

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**EXPLORING LITERACY PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY OF A
PERI-URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE PINETOWN
DISTRICT; KWAZULU-NATAL**

BY

SHAMITHA RAMDAN

2015

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PERI-URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE PINETOWN
DISTRICT; KWAZULU-NATAL**

BY

SHAMITHA RAMDAN

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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Signature:

Professor Ayub Sheik

DATE

DEDICATION

- **This work is dedicated to my precious mum whose boundless energy and zest for life has been a pillar of strength to me during my darkest hours.**
- **To my late dad whose constant presence over me has helped me to keep motivated and to persevere against all odds.**

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10. Thank you to the many readers through whom this thesis will pass through. I pray that I have done justice in unfolding the ways in which educators practice literacy teaching, in the Grade Three classes in the Foundation Phase. May the information in this study help to ignite some debate in the hallways of staffrooms, libraries and educator training workshops to bring about change to our educational practices.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
AS	Assessment Standard
ASs	Assessment Standards
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DET	Department of Education and Training
DoE	South African National Department of Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ESL	English Second Language
EFL	English as a First Language
FP	Foundation Phase
FAL	First Additional Language
HL	Home Language
HoD	Head of Department (School Based Level 2)
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IRA	International Reading Association
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LAD	Literacy Acquisition and Development
LiEP	Language in Education Policy (DoE, 1997)
LO	Learning Outcome
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational needs
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
MLA	Monitoring Learning Achievement
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NICHHD	National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

NRP	National Reading Panel
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OTL	Opportunity to Learn
PANSALB	Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB)
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SES	Socio-Economic Status
TLEP	Teaching Literacy Education Project
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation

GLOSSARY

baseline assessment – initial assessment used to find out what learners already know

blend – to put together two or three phonemes (individual sounds) to say a word or part of a word (e.g. ‘s’ + ‘p’ + ‘r’ = ‘spr’ in ‘spread’)

decoding – the reader’s ability to apply his or her knowledge of letter-sound relationships to correctly pronounce written words

diagraph – two letters used to refer to a single sound. In English there are consonant diagraphs (e.g. ‘th’, ‘sh’) and vowel diagraphs (e.g. ‘ee’, ‘ea’)

emergent literacy – refers to a child’s growing knowledge of the printed word. Children see print in the environment and begin to understand its purpose. They may have stories told or read to them, they learn what books are and how stories work. So even before they come to school they know a lot about literacy. They may try to write their names using their own ideas about letters and spelling (i.e. emergent spelling), and they may pretend to read a book (i.e. reading-like behaviour). This is the beginning of children’s literacy.

environmental print – print that is all around us e.g. street signs, traffic signs, shop signs, and labels on packaging

fluency – the ability to read a text quickly and accurately with expression that reflects understanding

graded readers – books which are written at different levels. The grammar, vocabulary and sentence length starts out very simple and gets progressively more difficult. The level of the book needs to be matched to the child’s reading level

guided reading – a classroom activity in which learners are taught in groups according to their reading ability. The teacher develops learners’ comprehension and fluency and teaches reading strategies

high frequency words – common words that appear often in print e.g. ‘the’, ‘a’, ‘to’, ‘said’, ‘in’, ‘he’

concepts of print – understanding the functions of print e.g. that print carries a message, that words are made up of letters, that we read from left to right and top to bottom

incidental learning – learning that happens without deliberate teaching

independent level text – relatively easy text for the reader, with no more than approximately 1 in 20 words difficult for the reader (95 % success)

independent reading – reading done in or outside the classroom, where the child has some choice of text and the pace of reading is not directly controlled by the teacher

literacy – It is one’s overall communicative competence as it is thought to encompass not only all acts of communication – reading and writing, listening and speaking - but also the thinking processes that underlie one’s understanding of concepts and knowledge associated with subject areas.

literal – the literal meaning of a text is exactly what is stated in the text. A ‘literal question’ is one which asks learners to get information directly stated in the text (e.g. what colour was the little boy’s jersey?).

monitor – to observe carefully, evaluate and give feedback

narrative - the purpose of narrative is to entertain. A narrative is told in the past tense. First the setting is described and the characters are introduced. Then there are events leading to a complication followed by a resolution. Time connectives are used e.g. ‘Early that morning’, ‘later on’, ‘once’

paired reading – paired learners take turns reading aloud to each other

phonemic awareness – the ability to hear, identify and manipulate the individual sounds of a language (e.g. in English to identify the same sound in ‘bad’, ‘sad’, ‘glad’, ‘mad’, and to distinguish between the sounds in ‘bed’, ‘bad’, ‘bud’ and ‘bird’)

phonics – phonics instruction teaches children the relationship between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language.

phonological awareness – the ability to understand how the sound system works for e.g. to identify sounds, syllables, rhymes, onsets and rimes

publish – one of the stages in the writing process (draft, write, edit, publish). When learners publish their writing, they present it to an audience for e.g. read it aloud or display it on the class wall or publish it in a class book

to recount – to tell past events in a sequence (e.g. to say or write about what one did last weekend)

a recount – The purpose of a recount is to tell a sequence of events (e.g. a child telling what happened at the weekend in the class ‘news time’). A recount uses the past tense and words like ‘first’, ‘then’ and ‘next’

reading literacy – The ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment.

rhyme – words or lines of poetry that end with the same sound including a vowel (e.g. sad, mad, glad, bad)

shared reading – an activity in which children share the reading of an enlarged text with the teacher. This is a lesson with the whole class. The text used is aimed at the top group in the class. Some children will be at a listening level, others will be beginning to engage in the reading and more will be engaging fully. The same text is used over several days. Each day a new focus is selected by the teacher. The text is used to introduce text features, phonics, grammar and reading skills in context.

sight words – words that readers recognize automatically (on sight). They do not need to decode them phonically or think about them. In the early stages of reading, sight words are usually high frequency words such as ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘they’, ‘a’, ‘the’, ‘are’, ‘were’, ‘my’, etc.

story board – a series (or sequence) of pictures illustrating a story or procedure (e.g. how to make a mask)

strategies – strategies are ways of learning. There are a number of strategies learners can use if they cannot read a word. For example, they can look for clues in the pictures, they can sound out a word or they can break it down into syllables.

text types – texts with different purposes, features and structures. Text types taught in the Foundation Phase are recounts, instructions (procedural text), stories (narrative) and information reports

utterance – a spoken words or sentence that has meaning in itself (e.g. hello/well done/I like spinach)

word bank – a store or file of new words

word attack skills – these are strategies that learners use when they cannot read an unfamiliar word

Reference:

Department of Basic Education. (2013). Curriculum and assessment Policy statement (CAPS).
Foundation Phase. Pretoria: DoE.

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING LITERACY PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY OF A PERI-URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE PINETOWN DISTRICT; KWAZULU-NATAL

This research project specifically focused on understanding the literacy practices of three grade three educators in a peri-urban school, who are entrusted with the task of promoting and mediating literacy acquisition and development among the learners. In order to supplement the data from the educators, this study also investigated learner's performance in literacy as well as various other aspects of the literacy environment which influenced the performance of the learners in literacy development. The selected research site was one peri-urban primary school in the Pinetown District, Phoenix Region in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

This research has attempted to answer questions relevant to learners' attitudes and experiences in the development of reading and writing practices, how educators develop reading and writing competencies at the school, what their reasons were for choosing certain approaches, how Government literacy policies were implemented in practice in the classroom and what assistance the educators received for developing literacy effectively. Within a case study approach, a mixed methods research design was used because data was collected through qualitative and quantitative methods in an interpretative paradigm.

The findings revealed that while educators made use of a number of teaching methods and approaches to teach literacy in their classrooms, a socio-cultural approach to literacy was lacking. The results of this study call for a broadening of the definition of literacy, to one that acknowledges the socio-cultural background of all the learners in their care, to develop a literacy disposition that will prepare individuals adequately for a competitive and changing world. The results were also presented to highlight the gravity of other problems that educators had encountered in the sample school and in general in literacy teaching and implementation.

Hopefully this project will serve as a catalyst for the sample school to review policies, amend curriculum changes and debate appropriate methods and approaches to promote effective literacy teaching and the actual implementation of reading and writing skills across the curriculum, while taking into account some of the suggestions offered in this study.

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CHAPTER ONE

MOTIVATION FOR AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

“Children are the most vulnerable citizens in any society and the greatest of our treasures”

(Nelson Mandela, 1993)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the literacy practices of three grade three educators in a peri-urban school. In doing so, this investigation will unravel how these three educators implement the literacy policy, how reading, writing, and oral lessons are taught and how learners acquire and develop skills in literacy at the sample school. My study hopes to reveal how literacy is taught and acquired in this small sample so that the findings could then be tested on a large scale in a follow-up study. The value of this research project then would be to provide suitable prompts for further enquiry into literacy development.

It will also focus on implementing reading, writing and oral strategies to motivate and develop literacy acquisition amongst the Foundation Phase learners in this primary school. It is also hoped that this study will provide an understanding of the contextual, social and academic factors and challenges that may influence students’ literacy development by exploring teaching practice through literacy development.

This chapter offers an introduction to the study and the structure of the entire thesis. Firstly, I will present the background, rationale and the aims of the study. Thereafter, the research questions, which have been grounded on the basis of the literature review and conceptual framework presented later in this thesis, are outlined. This is followed by key operational definitions of terminology used in the study. Finally, as a conclusion to the chapter, content outlines for the remaining chapters are explained.

1.2 FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study is concerned with the field of literacy acquisition, more specifically the development of reading and writing practices by three grade three educators in the Foundation Phase in a primary school in the Phoenix Region of the Pinetown District. According to the Education For All Global Monitoring Report (2005, p.52), “Literacy is a tool for the mastery of other subjects and one of the best predictors of longer-term learning achievement.”

Howie, Venter and Van Staden (2008) comment that literacy education is a basic human right along with the right to adequate food, health care and housing. To my understanding it is therefore not understood as a skill but rather as a goal. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2004, p.21) defines literacy as the “ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts.”

From my reading of Prinsloo (2008) I have gathered that literacy involves a continuous process of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society. Literacy is important for it does not simply provide educational and economic benefits. It also provides people the tools to access a range of other socio-economic and political rights. In this way, literacy helps to unlock learning. First one learns to read and then one reads to learn. Thus, reading becomes the key to unlocking further knowledge, skills and talents.

Govender (2010, p.1) concurs and adds that “English is the most widely-spoken international language and thus has a high status and role as an international language of wider communication, in the media, education, trade, science and technology, research and diplomacy. It is perceived as a language of development, one which will help transform under-developed, traditional societies into modern, educated, technologically competitive and affluent societies.”

I concur with the above statements and therefore believe that reading and writing in English must be considered as priority areas in efforts to improve the quality of basic education, particularly for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Research further shows that there is a direct link between reading and school results. This is because the more children read, the better they do at school (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005).

Although provision has been made by the Government to democratize education and, in particular to allow all students equity of access to key competences such as literacy, there are signs that problems exist at the level of implementation. Evidence of this was reported by the Department of Education (KZN), that 15% of Grade 3 learners passed their literacy tests (Serrao, 2008, Mail & Guardian, 2011).

The grand idea of the Annual National Assessments (ANA) is to gauge the extent to which the basic education system is impacting on the critical areas of literacy and numeracy. ANA is seen as a diagnostic tool to help the education sector to self-correct. It is a powerful tool for assessing the health of our basic education system.

ANA 2014 was administered to more than 7.3 million grades 1-9 learners in all public schools. The learners in each grade participated in testing their knowledge and skills in the fundamental competencies of literacy (language) and numeracy (mathematics) which are all critical to further learning in any field of study. The figures stood at 64 % and 65 % for grade 3 language and mathematics. The overall performance in ANA in 2014 showed an upward trend in performance in mathematics and literacy.

However, educators, school managers and curriculum support officials still have to intensify support to learners based on a diagnosis of learner scripts. There were numerous challenges that learners experienced in mathematics and language topics. In some cases it was due to ineffective teaching methods by educators (<http://www.gov.za/speech-minister-basic-education-official-release-annual-national-assessments>).

Contributing to the above discussion the researcher cites (Makeleni and Sethusha, 2014) who conducted a study to explore the experiences of foundation phase educators with regard to curriculum implementation. They revealed that there was a lack of effective teaching and learning of mathematics and literacy in the foundation phase. Educators lacked in-service training to empower them for new curriculum implementation and this had led them to teach only components of the curriculum which they had felt comfortable with. From the findings of the above mentioned study, the researchers made the claim that ineffective teaching methods and weak subject knowledge by educators can be viewed as contributory factors to poor quality teaching and learning.

The Education Minister stated that the “poor childhood literacy levels confirmed by ANA must be understood partly with reference to South Africa’s high adult illiteracy rates. In particular, teachers and learners are not coping with the new dispensation and are generally demoralized and demotivated.” In addition to this, the problem of literacy acquisition is complex. Hence, this becomes a pretext and a justification for undertaking this study (Department of Education, 2001, p. 34).

The low literacy scores were heavily influenced by some of the following factors: firstly, there appears to be a mismatch between Government policy and implementation. Policies are often rendered meaningless or confusing when teacher training is not always aligned with Government policies (Skinner, 2003). The Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) survey in 1994 found that many teachers in South Africa have an under-developed understanding of teaching literacy, reading and writing.

It has also been found that many Foundation Phase teachers have not explicitly been trained to teach reading and writing, thus they find it difficult to help learners with reading and writing difficulties (South Africa: National Department of Education, 1999). In addition to this, both teachers and students lack the resources which would enable them to carry out the new policies.

In recent years, Foundation Phase educators in South Africa have been experiencing rapid curriculum changes influenced by the rapid increase in global knowledge, technology and skills. Constantly South Africa reshapes its curriculum to meet the international standards of education. According to the Department of Education (2011a), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was replaced by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

However, according to Moalosi and Molwane (2010, p.29) a recent investigation of curriculum implementation in primary schools in the Foundation Phase, has revealed that educators experience numerous challenges regarding teaching and learner achievement. It was found that teachers received very little training when the new curriculum was introduced. Educators lacked in-service training to empower them for curriculum implementation and this led them to teach only components of the curriculum which they felt comfortable with. This shows that educators’ understanding and experience has a significant influence on teaching practice.

The literature in South Africa reveals that poorly planned workshops left educators confused as to where, what and how to start teaching the CAPS curriculum. The research findings also revealed that the training educators received was initial training and merely provided background information and guidelines on lesson preparation in the CAPS curriculum. Educators expressed the view that the training they did receive was inadequate for them to implement the CAPS curriculum effectively for it merely provided basic knowledge and understanding of the amendment to the curriculum, such as new additions and omissions (Moalosi & Molwane, 2010).

