation: I cannot provide learners with skills as I do not have facilities, materials nor get any support from the Department.)

When asked, the specialist remarked: “*Re tshwanelwake go dirisadikoloitsarona go tsamayamodikolong re dirisa le ditselatse di sasiangmmeebile re tshwanelwake go diramodikolong di le dintsitseokwabofelong re retelelwangke go di wetsatsotlhe.*”(Translation: We are expected to use our own transport as the area office is

understaffed, with no transportation for ensuring that schools are guided and supported on inclusive education, therefore support for schools is minimal.)

4.5.5 Theme 5: Strategies employed for teaching reading

All interviewees (educators) from the three primary schools preferred the bottom-up approach as their strategy for teaching reading as they alleged that there is no “one good prescribed method” for teaching reading and that as experienced teachers they used this same method that has yielded good results in the past.

4.5.6 Theme 6: Learner support measures in schools

The respondents from Schools A and C identified the following as support measures in school for teaching reading, namely: the strategic plan on teaching reading (e.g., Molteno programme), the intervention programmes on reading, the individual support plan (ISP) for learners experiencing reading difficulties, and the enrichment programme for learners who can read. It is critical to identify learners with reading difficulties early in elementary years so as to provide them with appropriate instruction and interventions so that reading difficulties are resolved during their early years of schooling than when they are older. Reading problems reflect reading difficulties that were not resolved in the early years.

4.6 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

I observed that **School A** has an enrolment of 410, but only 32 learners with reading and writing difficulties are sent to the school's support team who conduct intervention programmes and later refer them to the remedial class. From these intervention programmes, the researcher could deduce that a very small percentage of learners in the school experience reading difficulties. Through extensive learner support and guidance, learners are eventually sent back to mainstream classes. According to the records, only one learner was referred to a special school. The progression schedules over the past three years indicate no learners being retained at the end of the year.

In **School B** I discovered through checking learners' portfolios that learners could not transcribe nor read at the required level, but rather learners were taught basic skills such as writing their names and surnames. Their workbooks were incomplete though the marking was positive, and encouraged participation and positive self-esteem. Some of the learners in the pull-out class could neatly write their names and surnames with proper guidance and additional time. There were very few learners and most of them were over-aged. The class

register was controlled daily. There were no graded readers in this classroom, and only magazines were seen lying on the shelves.

The researcher checked on the learners' portfolios/profiles in **Schools A and C**, as well as their workbooks, to check on the extent of reading difficulties experienced by each learner. Records of continual assessment were checked to assess learners' progress. Reading books were checked to verify that they were at the required level. I checked the recording sheet to check on the general overall performance and checked on the analysis of quarterly results in the schools to assess the level of learners' performances which were for me below the required levels. From the document analysis of intervention form and progression schedule, I could deduce that learners with reading difficulties were progressing well through the support instituted by their educators.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have analysed and interpreted data obtained through observations, interviews and document studies. The next chapter will provide a discussion on the findings and the recommendations of the research study conducted in the participating schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter encompasses the following: firstly, it provides a brief outline of the research problem; secondly, it provides an overview of the study (the procedure and summaries of the chapter contents) and limitations of the study. The findings and recommendations of the study conclude the chapter.

5.2 AN OUTLINE OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The main research question was: what strategies/support measures could be used by teachers to assist learners experiencing reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase in primary schools within inclusive settings in Makapanstad Central? The following sub-questions were used to answer the main research question and they were structured as follows:-

- What is the current state of reading in the selected schools?
- What are the causes of reading difficulties?
- What factors influences and affect learner's reading levels/difficulties?
- What methods, models learning theories and approaches can be used to teach reading?
- How is reading taught in the selected schools?
- What strategies can be used to improve or alleviate reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in selected primary schools within an inclusive setting in Makapanstad Central?

5.3 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The dissertation has been structured into five chapters which are divided as follows:-

Chapter One: The chapter reveals rationale and background to the study indicating that learners' low reading levels and learners' experiences of reading difficulties are not only a national issue but a global issue that warrants attention and needs solutions. It further reflects the concerns and initiatives by the National and Provincial departments of education to alleviate or reduce the problem through the launching of various campaigns. Baatjies (2003:11) mentions that the ability to read is pertinent to all forms of life and that the failure of learners to read at the required level indicates that the education of learners is in crisis.

The literature study has indicated that government has an interest in and is keen to ensure that the quality of education is improved, especially where reading is concerned. These intentions are evidenced by the initiatives by the Department of Education to improve reading through the establishment of various campaigns, for example: the Foundations for Learning Programme (FFL), The National Reading Strategy (NRS), The Learner Attainment Improvement Plan (LAIP), The Quality Teaching and Learning Campaign and many others. The chapter has provided the background to the study and the justification for conducting the study, stating the research aim and objectives, the research methodologies, the limitations of the study and lastly the ethical considerations.