In a study conducted about organising of knowledge for the classroom (Jansen, 2009) it was revealed that Foundation Phase educators lacked content knowledge to teach mathematics and they knew very little about phonics in literacy. It is therefore evident that educators are experiencing various challenges resulting from the quality of training they received for implementation of the CAPS curriculum. It is therefore evident that educators are experiencing various challenges resulting from this lack of training.

Language ‘mismatch’ compounds this problem further whereby, despite the Language – in – Education Policy of 1997, it is still the case that most learners in South Africa, do not learn in their mother tongue, thus, the language of home and school do not match in many cases because of challenging factors in the process of switching from mother tongue to English (South Africa: National Department of Education, 1997). This presents a challenge to reading and writing development.

Howie et al. (2008) suggest that the South African situation is complex because most white, Indian and coloured children continue to receive their schooling in the same language of instruction from Grades 1 to 12, namely English or Afrikaans. However, most children speaking African languages at home have to switch at Grade 4 to receive instruction in either English or Afrikaans, whilst they also continue to receive reading instruction in the language of instruction of the first three years of schooling.

Ndamba’s (2008) study of mother tongue use in learning and language preference in Zimbabwe revealed that parents in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia resist mother tongue education in favour of English. Learning in grade four often showed long-term poor academic performance when compared with learners continuing learning in their mother tongue,

resulting in more learners with barriers to learning in their classrooms. The above discussions reveal a gap between classroom teaching practices and language policy in South Africa.

Sithabile and Bonakele (2010) add that it is no wonder then that South African learners lag behind among their international counterparts in mastering literacy skills. The problem is compounded even further because many of the learners still grow up in illiterate or semi-illiterate environments where English is foreign, or where access to resources remains unequal.

The educational background of parents has a strong influence on their child's achievement. In the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) survey conducted in 1999, in the majority of provinces, about 60 % of the parents had either not completed primary school or had not achieved education levels higher than primary school (South Africa: National Department of Education, 1999). Such is the legacy of apartheid and its policy of unequal development. It is these inequalities that continue to determine the effectiveness of many schools.

It is hoped that this research will serve a two-fold purpose: firstly it will ascertain the current state of how reading and writing are taught by the grade three educators in a primary school and secondly, it will help to illuminate some of the barriers experienced by learners in literacy acquisition as well as highlight some of the challenges experienced by educators in the teaching of literacy. Most importantly, it will offer solutions to assist educators in developing reading and writing competences, as well as enabling learners to acquire literacy. The data will be analysed and generalizations made about literacy development at the sample school to assist in viable solutions to problems encountered at this primary school.

I am of the opinion that these findings will provide specialist knowledge as to how reading and writing competences can be enhanced to boost and promote literacy development. This thesis adopted a case study approach and involve an investigation into reading and writing practices of grade three educators and learners in a primary school. Recommendations will include comments on the various techniques to teach, improve and to promote literacy development. In short, this thesis is about pedagogical knowledge and practices of literacy training.

Bassey (2000) summarises the thoughts of Sturman (1994: p.61) very aptly by explaining what a case study is. The writer states that a case study is the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon. In a case study the researcher will make use of a variety of techniques which

may include both qualitative and quantitative approaches. One of the distinguishing features of a case study is the belief that human systems function or develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity and therefore are not simply a loose collection of traits.

Thus, in this research, I used the case study approach to understand a single case, to explain why things happen as they do at the sample school. This approach will require an in-depth investigation of all the interlinking or interdependent parts of the patterns that emerge.

I made use of an evaluative case study. This means that a single case was studied in depth with the purpose of providing educationists, teachers, parents and learners, with information that will help them to judge the merits and de-merits of certain policies, practices and programmes with regard to literacy development at the primary school level, through the systematic and reflective documentation or presentation of evidence from the data obtained.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In an ANC newsletter former President Mbeki portrayed South Africa's educational development challenge as follows:

the material conditions ... have divided our nation into two nations, one black, the other white ... (the latter) is relatively prosperous and has ready access to a developed economy, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure... the second, and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped infrastructure ... (Letter from the President, 2003, p.12).

Unpacking the meaning behind this, would reveal the following: our country is characterised by two parallel economies, the First and the Second. The latter system produces the majority of university entrants and graduates, it does a good job in ensuring that most children in its charge acquire the skills in literacy and mathematics. The first 'system' mentioned here, refers to the vast majority of working class and poor children. The researcher is positive that these words will capture the imagination of policy makers and educationists, for it presents a very bleak picture of the future for the lives of many young South Africans who may be disadvantaged from the very start, even before entering their schooling career.

Pierre Bourdieu (2008) also makes mention of 'cultural capital' encompassing differences in class, inequalities amongst individuals and how this affects social upward mobility. Bourdieu explains how the rich perpetuate access to educational excellence and the poor remain in abject

poverty. Fleisch (2008) argues that the second primary school 'system' struggles to ameliorate young people's deficits in institutions that are themselves less than adequate.

This researcher further adds that in the seven years of schooling, children in the second 'system' do learn, but acquire a much more restricted set of knowledge and skills than children in the second 'system'. They read but mostly at very limited functional level, they write but not with fluency or confidence.

Fleisch (2008) shows that unlike previous studies which indicate that South African learners are reading well below comparable international norms and below the curriculum expectation, when the learners' average scores are disaggregated, the picture tells a devastating story of unequal learning. Thus the researcher concurs with Fleisch (2008) that this could be one of the factors contributing to the crisis in primary education in our country.

Although it is a global phenomenon the problem is further accentuated in South Africa due to the economic, social and political competitiveness of countries and international trends such as globalisation. However, in spite of this, locally, young learners in South Africa are struggling to acquire the literacy skills needed for success in their future academic and occupational careers.

In South Africa there is ongoing concern surrounding the development of learners' literacy skills: at the Foundation Phase levels there is concern about their acquisition of more advanced literacy skills, and in high school there are concerns about their attainment of the academic language skills needed for tertiary education. Thus these concerns are consistently reflected in local research (Lessing & De Witt, 2005).

According to Fleisch (2008) a major observation by the education officials in the Department of Education was that many grade one learners were experiencing difficulty in reading. This difficulty would eventually lead to a chain of other learning problems such as difficulty in writing, oral practices and so on. This observation became a catalyst towards improvement of reading and writing skills. The Human Sciences Research Council selected a representative sample of 20 primary schools, all of whom used English as a medium of instruction.

This assessment of the grade one and the grade three learners was designed to assess oral language development, pre-literacy skills, phonological awareness and reading comprehension.

The oral component of the test was read aloud by the test administrators and the learners responded in their test booklets. In the reading component, the grade three learners were expected to complete items that measured their phonological awareness, picture story sequencing, semantic knowledge and comprehension skills.

The results revealed that most learners were familiar with the oral aspect of the English language. However, on the reading component, only 38.2 per cent of the grade three learners had reached a minimum mastery level. It was also noted by the researchers of assessment that very few learners demonstrated mastery of phonological skills, decoding ability and reading comprehension. This shows reason for concern as to the development of literacy practices in a primary school. The researcher is of the opinion that features of the above-mentioned assessment could become valuable in the testing of literacy later in this study.

Fleisch (2008) agrees that the evidence and concerns of the above-mentioned assessment points to inextricable conclusions. Although different studies use different yardsticks to measure achievement in literacy, they all directly or indirectly point to the predicament of extremely low average primary education achievement levels. This researcher makes a comparison that while a small minority of primary school children, attending privileged schools are achieving 'curriculum benchmarked grade levels', which is comparable to countries such as Germany and the United States, a vast majority of children attending disadvantaged schools, do not acquire a basic level of mastery in reading, writing and mathematics. The South African primary education achievement gap begins in the Foundation Phase at the very earliest days of formal schooling and continues unbroken to the end into primary education and beyond.

A further contribution to this thought is offered by Zimmerman (2010) who states that the reasons for learners' low literacy outcomes are varied and often difficult to pinpoint due to the complex intertwining of socioeconomic, linguistic, cognitive, educational, familial and personal variables. Regardless of these reasons for learners' poor achievement of the outcomes, it must be remembered that the responsibility to improve learners' literacy achievement is placed, as a responsibility, upon a country's education authorities and this responsibility will eventually become the task of the individual educators to address.

The educator then has to work within the parameters of the curriculum, national and provincial education directives, and work with the resources at hand, adhere to the school management plan of the literacy programme and within the educator's own conceptions about reading and writing practices, achieve this mammoth task. So one would ask where does the problem exist? Why are South African primary school learners achieving such poor results in literacy and in mathematics in comparison to other learners?

Mullis, Kennedy, Martin and Sainsbury (2006) argue that the accepted assumption in South Africa is that after the Foundation Phase of schooling, a phase in which learners attain basic literacy, numeracy and life skills, learners will be prepared to learn and read in the Intermediate Phase of schooling. The researchers further add that this assumption is mirrored internationally where learners are expected to start using reading as a tool for learning after four years of schooling at approximately nine years of age. The researcher agrees that educators in the Intermediate Phase also assume that learners entering their classes will be able to read and write effectively enough to allow for them to be ready to acquire more advanced literacy outcomes associated with the mastery of different learning area content.

However, to the frustration of many educators, learners for various reasons may not be able to read, comprehend texts or write effectively. If these difficulties are not addressed, the gap between acquiring the correct literacy skills and the demands of the curriculum widens. In this turmoil of challenges educators remain at the frontline, where they become responsible for learner assessment results and they deal with the reality of literacy teaching to learners from diverse populations in different types of schooling contexts which may or may not be the ideal learning environment. This study focused entirely on the literacy practices of three grade three educators in a peri-urban primary school and in doing so, be able to trace learners' progress. The researcher also aims to highlight conditions or challenges that may impede or promote literacy acquisition in the sample school.

In addition to the above reasons for conducting this study, the researcher is of the opinion that a great deal of earlier research focused on how to improve the reading, reading comprehension and vocabulary of the learners. The role of the educator in fostering and promoting literacy has not received as much attention as that which has been given to which reading and writing methods work best in the development of literacy. Literacy pedagogy has changed and developed from merely teaching reading and writing or the acquisition of basic skills.

The question following from this is: What literacy practices and approaches are being implemented by the three grade three educators at the sample school?

1.4 RATIONALE

The specific research rationale, research aim and the potential contribution that this study may have, are outlined below:

I am working on the established premise that South Africa is a developing country and faces many educational challenges. Educators are tasked with some of the following responsibilities:

- provide all learners with equitable opportunities to learn to read and write, especially in their own language and in the language of the medium of instruction at school, whilst developing their overall literate skills;
- to advance young learners' English literacy skills to a level that will allow all vernacular African Languages ¹ learners effectively to continue learning in English after their Foundation Phase of schooling; and
- to develop learners' repertoire of reading and writing skills to aid in their acquisition of more advanced levels of knowledge and understanding in literacy (Zimmerman, 2010).

In launching a National Literacy Strategy aimed at addressing the challenges in literacy acquisition, that learners face, the South African National Department of Education (DoE) officially acknowledged the difficulties that South African teachers experience in teaching these literacy practices and the teaching conditions that complicate their task even further (DoE, 2008b).

1. The term 'African Language' refers to nine of the eleven official languages of South Africa, these languages being historically associated with Black South Africans. These languages are: isiXhosa, Tshivenda, Sesotho, isiZulu, Xitsonga, Setswana, Siswati, Sepedi and isiNdebele (Baker & Prys Jones, 1998).

I believe that Foundational Phase schooling is a crucial grounding for all learners upon which strong practices are built. The rationale behind this study is therefore to explore the literacy practices of three grade three educators in promoting literacy development in a peri-urban primary school. In order to supplement the data from the educators, this study also investigated learner's performance in literacy as well as various other aspects of the literacy environment which influenced the performance of the learners in literacy development. It must be noted that a primary school caters for learners from grade R to grade 7, therefore studies pertaining to these grades will be explored throughout this thesis.

The key intention of this research is to investigate the literacy practices of three grade three educators in a peri-urban school. In tandem with this, the following objectives have been formulated:

- To define the concept of literacy in the Foundation Phase
- To describe the theories of learning which underpin literacy teaching approaches.
- To describe recent approaches and practices in literacy development.
- To investigate the approaches and practices of the three grade three educators in the sample school.
- To recommend and to describe what can be done to promote effective literacy development.

1.5 LITERACY DEFINED

Literacy is a multifarious concept. But for the purpose of this study, literacy is considered as one's overall competence in communication. However, it thought to encompass not only all acts of communication, that is, reading, writing, listening and speaking, but also the thinking processes that underlie one's understanding of concepts and knowledge associated with subject areas (Bouwer, 2004). Educational literacies incorporates the integration of all the language components that are, reading and listening, speaking and writing.

1.6 TRADITIONS OF LITERACY

Defining literacy is not a simple task. Cognitive psychologists such as Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti and Pesetsky (2001) define literacy as a process of decoding the alphabetic system into the target language (English, in this instance), it is about moving from the spoken word to

print and the ability of the individual to decipher and interpret what is written with sufficient speed and accuracy. Within this definition of literacy the mental processes of writing are also emphasised. This skills-based approach to literacy had informed much research and policies about school-based reading and writing practices (Rayner, et al. 2001).

However, by the 1970's new ideas began to emerge about literacy that pin-pointed faults in the skills-based definition of reading and writing. The works of Kenneth and Goodman illustrated that readers often used context clues within a text to decipher words through a process of sampling, inferring and predicting (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996). These writers further argued that reading was not simply about decoding isolated words, but about making meaning from texts. The work of Freire (1971) was pivotal in advancing the idea that literacy could be seen as a source of oppression and liberation of individuals.

This writer explains this clearly by using the 'banking metaphor', whereby learners were seen as mere receptors for the knowledge that was transmitted by the educators (the gatekeepers of the status quo). It was through dialogue, that learners would be supported by their educators in learning what the learners wanted to know more about. Thus, learners would become agents of their own destinies through the process of literacy.

The work by Barton and Hamilton (1998) became very popular because they demonstrated how individuals used literacy skills in their everyday lives, which they termed 'vernacular literacy', reading and writing outside of school contexts. Vygotsky (1978) also contributed immensely to literacy development by stating that literacy was no longer a context-less neurological skill, but it was context-bound with political and social overtones. Gee (2005) further explains that within this paradigm, there exists a relationship between literacy and identity, because literacy forms part of a discourse which essentially is a way of thinking, speaking, behaving and writing.

However, Brandt (2001, p.7) argues that these two competing traditions of skills-based and context-based literacy, undervalue the economic importance of reading and writing. Whilst placing her research within the tradition of the context-based paradigm of literacy, this researcher expands her understanding of literacy to include its economic worth and thus defines literacy as a "resource which has both private and public value and which is taught, supported by sponsors, learned and traded on by those they sponsor."

Brandt (2001, p.7) explains further:

To treat literacy as a resource is to emphasize that it takes its shape from what can be traded on it. This perspective attends to the competitions that surround literacy, the struggles to harness it for profit or ideological advantage, the struggles for the prerogative to manage or measure it and the ways that these incessant struggles set the terms for individual encounters with literacy. Above all, this perspective emphasizes the instability of literacy, its link to political and economic changes and to the shifting standards of value and conditions of access that accompany those changes

I agree with Brandt's notion of literacy as a resource having economic value such as employability and social status. In the context of this study, literacy is defined as a valuable resource in that it is taught and learned in formal and in informal school settings, which takes the form of reading and writing skills. This does not negate, however, that literacy also occurs outside of school contexts. Here, literacy is not just a cognitive process but is also valued as a meaning-making activity with socio-political consequences, depending on both the quality of the literacy resource and the demands of the education system and the local/global marketplace (Levin, 2010).

Heath (1996, p.24) comments that for a long time literacy has been an exclusive activity, meaning that it was historically reserved for select groups. "It was within Western democracies that the relationship between literacy, economic progress for the nation and social advancement for the individual, became tightly intertwined with industrial growth and political stability. In other words, literacy began to be regarded as a public rather than an exclusive good – a right, so to speak, for everyone as a result of the ways in which literacy shaped economic progress, social advancement, and political stability"

It was not until the late twentieth century that literacy was redefined as a global good, and even more specifically a human right. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) main aim was not merely to rebuild schools in the devastated nations, but to build democratic societies. UNESCO (2004) sought to accomplish this task by focusing on human development, and in particular literacy development. The aim was to educate the masses so that the ideals of democracy would be preserved by facilitating, through literacy, a public that was well informed.

On its webpage, UNESCO (2004) provides an apt statement of the significance of literacy:

Literacy is a human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development. Educational opportunities depend on literacy. Literacy is the heart of basic education for all, and essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy (<http://www.unesco.org/en/literacy/literacy-important/>).

Crystal (2003) states that globalisation has placed a growing importance on the English Language. Through economic and cultural globalisation, the spreading role of English as a universal global *lingua franca* has taken place and:

It is English that stands at the very centre of the global language system. It has become the *lingua franca par excellence* and continues to entrench this dominance in a self-reinforcing process. It has become the central language of communication in business, politics, administration, science and academia (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton, 1999: p.346).

Garcia (2009) contests this by adding that the language of English had only experienced a 201 percent growth in the last decade. According to an analysis made in Ireland about the demand and supply of foreign language skills in the enterprise sector, approximately 50 percent of users worldwide choose a language other than English for example, to access the Google web-search. Although English is widespread in the media, and in the news, other languages are used more and more (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2005).

Garcia (2009) explains that what is different today from the ways in which people taught language in the nineteenth and twentieth century is that we can simultaneously and collaboratively engage in many different language practices at the same time, as it happens in electronic instant messaging and chatting. That is, speakers are now free to choose a broader range of language practices than those offered by the immediate community and the school. *Lingua Francas* are often either powerful languages such as Arabic, Chinese, English or Spanish.

Although in many countries the learning of English is considered a basic skill, to be taught in schools, alongside Maths and Literacy, yet, it does not enjoy complete hegemony in the world. This is because there are other languages which are experiencing growth and popularity. According to Graddol (2006) as a first language, English is being challenged by both Spanish, Mandarin and Hindi-Urdu. We learn from this that globalisation and the constant mobility of people, has made us aware that languages do not belong to territories. Rather, languages belong

to the people who speak them, who are in different geographical areas. However, the challenge here is that educational systems have constantly to change their policies and learning programmes to educate children who do not speak the same language at home as that spoken in the school.

I concur with the above writer and am of the opinion that learning the basic skills in reading, writing and oral practices in literacy will inevitably equip individuals with the basic tools to survive in the world. Previous studies in literacy acquisition and development have tended to focus on classroom practices (Joseph, 2007; Webb, 2002). However, it must be noted that literacy is generally acknowledged to be acquired rather than learned: consequently, “teaching” literacy may be viewed as a contradiction in terms (Gee, 1990; Street, 1996).

A firm foundation in reading, writing and oral practices provides learners with the potential for lifelong learning in a variety of disciplines. According to Lyon (1998), reading serves as the critical foundational skill for all school-based learning. For learners who experience difficulty in literacy, the opportunities for academic and occupational success become limited. Current research indicates that children who do not learn the basics of early reading and writing skills are unlikely to learn them at all (Moats, 2009).

For over a decade various attempts have been made by the South African Government to improve the literacy levels in the country through various literacy and reading campaigns for example, by upgrading schools that were under-resourced and by providing educator training. Yet, there are still reports in the media on the low literacy rates in South Africa. In the province of KwaZulu-Natal alone, it is “conservatively estimated that 22 % of adults have little or no formal schooling, leaving 1.7 million illiterate” (Macfarlane, 2005, p.6). In 1995 the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Sibusiso Ndebele, and MEC for Education, Ina Cronje’, declared “a state of emergency” regarding the illiteracy rates. (Macfarlane, 2005).

Since 1995 and in response to the national crisis, many policies have been developed or revised by the South African Government to shape reading and literacy in the country. Some of these include the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996); the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996); the Policy for Early Childhood Development (South Africa: Department of Education, 1996); the Revised National Curriculum Statement (South Africa: Department of Education, 2002) and so on. However, Baatjies (2003, p.5) argues that while reading and

literacy education are integral parts of these policies, there are no specific statements referring directly to the development of reading and writing.

In lieu of the low reading and literacy levels in the country, and arising out of some of the above mentioned policies, a number of reading and literacy initiatives were put into place by the Department of Education since 1995. Some of these include “The South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI) in 2000, The Masifunde Sonke Campaign in 2000, the Centre for the Book and so on. However, some of the initiatives and campaigns failed for various reasons such as poor organization, inadequate administrative support structures and a lack of funding.

In spite of the failed attempts, the South African Government is determined to combat illiteracy. This is due to the fact that approximately 8.7 million adults over 20 years of age in South Africa may be functionally illiterate. As a signatory to the Framework for Action for achieving Education for All by 2015, South Africa is committed to the goal of achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015. This plan of action will focus on curtailing illiteracy in children by improving the quality of early literacy instruction and introducing intervention in families and the community to promote early literacy development (Willenberg, 2005).

To add further to this discussion, the researcher refers to the IEA progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011 which measured trends in reading literacy achievement in primary schools. South Africa participated in a pre-PIRLS 2011 study. The findings revealed that higher reading achievement was associated with learners attending schools where a greater percentage of learners were from relatively affluent socio-economic backgrounds, spoke the language of the PIRLS test as their native language, and who entered school with early literacy skills. In addition to this, the most successful schools in reading also tended to emphasize academic success by rigorous curricular goals, effective literacy teachers, strong parental support, better working conditions and facilities and have more instructional materials such as books, computers and technological support (Martin & Mullis, 2013).

Howie et al. (2008) examine other reasons for the low literacy levels and they are highlighted as the under-resourcing at schools, poor teaching practices, a lack of available resources for the indigenous languages, a lack of motivation to alter the situation, the oral tradition of the

indigenous languages and a function of the time we live in, where instant gratification in so many aspects of life is propagated.

The researcher is of the opinion that primary education is a crucial stage in the life of a learner because learning and developing reading, writing and other skills in literacy provides the “tools” for learners to continue to develop throughout their schooling. In spite of this, what is alarming to note is that the instructional practice of teaching literacy in primary schools is still very traditional (Block, 2001; Christie, Enz & Vukelich, 2003). The problem of students’ poor reading and writing skills in primary schools is carried over into secondary schools. These students then enter higher education and struggle to cope academically. Hence, students with reading problems get caught in a “negative cycle of failed reading outcomes and academic under performance” (Pretorius, 2002, p.189).

Maphumulo (2010) examines current literacy teaching methods and comments that in the majority of schools, in their day-to-day practices, many teaching methods consist of a loosely-applied whole language approach which emphasises reading and writing whole passages of texts. There is also the concern that the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) documents do not explain the mechanics of literacy teaching which teachers are now expected to follow.

It fails to explain in detail exactly what it is that teachers need to do in the classroom in order to ensure that learners can read and write meaningfully. The Department of Education (DoE, 2008) states that teachers need to use a variety of methods whilst teaching in their classrooms. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the literacy approaches and practices of the three grade three educators in a primary school.

While classroom practice is not the only factor involved in literacy acquisition and development, the researcher concurs with Ball and Kenny (1990), as shown in their study, that it is quality classroom teaching which has the most influence on successful outcomes for learners. Some best practices and strategies that support quality education would be: well trained educators, well managed learner- friendly classrooms and schools, learner centred and participatory methods and skilful assessment to facilitate learning (Compendium on Quality in Basic Education, 2003). International and local research also suggests that resources play a pivotal role in primary education in South Africa.

According to a recent article entitled *Textbook woes beset KZN pupils* (The Mercury, 2012, November 13), the findings of various teacher unions after an assessment of the first half of this school year, suggests that there are still schools struggling with textbook shortages or there is an insufficient number of new curriculum Mathematics and English workbooks for learners. An alarming discovery made was that in some instances about 300 pupils were asked to share 60 textbooks. The researcher is of the opinion that this challenge will threaten to derail quality education in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

There is also dissatisfaction amongst teachers due to their work conditions which are characterised by some of these factors: large class sizes, heavy work loads and inadequate training. Martin and Mullis (2013) present the argument that the emphasis in English learning now includes written communication as well as oral communication. This is due to the fact that when people need English competence for their practical life, and in nearly all professional and business domains, they often need oral skills as well. However, it has been found that too often when English is taught, learners are taught to do more writing (for example, writing a paragraph, essay or a letter) with little attention to the skills of oral English.

The above-mentioned writers further add that teachers who were themselves schooled in a scholastic approach to the language, where the focus was on grammar and correct language usage, with little attention to oral communication, normally feel comfortable in reproducing this same approach with their own students. However, it must be remembered that the scholastic approach to literacy has become obsolete because of the growing role of English locally and internationally.

This study has focused specifically on the skills of reading and writing because the researcher is of the opinion that these skills form the strong, concrete foundation of literacy. If these skills together with others, are taught correctly, a learner will be able to be competent to use literacy later in life. Prinsloo (2008) states that teaching and learning of language and other skills are greatest during early childhood. Once set on the learning path, learners cumulatively gather more skills, knowledge and understanding.

Sithabile and Bonakele (2010) examine the role of ‘collaborative talk’ in literacy development. These researchers state that learning is socially situated in specific contexts and develops from and within the relationships between teachers and learners, incorporating ‘talk’ as an important

element that children need to engage with in the learning process. Thus it is imperative that learners be provided with the opportunities to engage in ‘collaborative talk’ with their peers and with their teachers in order to develop competence in the language and to make sense of their learning.

Drummond and Tapia (2007) contribute to this by adding that in many classrooms learners are not usually helped to develop effective dialogic strategies for thinking collectively. Children must engage critically but constructively with each other’s ideas. This will have a positive effect on their problem solving, reasoning and argumentation skills.

Robertson, Line, Jones and Thomas (2000) explored some of the difficulties experienced by students learning English as an additional language. These students manifest a lack of confidence with English, they have an incomplete understanding of what has been taught, and many of them feel unhappy with their oral performances in the presence of other students. A study by Wong (2004) used interviews with many students learning English as an additional language. He found that many of these students were very accustomed to a didactic and a teacher-centred classroom with very little opportunity for classroom conversation, where the focus was on learning grammar, and correct language usage. Essentially, learning English was seen as learning a scholarly skill for the purposes of reading and writing, not as learning a living language of use.

In a study by Govender (2010) on IsiZulu-speaking Foundation Phase learners’ experiences of English as a second language in an English medium school, it was found that reading, writing and comprehension skills appeared to be cognitively challenging to these learners. In addition to this, pronunciation of words, grammar and language rules were also seen to be problematic areas. This contributed to speaking and reading anxiety amongst learners.

Maphumulo (2010) explored how grade one IsiZulu teachers teach reading, and the findings illuminated some of the factors that hindered the teaching of reading in the classroom which were: a lack of teaching resources, poor parental involvement, environmental factors such as vandalism at the school whereby teaching resources were stolen from the classrooms, poor communication between the teacher and the learners and insufficient teacher training practices for educators to teach reading effectively to young children. The researcher can relate to this

because similar challenges are currently being experienced by educators and learners at the sample school where the researcher is teaching.

In another study, it was found that in school during English lessons, teachers merely explained the grammatical rules, and learners completed the exercises set out in the text books. Oral communication skills such as speaking and listening were almost totally ignored. Learners rarely had the opportunity to use English in conversation in the classroom and they were under no pressure to become competent in this language. Due to these mentioned difficulties, students found it difficult to make the transition from passive learning to becoming active participants in English learning (Governder, 2010). I can identify with these practices in literacy teaching, as it still continues in many schools. Thus, this problem is worth addressing for the development of good literacy practices.

Walqui (2000) and Ramdeo (2006) have argued that success in language acquisition is influenced by many interrelated factors, which include the social context of the learning, cultural beliefs about language learning, the status of the target language, and the processes of language learning itself. However, factors such as language (language proficiency and attitude), learner (diverse needs and goals, support, role models), and learning process (learning styles, motivation and classroom interaction) also need to be considered in shaping learners second language learning.

I agree with Broughton and Fairbanks (2002) that although literacy instruction is meant to enhance learner empowerment so as to promote the goals of a multicultural and democratic education system, this is sometimes not so. It was found in a study by Anyon (1996) that when learners were subjected to constant control by educators during lessons and were never asked to think beyond a very basic level, these learners became uninterested, restless and inattentive in the learning process of literacy acquisition. Anyon (1996) had observed that instructional literacy practices were used which were designed to teach learners to follow and to conform, to accept and to adapt to the status quo, rather than be taught how to lead, to challenge and to be 'critical agents in the act of knowing' (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.33).

Gambrell, Mazzoni and Almasi (2000) comment further that when literacy learning does not encompass the social, cultural and collaborative literacy experiences for learners, then literacy learning will not promote learner engagement in the learning process, as in the case discussed above. The reason for this is that learners will fail to see the significance of literacy for purpose in their lives.

School literacy will become distinct from ‘real literacy’ as experienced daily by the learners. This will negatively affect individuals’ perceptions of themselves as readers and writers. Thus there is a need to seek possible ways to develop the skills in literacy which will become tools for learners to use in the process of empowerment and change.