Chapter Two: The chapter provides a brief discussion on reading difficulties. The literature review in this chapter indicated the current state of reading globally, in the continent of Africa, and locally, the possible causes of learners' reading difficulties and factors influencing learners' reading difficulties, the reading models, methods and approaches for teaching reading and the learning theories.

Different theorists hold different views on learning. Schunk (2008:73) states that behaviourists explain learning in terms of environmental events and that they believe that reinforcements and awards encourage good behaviour; cognitivists believe that the child's cognitive processes influence his or her ability to learn; constructivists believe that learning occurs as a result of interactions between the persons and their environments.

As the researcher in this study, my frame of reference is based on the constructivists' theory. The researcher is therefore in alignment with the theory which states that learning is an active process in which learners construct meaning out of their daily encounters (Hein, 2011:2). The constructivists' theory of learning has important implications for the current system of teaching and learning. In this chapter I have therefore discussed various approaches and methods of teaching reading.

Chapter Three has provided the blueprint for how the study was conducted, including the research methodologies, data collection strategies and analysis, population and sampling and ethical considerations and data analysis.

Chapter Four: This chapter has discussed the presentation and analysis of data gathered through observations, interviews and document study. The data gathered was transcribed for conducting analysis more easily and quickly through the use of coding, categorisation and thematic presentations and discussions. Data was analysed, interpreted and discussed. According to de Vos et.al (2003:340), the process of data analysis and data interpretation, can best be represented in a spiral image whereby the researcher moves in analytical circles rather than using a fixed linear approach.

Chapter Five provides a summary on the findings of the study, and the researcher's recommendations for reducing and improving on the reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in primary schools within an inclusive setting in Makapanstad Central, and the strategies that can be used to improve on reading difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation in primary schools within an inclusive setting.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to three primary schools within inclusive settings in Makapanstad. Only Foundation Phase educators, principals and subject education specialist for the Foundation Phase were selected for the study. Primary schools with remedial classes and well-functioning school-based support teams were preferred other than others as they would provide an information rich base for the study.

The researcher selected the schools located in the same geographical area. Even though the schools are far apart from each other, the travelling distance in between school A and C is tolerable and transport is easily accessible unlike in school B which is located in a remote area which has transport problems nonetheless, the school was also selected due to its relevance and information rich participants.

All the schools selected are classified as quintile threes because the communities around these schools are mostly unskilled and unemployed. Schools classified as quintile threes imply that the schools are amongst the poorest of the poor schools and they are all under Makapanstad Central cluster which is under the administration of Moretele Area Project Office (also known as Districts Offices in other provinces)

5.5 FINDINGS

- All the selected schools are comprised of two phases namely, the Foundation Phase (beginning from grade R to grade Three) and the intermediate phase (grade Four to grade six)
- The school management teams in all the schools comprised of the principal as head of the school (manager) the Head of Departments, senior teacher and the school governing bodies except for school C which also had a Deputy Principal.
- In school “A” and “C” the school buildings are very old but properly cared for with clean surroundings and flower garden in front of the classrooms whereas in school “B” the school buildings are not very old, the school does not have flower garden and the environment is not appealing or attractive.
- All the schools start at 7H45 with morning devotions characterised by the chanting of choruses, a sermon or motivation followed by a prayer and lastly the chanting of a National anthem but teachers in school “A” meet in the principals’ office 15 minutes before the school starts as well as teachers in school “C” whereas teachers in school “B” meet immediately after assembly for a short briefing of five minutes.
- In school “A” learners move directly to their classrooms and continue with their daily activities of teaching and learning and in School “B” learners fetch water from the pump for their classrooms whereas in school “C”, learners start by cleaning their veranda’s before the normal routine of teaching and learning ensues.
- Most teachers in the Foundation Phase in the selected schools are in their early and late fifties.
- Schools have no well-resourced libraries nor reading books
- Educators spend more time doing administrative work and less time teaching.
- Educators are unable to keep up with educational innovations
- Educators prefer using the bottom-up (phonic approach) to teach reading
- Teachers are demoralised to further their studies
- Progress reports indicating poor learner performance partly attributed to learner’s low reading levels

The study indicates that education is a societal issue and that there is a positive correlation between learners' socio-economic background and the learner's reading proficiency; learners from poor home backgrounds and unstable environments experience more reading difficulties than those from good stable home backgrounds. Ghanaguru, Liang, & Kit (2006:22) identify lack of motivation, unstable home environments, and prior knowledge as factors that constitute barriers to effective reading.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends the following:

- School building be revamped and renovated to add to their value as learning institutions.
- Learning institutions need to cater for learning needs and bridge the gap in order to develop the pride of learners in rural areas of being taught in a conducive teaching and learning environment similar to those of their peers.
- School to be well resourced with qualified, competent and hardworking human resource, physical resources such as libraries and teaching and learning support materials.
- Paper work is reduced to afford educators to spent time with their learners and teaching them how to read, as reading is the cornerstone of all other learning.
- Intensive workshops and in service training be conducted on a lengthy basis to ensure that all teachers know and understand what is expected of them.
- Teachers must be guided on how to teach reading or to use the policy documents when preparing to teach learners, so that they are able to keep up with educational innovations.
- Teachers to be motivated to further their studies through incentives or rewards after completion of their studies so as to realise that teaching is a noble profession that is worthy to lure the young generation.
- Re-training of all teachers to ensure that quality teaching and learning occurs.
- Conscientious parents on the value of reading through meeting, media and workshops on how they can support their children

As the researcher in the current study, I observed that learners experiencing reading difficulties often displayed the following similar and common difficulties: for example, they often confused letters and sounds, had difficulty in putting sounds in the correct order, struggled to read longer words, did not understand or remember easily, indulged in letter reversal and inversion and lacked interest in the reading material.

The study reveals a lack of dedication amongst educators to teach reading as well as a lack of experience and expertise and skill to teach reading.

It also shows that

- poverty and school conditions contribute immensely to reading difficulties experienced;
- parental involvement is still lacking, especially in rural schools;
- inclusive education is not well cascaded to lower levels (schools);
- educators need intensive training to become experts and specialists to improve teaching skills and to keep pace with innovation in education;
- classes are overcrowded and there are continuous interruptions that prohibit quality teaching and learning; and
- Teachers lack experience and support.
- All schools need to be well developed and resourced, irrespective of their being in the rural areas or not, to enable all learners to be exposed to a variety of reading material to widen their horizon and to be able to compete with their peers locally and globally without feeling inferior.
- Proper training and workshops should be implemented fully with accreditation (no crash courses/workshops) to provide the necessary skills and educators as propellers of education need to be wholly involved in innovation. Thorough investigation, research and consultation need to be embarked on before implementing any curriculum changes.
- Learners' and educators' teaching-times need to be protected. Educators should be on time and utilise learners' contact time efficiently and effectively by cutting meetings and workshops during learners' contact time. Early childhood development and support are crucial for learning; therefore it is of great importance that Education Support Structures carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively by supporting educators to implement the FFL programme, which is the initiative to improve reading.

5.7 SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING READING TO LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES

The proposed support plan is based on the following constructivist guiding principles of learning as espoused by Hein (2011:2-3) and which are grounded in the belief that learning consists of individuals' constructed meaning.

Based on the constructivists' philosophy, the researcher has developed a reading strategy to improve learners' reading proficiency in the Foundation Phase, especially in inclusive schools where learners with diverse educational needs are grouped together. The support plan or programme will run from Grade R to Grade 3 and this is outlined as follows.

The support strategy begins with a print-rich environment. It is the duty of every Foundation Phase educator to make his/her classroom reader friendly by collecting three-dimensional objects in the classroom which can be seen and touched by learners because in this early phase they are in the concrete operational stage and learn best through seeing and touching. Label the objects so that learners must read what they can see and touch. Research indicate that learners in rural schools are not well resourced and schools are not print-rich to encourage learning. Learners from poverty stricken families only see printed materials at schools.

Display two-dimensional pictures or posters and label the pictures to create reading opportunities for learners and for stimulating the reading environment. Create picture books for each learner: use A4 blank sheets where each learner can create his/her own picture book by cutting pictures from magazines, labelling the pictures with your help as an educator. Use pictures to develop wall stories.

Develop matching picture cards and sentence cards, label classroom objects to encourage incidental reading and use sign boards or advertisements which are encountered in daily life to teach reading. Charmaine Uys stated during the Foundation Phase conference that there is a strong relationship between high frequency words and reading skills and that children who have good word recognition skills are good readers and that teaching and learning high frequency words should be the basis of an effective reading instruction (DoE (NW), 2008:27).

Anne Marie Wyum (DoE, 2008:29), described the four language systems that need to be acquired by learners before they begin to read and they are, aural system (hear words), oral system (speak the words), printed system (language by eye/see the language) and the written system (language by hand). Foundation Phase learners should be taught in circles or rows on the floor so that they can clearly see the teacher and all the materials used to teach them. Create an environment that is conducive an environment that would give learners a feeling of pride and self-esteem.

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

GRADE R LEARNERS

Much of learning is informal and incidental and storytelling is a central part of the day and many lessons can be built around a favourite story.

In the first quarter (trimester) teachers in the grade “R” classrooms must emphasize visual and auditory discrimination (the ability to see differences and similarities between visual forms or images and the ability to hear similarities and differences between sounds. Start off by working with individual letters and practice writing the letter in the sand on the floor, using a play-dough, write a big letter on the floor, allow the learners to walk along the lines use all avenues that would allow learners to explore and experiment the letter. Familiarise with the corresponding sounds and let learners brainstorm words or names beginning with the sound. Draw the pictures and write the words Use the word to make a picture dictionary as new sounds are learnt, blending may begin as learning sounds on their own may be meaningless. As new sounds are learnt, learners can begin to read short words that are blended with familiar sounds.(Adapted from Spot On Teacher’s guide 2008). Gradually introduce learners to letter-sound and letter formation and encourage learners to know and identify beginning sounds in their own names.

Spatial orientation: Orientate learners about space, e.g. up, down, behind, forward, backwards, in front of, next to, etc. according to, or in relation to learner’s bodies (educator gives learners instructions and learners demonstrate the instruction and say what they are doing); and in relation to objects in the environment (use pictures or different objects in the environment to reinforce the concept of space). These are essential in teaching learners how to read and write.

Laterality: Help learners acquire the ability to distinguish between “left” and “right” in relation to their bodies (let learners know and identify different parts of their bodies and conduct activities that will reinforce the use of right and left).

Encourage **active learner participation** through songs, rhymes and activities to develop language skills. Gradually introduce learners to print through pictures and labelling or sentence cards. Read to learners as you point at the words so that they understand the dynamics of how to read (left to right and top down).

GRADE 1 - 3

It is essential for learners to hear the spoken word first, then speak the word, see the word and thereafter read the word. When teaching learners reading in the Foundation Phase, the educator has to start with phonetic awareness, then phonics and sight words, and then vocabulary.

Darrel (2005:4) & Norton (2007:5) state that just as there is no single type of learners in the reading room, instruction need to match the learner's academic needs. Russell and Santoro (2007:190) maintain that carefully designed instruction is required to help learners at risk of academic failure referred to here as learners experiencing reading difficulties. Different authors identified different models for teaching reading (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:140; Norton, 2007:8; and Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2005:88-89). I would suggest that teachers use the interactive model as a strategy for teaching reading as it encompasses both the top-down and bottom –up model.

To avoid rote learning amongst learners I suggest that teachers need to consolidate the work done in the previous grade to be sure of what learners know or do not know. In order to make sure that learning becomes meaningful, educators must start with what learners know and understand and the same applies to learning how to read.

Based on the literature review and my personal experience as an educator I align my study with constructivism theory of knowledge which argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from the interactions of their experiences and ideas, a philosophical perspective contending that individuals form or constructs much of what they learn and understands. Constructivists view learning as an active process through which learners discover concepts.

Aina, Ogugbeni & Adigun (2011:5), state that it is the learner's first language that provides a rich foundation for second language learning (see 2.11). It is against this background that the strategies for teaching reading are basically developed. The researcher recommends the following strategies for teaching reading in grade 1-3 which will be related to the components of teaching reading (see 2.11).

Enhancing reading in the classroom

- Use 3-D objects (concrete objects related to the learner's context) to teach reading;
- Develop prediction skills through pictures and wall stories;
- Label classroom objects;
- Use teaching and learning aids

Phonemic awareness

- Phonemic awareness is recognising that speech consists of a sequence of sounds and recognising the individual words, how they make new words and how the words make sentences.
- Develop the learner's listening skill through games, nursery rhymes, poems etc.
- Engage learners in activities that focus on syllable unit e.g. clap their hands as they sound their names/words for an example Bo-na, Le-se-go etc.
- Engage learners in activities that focus on phonemes e.g. put the sounds together to form a word: le/se/a/ = lesea; a/-ga= aga etc.
- Teach learners to identify initial/beginning sounds in words/names.
- Engage learners in blending activities e.g. which word would you have if you put the following sounds together (consider the level when selecting the words)
- Engage learners in segmentation activities e.g. let learners say the parts they hear in a word e.g. m/a/l/o/m/e =malome (separating phonemes)
- Kge/-tse = kgetse (separating syllables)
- Do substitution activities e.g. which word would you have if you substituted/replace the beginning sounds for an example bona –(b)-ona; (l)-ona; (s)-ona etc.