Heath (1983) contributes to this discussion by adding that children socialized in different contexts come to school differentially prepared to participate in school, which may result in failure. Therefore, Heath (1983) argues that there is a need to study schools and classrooms in relation to the broader community or culture of its learners. In a study of three communities: a black working class community, a white working class community and a racially mixed middle class community, it was found that each community socialized their children into very different language practices.

The conclusion made from this study was that “the place of language in the life of each social group in these communities, and throughout the world, is interdependent with the habits and values of behaving, shared among members of that group” (Heath, 1983,p.11). In this study Heath (1983) demonstrated that children from each of these communities were differentially prepared for school, which promoted and privileged only the middle class ways of using language. Thus it is important for educators to glean information about the ways learners use language in and out of school, they must begin to take notice of the resources learners bring to school and educators may have to change their pedagogy and curricula, rather than assuming learners themselves have to adapt and change.

As we have seen from the discussions above, classroom practice is not the only factor involved in literacy acquisition and development. However, Ball and Kenny’s (1990) study shows that it is quality classroom teaching which has the most influence on successful outcomes for learners. Best practices and strategies are about processes that support quality education, and require the following for successful implementation: well-trained educators who continually engage in professional learning and development; well-managed learner-friendly and gender-fair classrooms and schools; skills-based, learner-centred and participatory methods; skilful assessment to facilitate learning and appropriate technologies (Compendium on Quality in Basic Education, 2003).

The Pan South African Language board (PANSALB, 1999) was established by the Government to educate people about their language rights. In a survey conducted by PANSALB (2000) on language choices of their respondents, one question that was addressed was on the issue of the home language versus the primary language of tuition of the respondents. The outcomes of this survey show both the

amount and degree of the mismatch between the languages at home and at school. Compared to the eleven home languages, only three languages occurred as more or less substantial primary languages of tuition, being English, Afrikaans and IsiZulu (PANSALB, 2000).

In addition to this information, from my reading of an evaluation of the implementation of the new Language - In -Education Policy by Mabiletja (2008, p.19) the table 1.1 below shows the official languages of South Africa, the total number of speakers of each language out of the total number of speakers.

Table 1.1 Official languages of South Africa (as cited in Mabiletja, 2008).

Languages	Speaker: No. of HL	% PanSALB 2001
Zulu	9 200 144	22,9
Xhosa	7 196 188	17,9
Afrikaans	5 811 547	14,4
Pedi	3 695 846	9,2
English	3 457 467	8,6
Tswana	3 301 774	8,2
Sesotho	3 104 197	7,7
Tsonga	1 756 105	4,4
Swazi	1 103 193	2,5
Venda	876 409	2,2
Ndebele	586 961	1,5
Other Languages		0,6

The languages are hierarchically tabulated according to the order from the larger number of speakers to the least. It must be noted that there are a far larger percentage of speakers of the African languages and Afrikaans as a home language as compared to the English language. However, in spite of this English still reigns as the dominant language in all facets of our society.

Mabiletja (2008) confirms this thought by commenting that generally English and Afrikaans perform high functions as compared to the other African languages. English and Afrikaans are also used in secondary domains such as in Government, administration, the courts, education, commerce, the media, with English gradually replacing Afrikaans. In contrast, the African languages are used in primary domains such as for interpersonal communication, religious and for cultural purposes.

In addition to this, the outcomes of the PANSALB (2000) survey on language learning attitudes of its respondents shows clearly the mismatch between the respondents' attitudes and the actual practices in education. These and other outcomes may begin to illustrate the fallacy of thus assuming that English smoothly functions as the *lingua franca* for intercultural communication in South Africa.

Allington and Cunningham (2007) claim that most black South Africans lack the confidence in valuing their African languages which may contribute to the apartheid syndrome, the reason for this being that many believe that they have to learn English to overcome their 'deficit'. The point noted here is that in spite of the affirmative action programmes, African languages are either not used as languages of teaching at all, or only during the first three or four years of initial schooling, and then are dropped.

Hardly any materials in African languages exist or where they do exist are of very poor quality. Moreover, as soon as English becomes the predominant language in the classroom, most teachers are not proficient enough to use it adequately (Alexander 1997). This results in black children's literacy in their own language and in English, at the end of their elementary schooling, being often poorly developed.

Thus it is very important to emphasise the very real mismatch between the multilingual policy of official documentation and the actual language practice in Government, education and business. It is only if all South African languages are seen as equal, only if the schools value every child's mother tongue as an asset and offer multilingual options and only if people are rewarded for their knowledge of a variety of languages in term of jobs and status, then only can language practice in South Africa eventually reflect the language policy (Alexander, 1997).

By discussing the traditions of literacy, it must be noted that literacy is a complex concept to define and indeed defies easy explanation. I have attempted to examine the ways in which literacy has been defined and I have discussed the close relationship between literacy and language. However, according to Green and Evans (2008) there are gaps in the literature with regard to the acquisition of literacy and teaching and support, notably how policy impacts positively or negatively on classroom practice, in the case of the switch from indigenous mother tongue instruction to English. Compounding the problem is a conflict between parental wishes and Government policy which can add complications to the actual teaching situation. It is hoped that this research will contribute insights to some of the problem areas mentioned as well as to literacy acquisition and development in a primary school.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is confined to and focussed on one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal. No attempt is made to generalise the acquisition and the development of literacy practices at this selected sample school with schools in the neighbourhood. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is my intention to reveal how literacy is taught and acquired in this small sample. However, the findings of this research project maybe relevant to other schools, so as to enable educators, the school management members, parents and policy makers to understand and hence to deal with the complex phenomenon of literacy acquisition and development, in particular, the roles and functions which need to be carried out for literacy practices to take place effectively.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is guided by and will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. In terms of the practice of literacy development:

- ✓ What are the learners' attitudes or experiences in the development of reading and writing practices in the classroom?
- ✓ How do Foundation Phase educators develop reading and writing competences in a primary school?
- ✓ Why do Foundation Phase educators develop reading and writing competences in the way that they do?
- ✓ How are Government literacy policies implemented in practice in the classroom?
- ✓ What preparation or assistance (if any) do the educators receive for developing literacy competencies?

2. What underlying social factors or challenges (if any) can be seen to impact on the practice of literacy development at the sample school?
3. What recommendations can be achieved from this project for future literacy development and support?

1.9 ORGANISATION OF STUDY

The contents of the various chapters are as follows:

Chapter One has aimed to provide an overview of the reasons this study has been undertaken. The chapter presented the background, rationale, aims, the scope of the study and potential contribution of the study, as well as the research questions which drive the entire thesis.

This is followed closely by **Chapter Two**, the literature contextualising the study, is presented. An overview of the South African education system in terms of its historical context and policy developments for literacy are outlined.

In **Chapter Three**, a literature review is presented. Firstly, it begins with worldwide issues on literacy development, followed by the role of international comparative studies in literacy. Secondly, small-scale empirical studies conducted in South Africa on literacy are investigated. This chapter ends with literature elucidating the school factors that influence the teaching and learning of literacy.

Chapter Four presents the conceptual framework in detail which acts as an exploratory or explanatory tool for findings associated with this study. Important concepts used in this framework will be introduced.

Chapter Five involves the outline of the research design and methodology for this study. There will be discussion on the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings of this research. Thereafter, the research design and methods of sampling, data collection and analysis used to answer the research questions will be discussed. In this chapter, the researcher also intends to describe the context or the sample school, in which this research was conducted. Finally, a discussion of the trustworthiness of the research undertaking and the steps taken to ensure the integrity of the research in terms of ethical procedures is presented.

Chapter Six incorporates the presentation and discussion of the qualitative research findings for the research questions. A summary will be compiled of the main findings. It also includes reflections on

the research methodology and the conceptual framework utilised. This chapter also draws conclusions for the study and offers its implications for policy, practice and further research into literacy development in primary schools.

Chapter Seven presents a summary of the study and the main findings. This chapter also draws conclusions for the study and offers its implications for policy, practice and further research.

1.10 Summary

In this chapter the research problem and the rationale for this study were presented in detail. The value of the study is thought to be in making recommendations based on an understanding of the reality of not only the educators' and learners' experiences but also of any underlying challenges which may bring about this current crisis in literacy development in our country.

It is hoped that this research project will not only address this gap, but add in some measure to the existing body of knowledge on literacy development in developing countries. These findings might also be used to inform language and education policy decisions at primary schools.

The next chapter, being chapter two will present an overview of the South African education system in terms of the policy developments for literacy.

CHAPTER TWO

SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL POLICY ISSUES IN CONTEXT

“The journey of our past has led us to the present and will educate us for our future”

(David Hutchinson)

2.1 Introduction

Leading on from the discussions of Chapter One, this chapter serves to describe South Africa’s educational policies in order to bring to the fore the changes that have been made from the past up to the present to enhance learner improvement in literacy. The central aim of this research is to investigate the literacy practices of three grade three educators in a primary school. However, in support of this main aim, the researcher outlines curriculum development in this chapter, for it plays a pivotal role in teaching practices of educators in South Africa. All these aspects will have a bearing on the analysis of the data from this research.

2.2 Historical curriculum developments

During the apartheid era in South Africa, education was structured differentially according to race and ethnicity. The goal was political and economic oppression of the Black majority for the social and economic ‘upliftment’ of the white minority. For many years education for White learners was controlled by the Department of Education and Culture (House of Assembly); for Indian learners by the House of Delegates; for Coloured learners by the House of Representatives; and for the Black learners by the Department of Education and Training. All of these systems were run centrally by the Department of National Education (Lubisi & Murphy, 2002).

Sailors, Hoffman and Matthee (2007, p.23) explain that “initially White teachers were trained at teacher training colleges or received degrees from universities for high school teaching in preparation for teaching in schools for White learners. In the homelands control over primary school teacher training for Black teachers was allocated to the area itself. In non-homeland settings, Black teachers were trained in special colleges located mostly in the townships and designated for them.” For the black learners their language of instruction was mother tongue in the primary grades. It was only at the beginning of secondary school that English and Afrikaans were introduced to learners.

Sailors *et al.*, (2007) argue that the use of these official languages of the apartheid state, had led to many Black learners failing and dropping out of the education system due to their inability to succeed in these languages. The argument here could be that the intention of the apartheid state engineered this form of social and educational injustice so that the majority of the population in South Africa would remain illiterate and undereducated. “After the 1976 Soweto uprising whereby pupils protested against the Government for enforcing the language of Afrikaans, the Government backed down and passed the 1979 Education and Training Act, which reduced mother tongue instruction to four years of primary school, followed by a choice of English or Afrikaans as a language of instruction thereafter” (Sailors *et al.*, 2007, p. 42)..

It must be noted that the political, social and economic changes in post-apartheid South Africa have been accompanied by considerable changes in our education system. There has been the desegregation of schools, the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) (1999) which was followed closely by Curriculum 2005 (C2005) to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), followed by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). And finally now it rests under the guardianship of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) which made its debut in 2012 into all South African schools.

2.3 A tale of two education systems in South Africa

According to Schlebusch and Thobedi (2004), after 1994 the new Government restructured the education system dividing it into national, provincial and local school levels. The aim here was to bring together different teachers and their various classroom practices and professional experiences under one administrative body in each province. This abolition of school segregation in the early 1990’s led not only to the collapse of an apartheid Government but also many Black learners moved into city schools which had previously been reserved for White, Indian or Coloured learners only.

Lubisi and Murphy (2002) explain that as a result of this, schools in the Black African townships remained mainly Black African in terms of learner profile. The reason being was that there was this perception that these schools have lower standards and therefore parents from other races did not wish to place their children in these schools.

The schools in the ‘first system of education’ maintain a Black African learner profile due to the economics of school fee payment and current economically disadvantaged communities

being in areas previously designated for Black people. Many schools battle to collect fees from the children enrolled at their schools. It must also be remembered that whilst no school can deny a child access because the school fees cannot be paid, it can deny admission to the child if he or she resides outside the immediate area of the school and if there is another school in the child's own neighbourhood which he or she could attend.

It is due to this chain of events and circumstances that communities previously designated for black learners continue to have a Black African racial make-up and to some extent perpetuate the status quo. Sailors *et al.*, (2007: p.368) refer to the two systems in South African education as a “a tale of two cities..... The second system of education consists of more advantaged schools, that cater for White learners and the children of an emerging middle class of non-White professionals and learners who have migrated to these schools from the township areas.”

Fleisch (2008: p.v) presents the following powerful argument that these two education systems promote a distinct “bimodal distribution of achievement. The reason being that the system is characterised by learners from disadvantaged backgrounds who are unable to read and write in the language of teaching and learning at schools. Whilst the second system produces most university entrants and graduates and is well-resourced and consists of former White and Indian schools.”

According to Zimmerman (2010) it serves a burgeoning private sector, representing a higher-achieving group, predominantly comprising a number of middle-class Black and White learners who attend relatively well-resourced schools and who become proficient readers by the end of their primary school years. The existence of these two separate disparate education systems is fundamental to address, for it impacts upon the sampling strategy of this research.

2.4 Policy influences in education

Many policies are a legacy of apartheid education that endure up to the present. They have all influenced South African education. The progressive Outcomes Based Education (OBE), Curriculum 2005 (C2005), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the recent CAPS have contributed to the deepening crisis in our education system. The focus here is to present and scrutinise those aspects of the policies to trace the changes affecting literacy development in a primary school. Moreover, additional policies that have since

come to the fore to aid the teaching of literacy skills in primary schools are examined in this chapter. Most importantly, the impact of language policy changes is also explained.

2.4.1 The introduction of Outcomes-Based Education / Curriculum 2005 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement

Incorporating Spady's (1994) philosophy of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), South Africa developed its own model. OBE was a learner-centred approach that emphasised what the learner should know, understand, demonstrate and become. The main goal was that teachers and learners had to work to achieve predetermined results or outcomes by the end of each learning process. According to Botha (2002) the outcomes integrate knowledge, competence and orientations needed to become thinking, competent and responsible future citizens.

Vandeyar and Killen (2007) agree and they explain that in OBE the emphasis was placed on learner's achievement of specific outcomes as well as on the reporting of learner achievement in terms of these outcomes, thus the name Outcomes Based Education. The other two main features of this policy incorporated an integrated knowledge system with eight learning areas from Grades 4 to 9 and secondly that the curriculum promoted a learner-centred pedagogy. I concur with Botha (2002) that OBE was introduced in South Africa for the following reasons: firstly due to international trends² as a means to root out apartheid education. The Government chose OBE as a model to address the crisis in the education system and secondly for the future empowerment of all South African citizens.

As an educator, I believe that this model was implemented to assist educators to move away from the once content-based teaching and curriculum to a more learner-centred curriculum. Lombard and Grosser (2008) state that the outcomes in OBE were sub-divided into seven critical and five developmental outcomes which would develop cognitive capacity.

2. OBE had first been implemented in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United states from where it originated (Botha, 2002).

However, it was not without criticism. As an improvement to OBE, Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced in 1997. Three years later, C2005 failed to deliver what it had intended to as Chisholm (2007: p.298) explains:

... original formulations were clothed in a complex framework of outcomes that provoked a range of criticisms drawing attention to the behaviourist underpinnings, excessive assessment requirements, and difficulty of implementation in under-resourced contexts with poorly-trained teachers.

In addition to these flaws, there were complaints about the language use in OBE, the excessive paperwork that was related to new forms of continuous assessment and the expectations which were considered too complex. It was mentioned that the well-resourced schools were found to be better able to adopt the learner-centred approaches and the new assessment methods that OBE proposed, than the poorly resourced schools (Chisholm, 2007, Taylor 2008). Due to these loop holes, this approach failed, resulting in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) of 2002 for Grades R to 9, being implemented. However, Pudi (2006, p.104) argues that:

there is no paradigm shift from OBE to C2005 to RNCS..... The evolutionary sequence from OBE to C2005 is based on the rationale to apply OBE in a way that is relevant to the South African situation and the evolutionary sequence between C2005 to the NCS or the RNCS is based on augmenting / filling the gaps realised in the implementation of C2005.

Tellingly, Todd and Mason (2005, pp.222-223) caution one by stating that:

...outcomes-based education is an innovation that assumes basic structures, such as functioning schools with qualified teachers and adequate classrooms, desks and textbooks, are already in place, which might be the case in the developed world, but is by no means guaranteed in developing world educational contexts. Given the historical and situational constraints, most South African schools are not well placed to take on an innovation as radical as an outcomes-based education, without first putting in place some of the basic requirements of effective schooling.

I agree with the above-mentioned writers who had enunciated that formal changes in an education system do not guarantee better practice or better results, if policy makers do not take into account the context and the agents of implementation. It may just be that the new policy is impracticable to implement thus resulting in failure.

2.4.2 The Revised National Curriculum Statement ³

This comprised three phases. The first phase, the Foundation Phase, included Grade R to Grade 3. There were three ‘Learning Programmes’ in the Foundation Phase, namely Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. The second phase was the Intermediate Phase and included Grades 4 to 6. The last phase, the Senior Phase, incorporated Grades 7 to 9 with Grade 8 being the first grade of high school. In the Intermediate and Senior Phases, learners had eight learning area subjects.

In the learning area literacy in the Foundation Phase, the reading and viewing outcome is placed with five other expected outcomes associated with the overall language competency, namely listening, speaking, writing, thinking and reasoning, and language structure and use. Each of these learning outcomes has its own assessment standards (ASs) (DoE, 2002b).

2.4.2.1 The Foundation phase literacy curriculum

According to policy, in addition to the three learning areas in the Foundation Phase, one additional language was to be introduced in Grade 2. The RNCS (DoE, 2002a) states that the most important task of the Foundation Phase teacher was to ensure that all learners learn to read and therefore 40% of teaching time in the Foundation Phase was to be allocated to literacy teaching. It was required that all learners need to be taught strategies to help them to read with understanding and to unlock the code of written text.

3. The RNCS for Grades R to 9 is sometimes referred to as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS)

According to Zimmerman (2010) this policy adopted a so-called ‘balanced approach’ to literacy whereby learners had to be taught how to locate and use information, to follow a process or argument, summarise, build their own understandings, adapt what they learn, and to be able to demonstrate what they learn from their reading and writing in the learning process. The main focus used in the curriculum was to begin with children’s emergent literacy and thereafter to involve them in reading books, writing for genuine purposes and giving attention to phonics (DoE, 2002a, p.23).

According to the Department of Education (2002b, p.56) specific learning skills for language outcomes, acknowledge that learners must be involved in reading South African and international fiction and non-fiction material which is necessary “for learner’s emotional and personal growth, for language development, for literacy, for understanding of values, and for enjoyment purposes.”

Moving on in this discussion, the new C2005 was aimed at overcoming one of the fundamental design flaws of the RNCS in terms of specifying the knowledge content more explicitly. Whilst it achieved this for the learning area mathematics whereby the progression standards are clear, the language-assessment standards give teachers little guidance. For example, at grade 2 and 3, teachers are exhorted to see that each pupil ‘reads lots of books (both fiction and non-fiction) and familiar rhymes at an appropriate language and reading level’ (DoE, 2001c).

Yet, it is not clear what is meant by appropriate levels of reading and language. The argument brought forward is when, for example, is it expected that pupils should be able to write simple paragraphs with sentences of the subject-verb-object type? At what level should subordinate clauses be introduced to learners? When should a teacher introduce tenses and direct speech?

I am of the opinion that, due to the fact that none of these key progression standards were specified in the RNCS policy document, it was likely, as with C2005, to fail. The pupils of teachers with poor knowledge resources such as insufficient training support materials, would have their learners lag behind as these teachers would be teaching subject matter unaware of what is expected of them. In addition to this, this streamlined curriculum offered competing and contradictory policy demands on teachers, which generated high levels of confusion and concern among practitioners.

As an educator who had also implemented this curriculum, I did witness first hand the flaws of this curriculum as outlined by Jansen (2003) that schools and classrooms did not have the infrastructure needed to support this curriculum reform. For example, reasonable learner-to- educator ratios; the

availability of basic learning materials such as textbooks, to support the new curriculum, which could have served as a critical learning base for teachers and learners; the policy was too information-driven, removed from classroom contexts and realities and lacked substantive content.

In spite of the failed attempts or interventions by the Department of Education to formulate and implement successful policies to improve educational reform, Michael Fullan (1999) and Bhikha, (2002) offer some explanation for this scenario. These writers feel strongly that social and educational reform requires ‘deep change.’ This implies that the participants in the reform process see themselves as active constructors of change rather than passive victims of top-down reform processes. The curriculum reform policies failed because they did not make a meaningful impact on the core concerns of equality, quality and efficiency.

Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003, p.21) add that reform in schools means “aligning the many components of the schooling system so as to impact maximally on learner performance.” The Department of Education (2003) admits that the resources were not adequate enough to make a difference at the school-level in the form of improved learning performance. While there were clearly some changes recorded, they tended to be visible in the external behaviours of the teachers, rather than in the subject-knowledge gains among the learners.

Due to the desperate and failed attempts by the Department of Education to produce quality education, new literacy strategies were needed at the National level in the years following the Revised National Curriculum Statement. Thus, one such progress strategy was the launch of the Foundations for Learning Campaign which is highlighted in the sub-section that follows.

2.4.2.2 The Foundations for Learning Campaign and the National Reading Strategy

In March 2008, in response to the findings of national, regional and international ⁴ studies which showed that South African children were unable to read, count or write at expected levels, the Department of Education (DoE) (2008c) launched its *Foundations for Learning Campaign*, a four-year campaign aimed at providing teachers and schools with clear directives on the DoE’s expectations of schools and teachers in the achievement of expected levels of performance.

4. National study: A study conducted within a Province or State of a country. Regional study: A study conducted in a specific Province of a particular country. International study: a study encompassing many countries.

The focus of the campaign was on primary schooling, with the intention of ensuring that learners across the system have a solid foundation of learning. The aim was to increase average learner performance in literacy, language and numeracy / mathematics to no less than 50%. The focus was on teaching-time allocation, resource sufficiency and assessing, tracking and recording learner progress in reading, writing and numeracy (DoE, 2008c).

To ensure the success of these campaigns, specific guidelines were outlined by the Department of Education. It was expected that every teacher in the Foundation and Intermediate phases would spend at least 30 minutes on reading for enjoyment daily.⁵ It was stipulated that the literacy focus time should be in the learners' language of teaching and learning (LoLT) and/or Home Language three times per week and in their First Additional Language (FAL) twice a week. The writing, listening and speaking components of language development should take place in the LoLT once a week each and in the FAL once a week each (DoE, 2008c, p.14).

The above goals of this campaign dovetail with two other DoE documents that were published during this time in an attempt to curb and root out the many problems or obstacles that were contributing to learners' poor performance in literacy and mathematics. The first was: *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades: A Teacher's Handbook*, which provided practical teaching guidelines on how to implement the literacy focus time and the language development periods (DoE, 2008a).

5. The 30 minutes of reading for enjoyment did not form part of the overall time allocated to Languages. However, this was not clearly stated in the document itself (DoE, 2008c).

The second document was the *National Reading Strategy* which aimed to outline the problem with and reasons for children's poor reading abilities, and to offer more all-encompassing goals than the *Foundations for Learning Campaign* (DoE, 2008b, p.11) and some of these goals were to:

- ✓ clarify and simplify curriculum expectations;
- ✓ promote reading across the curriculum;
- ✓ affirm and advance the use of all languages; and
- ✓ ensure that not only teachers, learners and parents, but also the broader community understand their role in improving and promoting reading.

The National Reading Strategy was built strongly on six key pillars, namely: (1) to monitor learner performance; (2) to improve teaching practice and methodology; (3) teacher training, development and support; (4) management of the teaching of reading; (5) resources and (6) research, partnerships and advocacy (DoE, 2008b, p.13).

2.4.2.3 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

Over the last four years, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has placed a much larger emphasis on reading and writing skills than before. The increased focus on literacy was due to the poor literacy scores that were achieved in the *Progress in the International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) in 2006. Through the *Foundations for Learning Campaign* and now the new and current CAPS, the Department of Basic Education, is trying with great effort to improve literacy skills in South Africa.

According to *Curriculum News* (2011), in November 2009 the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, stunned the educational community with her announcement that Outcomes Based Education was dead. The Minister further declared that the implementation of RNCS had failed for it was found that teachers were confused, overloaded, stressed and demotivated, and as a consequence, were underperforming. The outcome of this was the formulation of CAPS, which started in the Foundation Phase and Grade 10 in 2012. Due to the fact that the quality of learning outcomes in our schools have been of major concern to educators, parents and the general public, for a number of years, targets for improving learning outcomes have been set in Action Plan 2014.

The preparation of the CAPS documents has been a mammoth task for it has included the reworking of 76 subjects at different levels and versioning into all our official languages.

The following policy documents must be read in conjunction with CAPS:

- ✓ *The National Policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum statement Grades R-12*. This explains the subject selections and the promotion requirements for all four school phases; and
- ✓ *The National Protocol for Assessment (Grades R-12)*, which provides a policy framework for the management of school assessment, school assessment records and basic requirements for report cards, learner and teacher, profiles (*Curriculum News*, 2011, p.43).

The implementation of this National Curriculum and Assessment Policy statements will also require that new timetables be formulated in the foundation and the Intermediate Phase, new textbooks for all grades R-12, the training of principals, teachers and provincial officials and constant communication with parents and learners. These changes will also have specific training implications.

I focus attention on changes in the Foundation Phase since this research pertains to literacy teaching in the Foundation Phase of a primary school. In the Foundation Phase (Grades R-3) a second language will be introduced from Grade 1 being IsiZulu or Afrikaans. The time allocation in the Foundation Phase will be as follows from 2012 (*Survival Guide to the Foundation Phase Curriculum and Assessment Policy*, 2012, pp.8-9).

Table 2.1 Instructional time in the Foundation Phase (Survival Guide to the Foundation Phase Curriculum and Assessment Policy, 2012, pp.8-9)

(a) The instructional time in the Foundation Phase is as follows:

SUBJECT	GRADE R (HOURS)	GRADES 1-2 (HOURS)	GRADE 3 (HOURS)
Home Language	10	7/8	7/8
First Additional Language		2/3	3/4
Mathematics	7	7	7
Life Skills	6	6	7
• Beginning Knowledge	(1)	(1)	(2)
• Creative Arts	(2)	(2)	(2)
• Physical Education	(2)	(2)	(2)
• Personal and Social Well-being	(1)	(1)	(1)
TOTAL	23	23	25

- (b) Instructional time for Grades R, 1 and 2 is 23 hours and for Grade 3 is 25 hours.
- (c) Ten hours are allocated for languages in Grades R-2 and 11 hours in Grade 3. A maximum of 8 hours and a minimum of 7 hours are allocated for Home Language and a minimum of 2 hours and a maximum of 3 hours for Additional Language in Grades R – 2. In Grade 3 a maximum of 8 hours and a minimum of 7 hours are allocated for Home Language and a minimum of 3 hours and a maximum of 4 hours for First Additional Language.
- (d) In Life Skills Beginning Knowledge is allocated 1 hour in Grades R – 2 and 2 hours as indicated by the hours in brackets for Grade 3.

For many years the South African schooling system has had only one credible and objective measure of learner performance and that was the National Senior Certificate Exams that Grade 12 learners write. According to the *Curriculum News* (2011, p.21), the system had always depended on assessments internally set and marked by the schools themselves to judge whether learning and teaching was of a good standard and if it was aligned to the country’s curriculum expectations.

However, many schools declare that the majority of their learners are fit to move on to the next grade and ultimately to Grade 12 and beyond. But the Grade 12 results indicate a different story of children who fail to master the basics necessary for them to pass with a quality pass at the end of the 12 years of schooling.

According to Taylor and Mayer in an article that was published in the (The Mercury, 2014, November, 10, p.6) since English First Additional Language is the medium of instruction for 80 % of learners, poor levels of English proficiency constitute the largest single cause of learners dropping out before reaching Grade 12, failing to pass the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and of not completing their tertiary studies (fewer than half of tertiary students gain a qualification). Although there has been some progress in recent years, the school system continues by and large to replicate many inequalities which disadvantage certain learners over others in terms of access to the NSC, the opportunity to learn through improved proficiency in English and access to careers in science, technology and commerce.

These writers conclude on this note that if the NSC pass rate is increased at the expense of access to quality education for many learners, as it appears to be doing presently, then this constitutes a perversion of the very purpose of schooling (Taylor & Mayer, 2014).

It was for this reason that a key introduction into the system, in a bid to improve the quality of learner attainment was made. This was the Annual National Assessments (ANA) in two areas fundamental to learning which were literacy and numeracy for all children in Grades 1-6. Some of the primary purposes of these tests were to: provide each school with an objective picture of their learners' competency levels with respect to these two areas using nationally benchmarked tests that are aligned to the curriculum, to provide them with an analysis of the areas of difficulty experienced by their learners and to assist schools to design teaching programmes to improve actual learning in the classroom (*Curriculum News*, 2011).



Cartoon 1 : Fourteen year schooling system (Ramjan, 2014, p.17).