Word recognition

- When teaching a new word, let learners identify or be able to recognise phonic sounds;
- Let learners recognize letters forming a word;
- Break the word into sections (syllabification);
- Frame the word;
- Read the word and let learners repeat after you. Use this process to teach sight words.
- Get the learners to role play reading the words
- Model reading to the learners

Phonics

- According to Nel, Nel & Hugo (2012:92), phonics involves associating the speech sounds of letters and their written symbols. I suggest the following strategies for teaching reading:
- Introduce one, two or three sounds in a week depending on your learner's level of performance (this should be learner paced)
- Be sure that learners know the letter sound can write and identify them before moving on to the next
- Re-inforce letter formation by using different material and forms
- Introduce consonant vowel combination starting with the simplest (a consonant can be combined with all the vowels)
- Allow learner to build or breakdown words starting with the simplest
- Conduct a spelling informed by the phonics taught and encourage learners to read their own new words and correct the mistakes.

Comprehension

- Explore the reading material through discussions, explanations and thought provoking questions
- Explain unknown word or new vocabulary.
- use the different methods of questioning aimed at developing the learner's lower order and high order thinking
- vary your questioning to suit all learners in your class

Fluency

Fluency in reading involves being able to accurately identify the majority of words and being able to read the words quickly and effortlessly. Fluency is reading smoothly with appropriate phrasing, expression and comprehension. The following strategy for reading fluently is suggested:

- When confronted with an unknown word or phrase,
- look at the picture, go back to the word and see if you can identify the letters
- Sound-out the letters in a word
- read the entire sentence to try and get the meaning
- ask for help and re-read the word and the entire text
- model reading in order to encourage correct pronunciation whilst also teaching learners to observe punctuation marks.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The main aim study was to investigate and to explore the extent of reading difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase in schools within inclusive settings in Makapanstad Central.

Reading difficulties are exacerbated by various factors such as the socio-economic factors, the neurological factors, educational factors and many more. Most teacher are not sure on what methods to use when teaching learners to read with the majority sticking to the one way approach to teaching reading which hampers learners' reading abilities and encourages low reading levels. Lack of resources contributes immensely to learner's reading difficulties.

The study aims to significantly to improve learners' reading levels. It is imperative that Foundation Phase educators take the lead in ensuring that learners' reading levels are drastically improved and augmented. Educators as experts in their own field need to alternate various methods for teaching reading depending on the learner needs. Research indicates that no method can be singled out as the best method for teaching reading (See 2.11).

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APPENDIX A: Request permission to conduct research

Appendix A

93 Block cc

Soshanguve

0152

14-05-2010

The Manager

Kosea-Moeka Primary

P.O. Box 27894

Moeka

0404

Sir/Madam

RE: Request to conduct research

Herein please be informed that I am a Unisa Student: number 7708858

I am currently registered for Med special needs (inclusive educational) studies and would like to conduct a research on the learning difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation in inclusive schools in Makapanstad.

The findings and the recommendations of this research will be made available on request to assist in the reading difficulties experienced by learners at schools in Makapanstad.

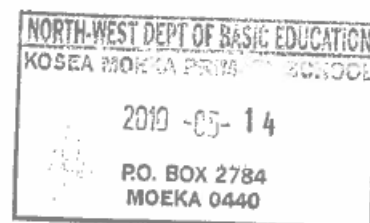
Your consideration in this regard is appreciated

Yours in Education



B.D. Hlaethwa

(Researcher)



APPENDIX B: Certify observation and interviews at Kosea-Moeka Primary School

Appendix B

KOSEA-MOEKA PRIMARY SCHOOL

P.O Box 2784, Moeka 0440

Enquiries: Mr. B. Maswanganye

Tel: (012) 705 5030

Cell: 084 725 6563

Fax: 0866502368

E-mail: koseamoekaprimary@gmail.com



24 September 2010

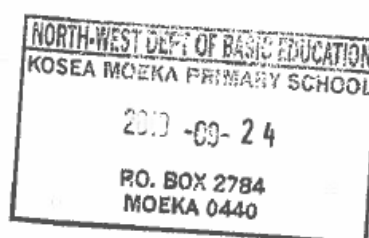
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Ms. Hlaethwa B.D. conducted the observations and interviews for her postgraduate research studies at the above-mentioned school for the period of August and September 2010.

Hope you find this in order.

Yours Faithfully

B. Maswanganye
(Principal)



APPENDIX C: Request to conduct research at Pholokgolo Primary School

Appendix C

93 Block cc

Soshanguve

0152

14-05-2010

The Manager

Pholokgolo Primary School

Eb93

Mogodi 2

Ratsiepan

Sir/Madam

RE: Request to conduct research

Herein please be informed that I am a Unisa Student: number 7708858

I am currently registered for Med special needs (inclusive educational) studies and would like to conduct a research on the learning difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation in inclusive schools in Makapanstad.

The findings and the recommendations of this research will be made available on request to assist in the reading difficulties experienced by learners at schools in Makapanstad.

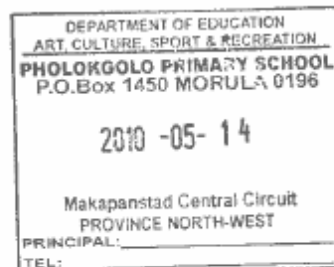
Your consideration inn this regard is appreciated

Yours in Education



B.D. Hlaithwa

(Researcher)



APPENDIX D: Permission to conduct research at Pholokgolo Primary School



North W

Appendix D

Pholokgolo Primary School

Enq: K.E Sefolo
Contact: 083 358 0305
Fax: 086 663 0305
E-mail: 600101644@nwed.gov.za

P O Box 1450
Morula
0196

22 October 2010

Ms Hlaethwa
93 Block Cc
Soshanguve
0152

Madam

I acknowledge receipt of your letter to conduct research at my school .
I hereby grant you permission to conduct your research and wish you the
best in your studies.

Kind Regards


Principal

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ART, CULTURE, SPORT & RECREATION PHOLOKGOLLO PRIMARY SCHOOL P.O.Box 1450 MORULA 0196 2010 -10- 22 Makapanstad Central Circuit PROVINCE NORTH-WEST PRINCIPAL: TEL:

APPENDIX E: Request to conduct research at Thihe Primary School

Appendix E

93 Block cc

Soshanguve

0152

14-05-2010

The Manager

Thihe Primary School
P.O. Box 89
Makapanstad
0440

Sir/Madam

RE: Request to conduct research

Herein please be informed that I am a Unisa Student: number 7708858

I am currently registered for Med special needs (inclusive educational) studies and would like to conduct a research on the learning difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation in inclusive schools in Makapanstad.

The findings and the recommendations of this research will be made available on request to assist in the reading difficulties experienced by learners at schools in Makapanstad.

Your consideration in this regard is appreciated

Yours in Education



B.D. Hlaethwa

(Researcher)

APPENDIX F: Permission to conduct research at Thihe Primary School

Appendix F

NORTH WEST DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

 **THIHE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

2834 Radipapanna Section P. O BOX 89 School cell :072 277 3454
Makapanstad Makapanstad
0404 0404

18.10.2012

Ms B D Hlaethwa

93 Block CC

Soshanguve

0152

Madam

I have received your application letter dated 14.05.2012 requesting to conduct a research in my school. I hereby grant permission to conduct the research at my school with the hope that your findings will add value to my school.

Kind regards



Motaung BRG (Principal)



APPENDIX G: Request to conduct research at Makapanstad Central Schools(NWDoE)

Appendix G

93 Block CC
Soshanguve
0152
23 July 2010

The APO manager
Moretele APO
Makapanstad
0404

Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MAKAPANSTAD CENTRAL SCHOOLS

I hereby request permission to conduct a research at Makapanstad Central Schools within an inclusive setting.

I am a student at Unisa my student number is 7708858 and I am currently conducting a research. My research topic is: Reading difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation phase in schools within an inclusive setting

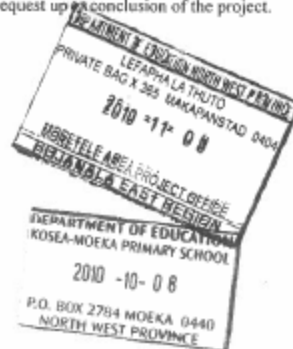
The results of this project will be made available on request up to conclusion of the project.

Hope you find this in order

Yours faithfully



B.D Hlaethwa (Researcher)



APPENDIX H: Permission to conduct research in Makapanstad Central (NWDoE)

Appendix H



education
Lefapha la Thuto
Onderwys Departement
Department of Education
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Private Bag X305
Makapanstad
0404
Tel: (012) 714-0269
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OFFICE OF THE AREA MANAGER: MORETELE AREA PROJECT OFFICE

Enq: Mokoena S.L.
Cont: 082 475 8838

11/11/2010

To: Ms B.D. Hlaethwa

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MAKAPANSTAD CENTRAL CLUSTER SCHOOL


Receipt of your letter dated 08/11/2010 is hereby acknowledged.