In addition to the constant changing of policies on education, and in order to make up for Government's failure in providing a solid foundation for education for all citizens, they now propose a fourteen year schooling system to allow learners to develop more skills before they exit their schooling career to become better equipped and prepared for tertiary education and employment. However, the risk involved in this, relates to the fact that many educators may still not be fully trained and there may still be a lack of resources to meet these needs. The cartoon above depicts the various shortfalls and challenges that exist which will hinder the future quality of education in our country.

Ramathan (2014) presents the strong argument as he unpacks the curriculum changes since 1996, that CAPS can be described as a restricted curriculum where the content to be taught, how it is to be taught and at what pace it is to be taught has been predetermined. The reason for this is, educators are given a handbook that specifies all of these details, including that of assessments and are expected to implement this curriculum in schools. The researcher is of the opinion that in doing so, teacher autonomy is severely restricted in that educators would have to know the content to be taught, how and when to teach it and how to assess this knowledge. This could relegate educators to become mere

technicians of the CAPS curriculum just implementing the content given to them in a form of a handbook rather than them operating as professionals.

2.4.2.4 The Language-In-Education policy

According to Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) there is an interest in learning taking place whereby learning is conducted in a second or even in a third language, usually English. The reason is that the English is perceived as the *lingua franca* with the best prospects of assisting learners towards gaining employment after completing their schooling career.

2.4.2.4 (a) The Bantu Education Act

The Bantu Education Act, Act 47 of 1953, determined the use of the home language as the medium of instruction which was compulsory up to and including Standard 6. Both English and Afrikaans were compulsory school subjects from the first year of school. From standard 7 onwards, English and Afrikaans were used as the medium of instruction on a 50:50 basis. This brought about an educational advantage to home language instruction.

However, De Wet and Wolhuter (2009) affirm that deep-seated distrust and fear, that home-language education would lead to impoverishment, social and political isolation, and disempowerment, has caused the majority of South African learners to prefer English rather than their home language as the language of instruction. These writers also confirm that some individuals opposed this language policy because they share the view that the policy not only has negative consequences, but would also lead to the economic and educational disempowerment of black people.

Desai (2001:p.330) concurs by stating that ‘the use of African languages Was often perceived as an attempt to ghettoize African learners and to deny them access to the mainstream of South African life.’ In addition to this, the policy places a ceiling on opportunities for development, because it was expected of black people to acquire academic skills in two ‘foreign’ languages (De Wet & Wolhuter, 2009).

2.4.2.4 (b) Mother-tongue education

Heugh (2006) agrees but adds that it is best for learners to achieve the foundations of education in one's mother tongue. The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b: Section 6) and the National Education Policy (RSA, 1996c: Section 3(4) (m) remind us of the right to education for all and the right to education in the language choice of the learner or the learner's parents, which is stipulated in the Constitution (RSA 1996a: Section 30). Thus, it must be noted that access to basic education for all as well as the right to education in the language of the learner's choice, is very high on the list of transformation priorities of our Government.

Perry (2008) argues that literacy programmes in schools cannot ignore the language debate because language provides the basis for the acquisition of literacy skills. In this research the researcher intends to scrutinize Government Policy on LoLT in education for this is a major factor to understand teaching practices and learner outcomes of our current curriculum.

2.4.2.4 (c) The Role of the Language-in-Education Policy

The Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) promotes multilingualism and equal importance is placed on all eleven official languages in our country. The Department of Education (DoE, 1997) proposes an additive approach to multilingualism meaning that learners will learn in their home language and at least one additional official language of the country. The reason for this is that every learner will become increasingly competent in their additional language, whilst the vernacular language will still be developed and maintained (DoE, 2002b). The main goal was to maintain the home language(s), whilst contributing to the effective development of the additional language(s).

Therefore, currently at schools, the use of the learner's home language for teaching and learning is highly recommended wherever possible, especially in the Foundation Phase where the learners are still developing important literacy skills such as reading and writing (DoE, 2002a). Presently, the following languages are offered from Grade R to Grade 3 in Kwa-Zulu Natal: Home Language (English), First Additional Language (where learners have the choice of choosing Afrikaans or IsiZulu), thus promoting and maintaining multilingualism in our schools, because the government regards language as an instrument to advance education and political transformation and to establish democracy.

According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2001:29) 'speaking the language of other people not only facilitates meaningful communication, but also builds openness and respect as barriers are broken down.'

Garcia (2009) contributes to this concept of multilingualism. This writer terms it 'bilingual education' rather than multilingual education, as the umbrella term helps to cover a wide spectrum of practice and policy. Bilingual education usually is where two or more languages are used together in instruction, but it is also the case where two or more languages are used together in complex combinations. The writer further explains that 'bilingual education' does encompass what many refer to as multilingual education, which embodies 'mother tongue' plus two other languages for all. It could also refer to the use of three languages: mother tongue, a national or regional language and an international language.

This concept of bilingual education is interesting and relevant for there are many instances where South African children speak or learn in three languages, for example, a learner who speaks Isi-Zulu (home language), learns in English as the National language of our country and later may also learn the language of Afrikaans or an international language.

Heugh (2006) argues that education changes after 1994 contained the promise of justice, the promotion and development of multilingualism and home-language instruction, parental choice and a cognitively enriched curriculum. After a thorough analysis of the policy implementation plan, Heugh (2006) reaches the conclusion that the education and language acquisition theory, upon which the language of instruction policy has been based, has been ignored. According to her, this may result in the current education practice promoting failure and injustice that will allow for apartheid education to reappear.

However, the following reality exists in many primary schools in our country where English or Afrikaans has not been the medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase, yet a shift will be made in Grade 4 to English as the medium of instruction for all learning tasks. This means that many South Africans will make the transition from a bilingual programme of English and an African language, to learning English in monolingual education. The Department of Education assumes that learners, who make this transition to English as early as possible, will benefit immensely from this 'switch.'

Heugh (2006) also contributes to this debate by stating that teachers in certain schools in the country feel that the LiEP, which calls for the switch to English instruction after Grade 3, in schools where the majority of learners are English Additional Language (EAL) speakers and learners, is contributing to educational failure.

Pluddemann (2003, p.287) affirms this by adding that

...the vast majority of African-language speaking learners experience a debilitating transition to English-medium teaching after three years of Home language (mother tongue). Despite the additive bilingual intent of the LiEP African languages continue to be 'subtracted' from curricular use before sufficient language development has taken place. Linguistically demanding 'content subjects' such as mathematics, science, history, geography, accounting and technology are taught and assessed through the medium of English from Grade 4 upwards.

Heugh (2006, p.52) explains this scenario in detail in the following manner: "most learners who have to make the transition to reading to learn in Grade 4 'simply fall into the gap' between learning in the mother tongue and learning through a second language of education, that being English. Most teachers are in a dilemma for they may not know how to best assist their learners to bridge this gap."

I am of the opinion that an early exit from a first language to a second language medium of instruction at this point actually constitutes a weak bilingual model. I also agree with Heugh when she further suggests that if the Department of Education is adopting an additive approach, then this should involve at least six to eight years of first language education, together with good provision of the second language development, to be followed by dual medium of education in the latter years.

According to Zimmerman (2010) this is in line with the research-evidenced hypothesis that it takes two-to-three years to develop what Cummins (1981) refers to as the 'Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills' (BICS) of a second language, and up to seven years to develop full Cognitive/ Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Cummins (1981) had thus proposed the idea of a distinction between conversational language ability and more advanced language competence needed for formal learning. It is explained further that conversational language ability refers to the surface level ability to hold a simple conversation. However, this level of fluency is not enough for a learner to cope with the language-based requirements of our education curriculum.

For a learner to cope with the curriculum requirements, Cummins (1981) argues that a learner may need to have developed CALP for this level of language proficiency to cope with more abstract academic tasks such as those in the school curriculum. Immediately we see the

vast gap that exists between learning situations of learners with English as a first language (EFL) and learners with English as an additional language of learning (EAL).

Cummins's (1981) theory, states that learners who have English as a First Language or who speak English as a mother tongue, are at an advantage for they are at an age where they should have achieved CALP in English. In contrast learners with English as an Additional Language, may have developed only BICS in English at this stage, therefore they may encounter problems in learning in English or acquiring skills in the English language.

In 2006, planned alterations to the LiEP were announced (Pandor, 2006). An amendment to the policy may lead to a further two years of mother tongue education. This may mean that the switch to English will more likely occur at the beginning of the Grade 7 year of schooling for those learners who have been learning in languages other than English or Afrikaans. According to Zimmerman (2010) this shift in policy is in line with research into bilingual education 'best practices' (Alidou *et al.*, 2006). However, in 2012 due to the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (CAPS) Grades R-12, the emphasis is on additive bilingualism.

It is through language that cultural diversity and social relations are expressed and constructed. Therefore, learning to use language effectively will enable learners to think and to acquire knowledge, to express their identity, feelings and ideas, to be able to interact with others and to manage their world. Thus, Foundation Phase will focus on building a strong oral foundation in Grade R and 1.

This will ultimately provide the foundation for learning to read and write in Grades 2 and 3. Many children will start using their additional language, being English, as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in Grade 4. This means that they must reach a high level of competence in English by the end of Grade 3, and they need to be able to read and write well in English (Pandor, 2006).

Fortunately, children can transfer many of their literacy skills from their home language. The First Additional Language refers to a language which is not a mother tongue but which is used for certain communicative functions in society, that is, the medium of learning and teaching in education. The first Additional Language subject includes all the eleven official languages of

our country. The First Additional Language in CAPS takes advantage of learners' literacy skills in their home language.

For example, activities which are introduced in the Home Language in CAPS are introduced in the First Additional Language in CAPS a grade later. This is what is called 'additive bilingualism.' It means to build a strong literacy foundation in the Home Language and to build First Additional Language literacy onto this. This means that learners in Grade 4 will have a strong foundation in their First Additional Language to enable them to learn in that language (*Survival Guide to the Foundation Phase Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements*, 2012).

The curriculum provides strong support for those learners who will use their First Additional Language as a language of learning. It is intended that by the end of Grade 9, these learners would be able to use their Home Language and the First Additional Language effectively and with confidence for a variety of purposes.

2.5 Summary

De Wet and Wolhuter (2009) highlight some of our Government's failures with regard to realising the transformation objective in education by discussing the following examples: Outcomes Based Education, another centrepiece of the Government's educational transformation plan became bogged down in the every day realities of our classrooms and failed miserably. However, basic aspects such as input, throughput and output quality in education were highly neglected.

The following alarming statistics regarding resource shortages in schools in our country are now outlined: Of the 25 415 public schools in South Africa, 4 046 schools have no electricity, 2 891 have no sources of water and 17 081 schools have no computers. In addition to this, a mere 46 % of Grade 1 learners eventually reach Grade 12 and since 2003 the matriculation pass rate has been falling each year (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2008: p.368-376). These figures show that we are far from the required transformation in education. These statistics show the complexity of the problem of education and hence intensifies the value of engaging in this research project.

I am of the opinion that it is the task of all educators to keep abreast of all changes that are constantly being implemented by the Department of Education with regard to policies and documents, to be able to assist their learners in the best way possible.

However, Zimmerman (2010) does not agree that educators should be further burdened, since they currently experience many challenges with regard to curriculum practices and its implementation policies. Vandeyar and Killen (2007) advise that although Governmental educational changes are aimed at redressing past inequalities in education, these changes may not necessarily result in major changes in the classroom level, if some educators are still applying the same old pedagogical practices that they had used a long time ago.

In this chapter I have presented an overview of the policy developments in South Africa that have occurred over the years. I also concur with De Wet and Wolhuter (2009) that although education played a vital role in the dismantling of apartheid education laws, further education policies will be nothing more than ‘political rhetoric’ until such time as the universal aim of ‘education for all’ has become a practical reality in South Africa.

It was for this reason that current political, economic, social and health issues predict an uphill battle for the establishment of a universal basic education for all South African children.

Building on from the discussion in Chapters one and two, a review of literature will follow in Chapter three on literacy development and current literacy practices in primary schools.

CHAPTER THREE LITERATURE REVIEW

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”
(Nelson Mandela)

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter One the literature reviewed informed the reader of the clarification of the main constructs and presented a preliminary literature review that informed the rationale for this study. In Chapter Two I further illustrated the context of this research by exploring educational policies, their strengths and their weaknesses. In this chapter, the Literature Review, I aim to do the following: offer further arguments that have already been introduced in the first two chapters and situate this study strategically within current empirical research literature, encompassing both local and international studies.

I am aware that there is a vast amount of literature on literacy development internationally. However, O’ Sullivan (2003) argues that the literature on teaching reading to young learners in developing countries is very limited. Perry (2008) verifies this by stating that although literacy development in early schooling in Africa has received increased attention from scholars, it is still under-represented in the scholarly literature.

Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) concur by adding that there has been a wide variety of research into reading and writing in English speaking countries, which has mushroomed in the past six decades or so, but again, there has been comparatively little research on literacy development on the African continent. Thus, one sees the need for research in literacy development. Therefore, it is evident that this research problem is germane to other countries. Bearing this in mind, this Literature Review will focus primarily on literature from South Africa but where applicable align itself to broader international perspectives.

As an orientation to this chapter, the next section (3.2) will provide a discussion of literacy development worldwide. Section 3.3 will further elaborate on South African learners’ achievement in literacy as outlined in Chapter One. The finale to this chapter unpacks the factors that may have a direct bearing on learners’ literacy achievement at schools.

3.2 Worldwide issues on literacy development

In this section a general discussion about the status of literacy development worldwide and in Africa will be presented. This will be followed by a discussion of the role of international comparative studies in monitoring and evaluating learner's academic development.

3.2.1 Mapping global trends of literacy

Considerable development has taken place in the broad area of literacy development and due to these changes, literacy can no longer be regarded as an autonomous set of technical skills that are learnt and followed to complete tasks. The researcher supports the view that literacy is now regarded as a social practice that is integrally linked with ideology, culture, knowledge and power. Thus the concept of literacy has rightfully lost much of the rigidity associated with traditional, de-contextualised and skills-oriented frameworks (Prinsloo, 2008).

Rassool (1999, p.25) states that "literacy is perceived to be organic because it is seen as a cultural activity that involves people in conscious and reflexive action within a variety of situations in everyday life." It is through this participation in literacy events, that people can interrogate the narrative of everyday life and redefine themselves in relation to the social world. Literacy is also regarded as being multidimensional because it is seen as serving a variety of social, economic, ideological and political purposes.