Permission to conduct research in Makapanstad Central Cluster Schools is hereby granted.


I hope the research will add value to learning and teaching in Full Service Schools and Special Schools, particularly in our District.

I wish you all the luck in your studies.

Regards



MOKOENA S.L.
CIRCUIT MANAGER



APPENDIX I: Consent for participation in a research project

Appendix I

UNISA

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Title: Reading difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation phase in primary schools within inclusive settings in Makapanstad

Purpose of the study: The study entails a research project conducted by Mrs. Bella Dudula Hlaethwa in selected Makapanstad primary schools which will be submitted to the University of South Africa in partial fulfilment of a Masters Degree. The study investigates reading difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation phase in schools within inclusive settings.

You are hereby requested to participate in the project as a respondent in the study. You will be observed and interviewed by the researcher Bella hlaethwa at your school. Participation in the project is voluntary. Your real names will not be used and disclosure of your identity is guaranteed. Information gathered during the study will be strictly confidential and your personal privacy will be respected and honoured.

You are requested to sign the consent participation form, if you agree to participate on the research project. You are further advised that participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw from the research project at any time that you may wish to.

I MABATLE Mmakubh.....R..... fully know and understand my obligations and rights as a participant in the study.

Tick the relevant answer

I agree to participate in the research project

I do not agree to participate in the research project

Signature of participant.....Mabatle.....

Date.....22/10/2010.....

Witness.....I. d. y. 10.....

APPENDIX J: Consent for participation in a research project

Appendix J

Annexure D consent form

UNISA

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Title: Reading difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation phase in primary schools within inclusive settings in Makapanstad

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You are requested to sign the consent participation form, if you agree to participate on the research project. You are further advised that participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw from the research project at any time that you may wish to.

I, Mpho C Ditshego, fully know and understand my obligations and rights as a participant in the study.

Tick the relevant answer

I agree to participate in the research project

I do not agree to participate in the research project

Signature of participant: M. C. Ditshego

Date: 18.11.2016

Witness: P.

APPENDIX K: Consent for participation in a research project

Appendix K

UNISA

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Title: Reading difficulties experienced by learners in the foundation phase in primary schools within inclusive settings in Makapanstad

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You are requested to sign the consent participation form, if you agree to participate on the research project. You are further advised that participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw from the research project at any time that you may wish to.

I, REGINA N. NGWENYA, fully know and understand my obligations and rights as a participant in the study.

Tick the relevant answer

I agree to participate in the research project

I do not agree to participate in the research project

Signature of participant: R. Ngwenya

Date: 22/10/2010

Witness: M. Schoole

APPENDIX L: Interview guide for educators

APPENDIX L

Interview guide (educators)

The researcher informed the participants in advance that a voice recorder will be used in the study. The following questions were used in an interview to probe educators in order to get clarity on specific issues in order to get clarity on the extent of reading difficulties experienced by learners in their schools.

1. As a remedial educator, can you briefly explain what your work entails?
2. How would you rate the reading proficiency of your learners in class?
3. In your view, what do you think are the causes of reading difficulties in schools?
4. What factors do you think affect learner's reading levels?
5. What do you think is the impact of reading difficulties towards learners in the foundation phase?
6. Do you receive support from the departmental officials (subject education specialists, managers, Head of departments etc.)?
7. How do you teach your learners reading?

APPENDIX M: Interview guide -Managers

APPENDIX M

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

1. There is a national outcry of learners who cannot read nor write at the required level especially in the foundation phase. How do you rate your school in this regard?
2. What is, according to your view , the causes of reading difficulties?
3. What support measures are being conducted in your school for learners experiencing reading difficulties?
4. In your view, do you think learners in your school receive the necessary support to alleviate or improve reading difficulties?
5. What do you think need to be done to improve learner's reading levels?

APPENDIX N: Request to conduct research study- Supervisor: Dr. LDN Tlale



Appendix N

The Site Manager
Moretele Area Project Office
Makapanstad
0404


Request to conduct research study

Herein please be informed that Ms B.D. Hlaethwa, student number: 7708858 is a student at UNISA. She is currently registered for M.Ed (Inclusive Education) and would like to request permission to conduct a research in your schools.

The findings and the recommendations of the research will be made available on request. The research will assist in the reading difficulties experienced by learners at schools in Makapanstad.