From my understanding, social purposes would include, for example, reading for information, learning and so on. Economic purposes can be seen in relation to the literacy skills and knowledge demands, made on people in the work place. Political purposes of literacy refer to the literacy practices in which people engage in their role as citizens or community members in relation to the social world. Ideological purposes relate to the values, beliefs, assumptions and expectations of people within particular social contexts.

Cook-Gumperz (2006, p.3) makes the following correlation between orality and literacy. The writer claims that literacy and oral practice cannot be considered as opposites. But rather "literacy is best regarded as part of an ideology of language, a socio-cultural phenomenon where literacy and orality within a broader communicative framework are

regarded not as opposites, but as different ways of achieving the same communicative ends.”

It must be understood that literacy spans a broad terrain with various subject-disciplines to address the complexities that surround literacy in the modern world as seen in Figure 1.1 below. From this we glean that literacy as a social practice needs to be analysed in terms of its relationship with institutions, structures, processes and the social system in which it is grounded. The importance of this lies in the fact that these contexts constitute the key defining sites of what literacy is, who it is for and what purposes it should serve for the individual, specific groups of people and the society as a whole (Rassool, 1999).

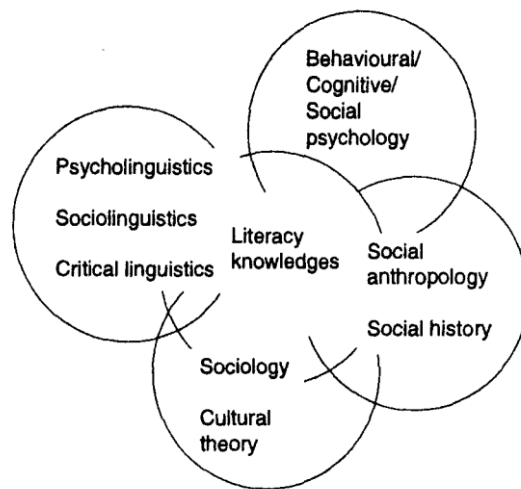


Figure 3.1 Literacy as a regionalised field of study (Rassool, 1999, p.44)

Street (2001, p.207) concurs with this though for the writer explains that literacy must be now examined in new ways. “Literacy is not conceived as a single set of competencies, but as different practices embedded in political relations, ideological practices and symbolic meaning structures.” The writer states that there are multiple literacies in communities and literacy practices are socially embedded. According to his view, illiteracy and literacy are social constructs which vary from context to context because not every country defines literacy in the same way.

In spite of literacy development being value-laden, a United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation's (UNESCO, 2005) report on its *Education for All* (EFA) initiatives, claims that literacy is a right denied to nearly a fifth of the world's adult population. The majority of those without literacy skills are from Sub-Saharan Africa, South, East and West Asia and the Pacific. With only 60% literacy rates, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and the Arab states are the regions with the lowest literacy rates.

It can be seen that the global challenge affects both developing and developed countries (UNESCO, 2005). South African learners' participation in the *Progress in international Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS 2006 assessments (Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman and Archer, 2007) has also highlighted the challenge of addressing literacy development for the South African population. As we will see later in this chapter a number of individual studies and large scale national assessments also suggest that learners in Africa battle in their accomplishment of literacy.

In South Africa, out of a population of over 47 million people, it is estimated that between 7.4 and 8.5 million adults are functionally illiterate and that between 2.9 and 4.2 million people have never attended school. In addition to this, one million children in South Africa live in a home where no adult can read (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2007). Moreover, Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) estimate that about 86% of South African adults have achieved basic literacy, but this does not mean that they have achieved advanced levels of literacy. The researcher agrees with these writers that this problem is compounded even further due to individuals being in a society where reading for enjoyment is scarce and where reading materials are not readily available.

Pretorius (2000) in her article entitled *What they can't read will hurt them* (Innovation 21:33-41) examines the relationship between reading and academic success for she states that a characteristic feature of academic under-performance in South Africa is poor reading ability of learners. The researcher cites Heath (1983) who argues that the relationship between reading and learning begins even earlier in the pre-primary school years because children who are exposed to storybook reading before they go to school tend to have larger vocabularies, greater general knowledge and better conceptual development than their peers and they therefore learn to read and write more quickly.

Research findings in applied linguistics and reading research, consistently show a strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success at all ages, from the primary school right through to university level. Pretorius (2000) in her study found that more than half of the 1 200 undergraduate Psychology and Sociology students at the University of Pretoria (UNISA), who were tested, were reading at a low level therefore they had 50 per cent or lower comprehension levels of the expository texts they were expected to read. The researcher is of the opinion that if our country is to produce skilled citizens, then the literacy crisis in our country needs to be addressed by researchers exploring the nature of reading problems and how they impact on academic performance.

The first crucial reason underlying the strong relationship between reading ability and academic performance is that reading involves the processing of linguistic data. It is often argued that English second language learners have poor comprehension levels and this may be due to their low or limited vocabulary levels. Students who are exposed to wide reading have been shown to produce longer sentences, employ more complex grammatical structures and have a larger vocabulary (Pretorius, 2000).

Reading also entails inferring, understanding, integrating and evaluating information within and across texts. Reading is a cognitive-linguistic meaning construction skill that develops through constant exposure to the printed word. However, it is important to note that reading skills that are developed in one language can always be transferred to another language.

However, as an educator teaching for the past twenty years, I have observed that the problems many of the English second-language learners experience in reading, may stem from the fact that they never properly developed reading skills in their home language therefore they cannot transfer reading skills to the second language when they switch to English as a medium of instruction. Sadly, it is no surprise that the education system never really gives them adequate opportunities to develop their reading skills in the second language.

According to UNESCO (2005) there is a need to monitor constantly and to evaluate the global drive to eradicate illiteracy. This will mean that both national and international assessments of literacy have a valuable role to play. For this reason, I think it is imperative

to unpack the role played by international studies in monitoring literacy development and this is undertaken in the section that follows.

3.3 The role of international comparative studies in literacy development

South Africa, together with other African countries, has participated in a number of these assessments, such as the *Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality* (SACMEQ) and the *Monitoring Learning Achievement* (MLA) projects. However, only a handful of African countries, including South Africa, have participated in the array of international comparative studies that have come to the fore in recent decades.

Organisations such as UNESCO, the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are involved in monitoring literacy development, but the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) will be discussed in this thesis as this research will make reference to South Africa's participation in an IEA study.

I will now discuss the contours of both large and small-scale studies that track primary school achievement in South Africa in the past decade. In these studies the data has been generated by National and Provincial Government Departments in their efforts to develop a baseline which will assess the progress of literacy development and curriculum reform and from cross-national studies of quality which are part of the goals of the *Education for all Movement*.

3.3.1 Systemic evaluation

The Systemic Evaluation of the Foundation Phase was released in 2003. This was designed to gather baseline information on learners, schools and ultimately, learning in the first three years of formal schooling. The study reported on the results of a series of questionnaires for principals, teachers and learners. Learners were assessed in literacy, numeracy and life skills. Some 51 000 randomly selected Grade three learners completed the assessment tasks. As a first national measurement of primary education achievement, the Grade Three Systemic Evaluation Study revealed that the average Foundation Phase school child was really struggling with numeracy and barely coping with the demands of learning to read and write (Department of Education, 2003).

A learner mean of 54% was obtained for the literacy assessment which was administered, which included the components of reading, writing, and listening comprehension, with national means of 39% and 68% being achieved. Thus, although the overall mean performance of 54% for literacy is seemingly acceptable, the mean score of 39% for reading and writing is less. The high mean score for listening comprehension could point perhaps to very strong teaching emphasis on oral comprehension rather than written comprehension activities (Department of Education, 2003).

Since this research focuses on literacy achievement of learners in primary schools, it is important to make mention of the results of the Grade Six Systemic Evaluation that was conducted in 2005. According to a report by the Department of Education (2005) the results confirmed similar trends evident in the Grade three Evaluation Study. The evaluation revealed that more than two-thirds of South African Grade Six learners performed below the level expected of them in language, mathematics and natural sciences. However, the researcher agrees with Fleisch (2008) that these results reveal a much deeper crisis in the South African Education System: that there exists a big achievement gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged schools, between black and white children.

Zimmerman (2010) argues that one has to query the level of difficulty of this local systemic assessment as there are seemingly large differences in performance in reading between these Grade 3 learners and the Grade 4 learners who completed the PIRLS 2006 assessments. One would be able to conclude that the results would be somewhat similar in these above mentioned assessments, if they had comparable testing content, given the expected progression in reading literacy abilities from one grade to the next. Furthermore, possible reasons for the systemic evaluation outcomes are not explored in the report, nor are actual teaching practices for reading literacy. Therefore, Zimmerman (2010) maintains that difficulties with literacy filter into the Intermediate Phase classrooms of learners.

The above researcher makes the strong assumption that perhaps as evidence of the continuance of these problems, learners also fared poorly in the Grade 6 systemic evaluation which followed three years after the Grade 3 evaluation. According to the Department of Education (2005) a national mean of 38% was obtained for English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). Further stressing this point in the USA, national longitudinal data show that three quarters of learners who exit Grade 3 as

struggling readers continue to read poorly in high school (International Reading Association (IRA), 2006).

3.3.2 International initiatives

(a) Monitoring learning achievement.

Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) was one of the first large cross-national studies of quality in which South Africa participated. It was designed to track and monitor the quality of education in primary schools in participating countries. The study involved national samples of Grade Four learners in literacy, numeracy and life skills. South Africa participated alongside a number of other African countries.

The literacy task focussed on word recognition, understanding of detail content, writing skills, spelling, grammar, retrieving information and providing information. In the literacy area 44 per cent of learners scored below 25 per cent. The table below indicates scores obtained by South African learners as compared to the other countries (Fleisch, 2008).

Table 3.1 Scores for Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills (Fleisch, 2008, p.11).

COUNTRY	NUMERACY	LITERACY	LIFE SKILLS
Tunisia	60,4	77,9	74,7
Mauritius	58,5	61,0	58,0
Morocco	56,4	67,6	62,3
Botswana	51,0	48,0	56,0
Uganda	49,3	58,7	66,8
Madagascar	43,7	54,7	72,1
Mali	43,6	51,8	56,9
Malawi	43,0	35,0	77,0
Senegal	39,7	48,9	45,7
Niger	37,3	41,1	44,7
Zambia	36,0	43,0	51,0
South Africa	30,2	48,1	47,1

(b) SACMEQ

For the monitoring and evaluating of quality basic education, the Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) was designed. Two educational policy research projects were undertaken by SACMEQ, covering 1 000 schools, 20 000 learners and 7 countries in the first project (SACMEQ 1) and in the second project covering 2 300 schools, 42 000 learners and 14 countries (SACMEQ 11).

Their primary aim was to provide assessments of the conditions of schooling and the quality of education provided by primary education systems. Important to note for researchers is that SACMEQ 11 included more than 1 000 variables in their project, including comprehensive information on family and community context, school infrastructure, classroom resources, teachers and teaching (Fleisch, 2008). It was the first time that South Africa participated in the study. Analysis in South Africa focused on establishing learners' levels of achievement in reading and examining whether or not differential levels of achievement existed according to gender, socio-economic status and school location.

Learners were given two assessment tasks.

These covered the learning areas of reading and mathematics. Although the tests were administered to a representative sample of Grade six learners, the results are worth mentioning for we are still discussing the literacy achievement rates of primary school children which would include learners from grade R to grade 6 in a primary school. Although there were a number of valid criticisms of these tests, as well as of testing, the results offer a piece of the picture puzzle, which together begins to reveal the scope and severity of the crisis in primary education.

Table 3.2 Learner’s achievement in reading (Moloi and Strauss, 2005), (Fleisch, 2008, p.16)

LEVEL		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Pre-reading	385	12,2
2	Emergent reading	596	18,1
3	Basic reading	604	19,1
4	Reading for meaning	506	16,0
5	Interpretative reading	298	9,4
6	Inferential reading	223	7,0
7	Analytic reading	344	10,9
8	Critical reading	208	6,6
	TOTAL	3 163	100

What does the above table reveal? Of the 3 163 randomly selected children in Grade six classes in South Africa, just over half of them were not ‘reading for meaning.’ Half of the learners in the sample were unable to demonstrate the ability to read and make meaning of a simple reading comprehension task. Learners could not demonstrate an understanding of the core idea in the given task (Moloi & Strauss, 2005).

This raises the concern that in the process of literacy development, learners did not acquire the correct strategies in reading for comprehension. Since the distribution of reading competency levels were heavily skewed towards the lower competencies, these researchers therefore suggest that a broad range of reading competencies need to be taught to learners and this will have implications for the training of teachers, for they will have to deal with individual learner reading needs and competence levels.

(c) Teaching Literacy Education Project

At this point in the discussion, it is apt to make mention of the Teaching Literacy Education Project (TLEP) which is an example of one project that is aimed at improving reading literacy in schools and at promoting teacher development. Taking into consideration the results of the PIRLS¹ study, it provided indications that learners may be struggling to develop reading literacy and competencies that are needed to make the transition to ‘reading to learn’ in the intermediate phase in South African schools.

The focus of the TLEP project is on exploring how teachers are trained to develop learner literacy in South Africa both at the Foundation Phase, which serves as the preparatory phase for ‘reading to learn’ in the Intermediate Phase, and at the Intermediate Phase itself in which reading skills and overall literacy should be strengthened and consolidated (Zimmerman, 2010).

As a practitioner I agree with Zimmerman, Botha, Howie and Long (2007) who state that very often learners enter the Intermediate Phase of education in South Africa without the necessary linguistic tools to access the educational curriculum. It may be that their educators may not have the repertoire of skills needed to prepare them for this transition or to deal with difficulties associated with this monumental shift in teaching and learning. This situation and many others begs for the development of teacher training curricula in the area of foundational literacy skills and support for learners with literate language development difficulties in South Africa. Interestingly, the TLEP investigates how current Foundation Phase teacher training curricula prepare and support teachers in this country to address reading instruction for literate language development in diverse linguistic Foundational and Intermediate Phase settings across South Africa.

Secondly, the Intermediate Phase teacher training curricula was investigated to ascertain how Intermediate Phase trainee teachers are assisted towards both a theoretical understanding of learner literacy development and practical know-how for the continuum of literacy levels that they will encounter amongst their diverse learner populations in the classroom, specifically

¹ For PIRLS, reading literacy is defined as “the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment” (Mullis, Kennedy, Martin & Sainsbury: 2004:p.3).

taking into account that many of the learners are developing second language competencies (Zimmerman *et al.* , 2007).

Overall, the study sets out to determine how undergraduate Bachelor of Education Foundation and Intermediate Phase teacher training programmes at a South African University are structured to address what the above researchers think may be a central factor affecting learners' ability to develop a reasonable level of literacy in general. The researcher is of the opinion that this is an important project because the training of Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase teachers in effective reading strategy instruction is indispensable for this will contribute to the success in learner literacy achievement.