Hoping that this request will receive you favourable attention

Kind regards

Tlale LDN 
Further Teacher Education
AJH Van der Walt Building
Room 7-13
(: +2712 429 2064
 : +27866061964/+2712 429 4922
 : tlaleldn@unisa.ac.za
 : P.O. Box 392, UNISA, 0003, South Africa



APPENDIX O (i, ii, iii): Interview Transcripts

APPENDIX O Interview Transcripts

The following is a transcription of interviews. These will be discussed according to themes and sub-themes.

Explanation/Descriptions of the terms used in the transcripts.

A1,	refer to participant at school A.
B1,	refer to participant in school B.
C1,	refers to in participant school C.
MA	refers to the manager/principal in school A.
MB	refers to the manager/principal in school B.
MC	refers to the manager/principal in school C.
IQ	refers to the interview question.

IQ: How many learners do you have in your classroom?

A1: I do not have a constant number of learners in my classroom. As a re-medial teacher in my school, I am confined to a specific group of learners from different grades who experience barriers to learning.

B1: I have a total number of eight learners in my classroom with various challenges to learning. These learners do not cope in the mainstream classrooms because of their challenges. For some of the learners in the class-room, effective teaching and learning is severely hampered that they can only be trained to acquire basic life skills.

C1: I have forty-eight learners in my class. Twenty three girls and twenty eight boys. My class comprise of learners with different abilities and educational needs.

IQ: As a remedial teacher, did you receive any training or workshop To enable you to work effectively with these learners?

A1: Yes, I attended a training workshop organised by the Northwest Department of education. Our school was amongst the few schools that were chosen to become pilot schools as full service centres so, I was chosen to attend the training which required us to implement what we have learnt in our schools. I then developed love and anxiety to learn more and enrolled for a diploma in special needs which I successfully completed in the year 2004.

B1: I only attended a training workshop that was arranged by the North-west Department of education.

C1: I never attended any workshop or training but I just love and enjoy helping and supporting learners with special educational needs. I am just coordinating ILST to ensure that all learners needs are catered for and attended to.

APPENDIX D(ii)

IQ:	There is a national outcry of learners who are reading below the required levels Do you have learners who experience reading difficulties in your school and how do you rate the reading proficiency of your learners in class?
A1:	Indeed, learners cannot read well and our school is no exception We do also have learners who experience reading problems to an extent that some are retained to repeat the class while some end up being referred to nearby special schools
B1:	Well, I do not expect learners in my classroom to be able to read at the required levels due to their challenges and needs . I am mostly concerned that these learners given the proper care and guidance would acquire the basic skills of life that would enable them to cope in life.
C1:	<i>Ke ka bantsi</i> there is a lot. Children are not the same and they do not come from the same backgrounds and because every child is a unique being on his/her ownself, reading levels can never be the same and of course reading problems are inevitable especially at the foundation phase.
MB:	Commented that reading difficulties are the results of curriculum change with less or no proper teaching and dedication of educators.
IQ:	What do you think are the causes of the reading difficulties?
A1:	<i>(Rona re bolawa ke thuto ya rona).</i> We are adversely affected by our curriculum changes. A1, B1, and C1: all remarked that there are learners who experiencing reading difficulties as learners do not receive enough teaching and learning as teachers have a lot of paperwork to complete.
B2:	Referred to the uncertainty among most educators on implementing the curriculum A1,B2 and C3 All respondents from school A, B and C referred to lack of resources as the major cause of reading difficulties. MA; MB; & MC: ill-discipline amongst relevant stakeholders.
IQ:	How often do you conduct reading lessons in your class?
A1:	It depends but most of the times it is done thrice a week.
B1:	As I have indicated to you, reading is not one of my priorities at the moment considering the type of learners i have.
C1:	I am trying my level best to stick to the time allocated for reading according to the CAPPS document though it is sometimes impossible with the number of learners i have at the moment.
IQ:	What do you think are the impact of reading difficulties on your learners?
	All participants from selected schools, related the to the following as the impact of reading difficulties on their learners, withdrawal in the classroom, no participation in classroom activities involving reading, stubborn, bunking classes and absenteeism.

Appendix C(ii)

IQ:	What support measures are in place for the support of these learners with reading difficulties?
A1:	As a remedial teacher I get regular visits from the department's auxiliary services and some learners up being referred to special institution and specialists.
B2:	I am stuck with my learners as I also have severely hampered learners in my class and I do not have facilities or resources (ga ke kgone go dirisa barutwana tiro ya malsogo ka gonne ga kena didiriswa tse di tshwanetseng.)
C1:	I coordinate Institutional Level Support Team in my school and i have received an extensive training and support from the Department of Education Moretele Area Office and i always hand in glove with the District Support Team to ensure maximum benefit of all learners in quality teaching and learning in the classroom . When and where there is a need, we also involve the experts.