These were some of the findings and challenges that students experienced during the implementation of this research. Firstly students mentioned that one of the greatest difficulties experienced was a lack practical exposure and experience with the reading instruction methodologies that the training programme introduced them to. Students wanted more basic skills and more strategies via a step-by-step practical guide to the teaching of reading to show them what to do.

This is important otherwise the knowledge that they learn stays at a symbolic level or will be forgotten quickly, especially as they are newly qualified teachers. They may not get the opportunity to implement these strategies as they would have to adapt to the programmes of the schools where they will start their teaching careers.

Secondly, students further indicated that insufficient attention was given to the development of writing skills and specifically, early writing skills. They reported that learners experience problems in spelling. Many students also mentioned that learners had great difficulty in acquiring reading skills, and that not enough time was spent on teaching reading in the classrooms. According to the student's observation, teachers were overworked and therefore they could not give attention to those learners who were struggling with literacy development in the classroom.

Some further observations were that learners found the reading lessons to be very boring. The Grade 3 educators blamed the Grade 1 and 2 educators for not teaching learners the

correct skills in reading therefore they did not know how to help their learners. Some educators spent too much time on the other aspects of literacy and often neglected reading and writing activities.

Finally the schools did not have the correct reading material and the educators themselves were not informed on effective reading instruction approaches and therefore often neglected reading instruction in their classrooms (Zimmerman *et al.* , 2007). The sad reality of the situation is that these students will enter the teaching profession without these concerns and needs having ever been addressed.

(d) Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) conducted the PIRLS study. It focuses on educational policies and practices around the world. According to Zimmerman (2010) the IEA is headed by a Permanent Secretariat in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and has a membership of about 70 countries. The IEA studies use the world as an ‘educational laboratory’, in which strengths and weaknesses of educational practices can be assessed.

It must be remembered that countries have their own national policies governing variables such as curriculum and teaching strategies, and, without an understanding of the approaches used within a country, it may be difficult to estimate the effectiveness of various policies and practices in relation to educational outcomes. Mullis (2002) believes that cross-country comparisons will allow one to examine the impact of different educational approaches on achievement and provide additional insight into a country’s own educational system.

Howie and Plomp (2006) agree that these international studies fulfil a variety of purposes which include the following: they allow for the comparison of levels of achievement between countries; assist in identifying the major determinants of national achievement within a country; allow for policy makers to examine the similarities and differences across countries; and lastly to identify the factors that affect differences between countries. Such international studies facilitate benchmarking, monitoring, enlightenment, understanding and cross-national research between countries. The results of the PIRLS study will be used

as a basis for discussion in this thesis for it focuses primarily on literacy achievement in the primary schools.

The information collected as part of large scale assessments such as the PIRLS is significant to help understand the factors that influence how learner's acquire literacy skills, their educational experiences and to describe in detail how learners are being assessed. To educators and policy makers the collection of the information from these assessments can be used to inform new policies, and different contexts of learning for learners. Mullis (2002, p.4) agrees that background data from these types of assessment can "...provide a picture of what is being done and how that coincides with what is thought to work best."

In fact, in large-scale assessments, priority is given to identifying instructional practices that relate to high achievement. However, there may be problems with identifying these instructional practices as strategies deemed to be effective might be reported as being used, but in actuality may not be implemented in ways envisioned to enhance learning.

What may be considered as effective practices may evolve and change over time and therefore it is very difficult to pin-point data about the ideal or best practices to be used to enhance learning. Mullis (2002) cautions us that it is important for large-scale studies such as the PIRLS to collect information about current instructional practices for this will help to ascertain the extent to which current research recommendations are being implemented and to glean what teachers are actually doing in the classrooms. This information will be used in this thesis as a springboard for further research to be conducted in the field of literacy development.

Kellaghan and Greaney (2005) highlight some concerns and problems that are associated with international studies. Firstly it may be difficult to design an assessment procedure that will adequately measure the outcomes of a variety of curricula despite there being common elements across the world. There may also be considerable differences in the expected standards of achievement, what is being taught and how it is being assessed, between developing and industrialised countries.

A second challenge may arise with regard to issues of translation into one or more languages and there may be achievement differences which may be attributed to language-related differences in the difficulty of the assessment tasks. Thirdly, the challenge relates to the cross-national equivalence of the populations and samples of learners being assessed. This can be explained in the following way: for example, where retention rates differ or where countries differ in their inclusion of children with special education needs or learning problems in the study.

A fourth difficulty occurs when the primary focus in reporting the results of the study is on the ranking of countries in terms of the average scores of their learners. However, the rankings in themselves say nothing about the many underlying factors that may contribute to the differences between countries in their performance. The final challenge is the relationships between inputs, processes and outcomes which need to be examined in the context of individual countries for one cannot assume that practices associated with high achievement in one country, will reveal a similar relationship in another (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2005).

Beaton, Postlethwaite, Ross, Spearritt and Wolf (1999) of the International Academy of education, conclude that there are many benefits and limitations with regard to international educational achievement studies if they are well conceptualised and conducted. Beaton and colleagues (1999) maintain that these studies are worthwhile but they recommend that they require effort on the part of the participating countries, much expertise on the part of the researchers and great care in the interpretation by researchers and policymakers.

Beaton *et al.*, (1999) suggest that policy makers and researchers in a country need to consider not only the results of the international analyses, but also the educational and cultural context in which that country operates. For this study, the educational and cultural context of the results of the PIRLS study is explored in-depth via analysis of the PIRLS data. The reason for this would be to investigate the contexts that have contributed to South African learners' poor performance in the study.

Matier, Moore and Hart (2007) claim that there is a vast amount of research and debate which suggests deep problems in our South African education system. This may be linked to learners' low levels of literacy achievement. They further argue that the root of these

problems lies in the ineffective teaching of reading in schools and learners' consequent inability to learn from reading across the curriculum independently. The researcher aims to make reference to research findings which connect with Matier, Moore and Hart's (2007) observations in this section. The findings of the PIRLS study will be unpacked as this bears relevance to literacy achievement in primary schools. I will also include and discuss in detail other studies of literacy achievement which also illustrates the many difficulties learners experience in literacy development.

South African learners' performance in the PIRLS 2006 reading literacy assessments were scrutinised by means of a process of benchmarking. According to Howie *et al.*, 2007 "benchmarking provides qualitative indications of learners' performance on a scale in relation to questions asked in an assessment. The PIRLS international mean was set at 500 points with the range of performance of learners being aligned to four set benchmarks. These benchmarks included an *Advanced International Benchmark* set at 625 points, a *High International Benchmark* of 550 points, an *Intermediate International Benchmark* of 475 and a *Low International Benchmark* set at 400" (Howie *et al.*, 2007, p.14).

These benchmarks are cumulative in that learners, who were able to reach the higher ones, also demonstrated the knowledge and skills for the lower ones (Howie *et al.*, 2007). It is important that I make mention of the benchmarking system in the PIRLS study for it is presented in the following table:

Table 3.3 Percentage of South African learners reaching the PIRLS 2006 International Benchmarks (Zimmerman, 2010, p.35).

PIRLS 2006 International benchmarks	Benchmark descriptions	International median	South African median (SE)	
			Grade 4	Grade 5
Low (400-474)	Basic reading skills and strategies such as recognise, locate and state information as in text and answer so questions.	94	13 (0.5)	22 (0.2)

Intermediate (475-549)	Learners with some reading proficiency who can understand the plot and can make connections across the texts.	76	7 (1.1)	13 (0.8)
High (550-624)	Competent readers who have the ability to retrieve significant details that are embedded across the text.	41	3 (2.0)	6 (1.6)
Advanced (625+)	Able to respond fully to the PIRLS assessment. Can integrate information across relatively challenging texts.	7	1 (1.5)	2 (1.1)

As seen clearly the table above shows the benchmarks, outlining the international achievement median for each and indicating South African Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners' median achievement. Upon scrutiny of the table, it is seen that only 13% of South African Grade 4 learners reached the *Low International Benchmark*, in stark contrast to the 94% of Grade 4 learners managing to do so internationally.

It must also be noted that 87% of Grade 4 learners and 78% of Grade 5 learners did not reach any of the benchmarks. 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 that they lacked basic reading skills and strategies to complete academic tasks. Of the minimal percentages of South African learners reaching the *High* and *Advanced International Benchmarks*, no African language learners were represented (Howie *et al.*, 2007).

Moss (2005) argues that the phenomenon of the so-called 'fourth-grade slump' must be acknowledged as a contributing factor to poor literacy achievement by Grade 4 learners. The writer reports that this phenomenon has been observed in Grade 3 learners from low income families. The writer explains this in detail as follows: these learners had been reading at grade level but have experienced a sudden drop in reading scores in Grade 4.

This could be due to the following reasons namely, school tasks change significantly from Grade 3 to Grade 4, assessment instruments shift from an emphasis on decoding to the reading of expository text between these grades, and lastly that previously unimportant reading difficulties may arise for the first time in Grade 4 when children encounter informational materials (Moss, 2005).

However, in spite of this observation one may argue that it is highly unlikely that the South African Grade 4 learners have experienced similar ‘fourth-grade slump’ resulting in poor literacy achievement, because keeping in mind the findings of the Grade 3 systemic evaluation, (DoE, 2003), many learners were not in any event, reading at grade level when they entered Grade 4. Nonetheless, one has to consider some of the reasons that Moss (2005) outlined as factors for a ‘fourth-grade slump’ which may result in learners experiencing difficulties in literacy achievement. In addition to these problems mentioned, the researcher is of the opinion that learner’s became overwhelmed with the learning tasks during this period of transition from one phase to the next.

3.3.3 Small – scale empirical studies in South Africa

I will now focus on discussing some small and localised studies on primary school reading that were published in South Africa in recent years. These local studies raised concerns for literacy development amongst English as Second Language (ESL) learner populations. In addition to this, the research emphasis was on teacher perceptions, learner attributes and/or small-scale interventions to address learner reading difficulties.

There were two studies conducted for Grade 7 learners, one of which tracked the effect of a reading programme on grade 7 learners’ vocabulary development in a high poverty township school on the outskirts of Pretoria (Scheepers, 2008), whilst the other compared the first and second language reading performances of 162 Grade 7 learners in English and Xitsonga. According to Manyike and Lemmer (2008) the findings were that these learners’ reading skills were poor in both their home language, which was Xitsonga and in English as their second language.

In a study conducted by Lessing and Mahabeer (2007) the barriers that hinder IsiZulu speaking ESL learners in the Foundation Phase from acquiring reading and writing skills, were investigated. A random cluster sample of teachers (N=104) from 16 English medium

schools in and around Durban completed questionnaires about which barriers hindered their learners' progress. With a 1% level of significance, the teachers perceived parental involvement, poor socio-economic backgrounds, proficiency in the English language structure, fear of responding to tasks and the lack of knowledge of phonetic skills as contributory factors to these learners' inability to read and write in English. At a 5% level of significance, teachers perceived that their proficiency in IsiZulu was important for the teaching of the English Language (Lessing & Mahabeer, 2007).

Pretorius and Machet (2004a) conducted research into the effects of an out-of school literacy enrichment programme on the literacy skills of an intervention group of Grade 1 and Grade 4 learners in five rural primary schools in rural Kwa-Zulu Natal. Fifteen learners were included in the intervention group per grade at each school. As part of a broader project, five randomly selected Grade 1 learners per school participated in the intervention and their randomly selected non-participant peers were given a number of tests that tapped into their emergent literacy skills and knowledge of IsiZulu.

The Grade 1 learners who attended the programme showed gains in most of the literacy measures with the most consistent gains shown for those activities involving reading. The assessment of five participating Grade 4 learners per school was focussed on IsiZulu literacy and numeracy, IsiZulu comprehension, English word recognition and English oral fluency and comprehension. A levelling-off effect was apparent as the gains were not as great and differences between intervention and non-intervention groups were not as marked as those of the Grade 1 group (Pretorius & Machet, 2004a).

The Literacy practices and perceptions of the Grade 1 teachers were also investigated by Pretorius and Macher (2004b). The teachers were interviewed and they were given a questionnaire regarding perceptions of reading, their literacy habits at home as well as at school. Of the small number of 20 teachers who completed a questionnaire, 60% classified themselves as "an average reader" in contrast to the 10% who saw themselves as "a fast, highly skilled reader", which is a characteristic one might expect of most teachers. About 57% of the respondents indicated having received "a thorough training" in reading theories and methods, yet only 34% recognised that their learners were not really performing up to standard.

Thus, it was evident that there existed a mismatch between the teachers' perceptions of the reading abilities of their learners and their actual reading levels as revealed by the formal assessments. According to Pretorius and Machet (2004b) the lack of external assessment and national standards were hypothesised as perpetuating the idea that their learners' reading levels were adequate.

Another study conducted by Matjila and Pretorius (2004) investigated the contributory effects of primary school teachers' apparent inability to deal with reading literacy development. The research was conducted over a three-year period in high poverty South African township schools. Findings revealed that Grade 8 learners were entering high school with very poor reading skills, regardless of whether they were reading in their vernacular or in English. According to Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) the findings also reinforced the claim that inadequate attention was being given to the development of reading in primary schools, thus, highlighting the necessity for research into the teaching of literacy skills in primary school classrooms.

From the findings of the many local and international studies conducted in literacy development with learners from primary schools, there are clearly grave concerns about the effectiveness of our current education system and the way literacy skills are being taught in primary school classrooms, for according to Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) the national performance in reading is often viewed as an indicator of the effectiveness of an education system.

3.4 Factors influencing learners' literacy achievement in primary schools:

An introduction

Postlethwaite and Ross (1992) offer four distinct reasons for the variation in learner average achievement across different schools. Firstly, some schools are located in privileged areas whilst others are not. From experience as an educator, the researcher makes the assumption that learners in these schools come from homes where parents care about their children's education, they ensure that their children are well-fed, they try to assist them as often as they can to read, write and complete homework and other given tasks and provide access to books

at home. In contrast, schools serving less privileged communities, have a larger proportion of learners without the benefits or advantages enjoyed by their more privileged counterparts.

Secondly, it has been observed that schools with higher learner achievement are far better equipped than schools with low achievement. These schools have ample space, there is enough space for learners to sit and write, there are text books for every learner, sufficient classroom and school library reading materials, small class sizes therefore learners can receive individual attention from their educators to assist them independently where extra help may be required and there are appropriately designed classroom facilities and aids for successful learning.

Thirdly, schools with high average learner achievement have good teachers. These teachers show an understanding of their subject material, they have high expectations for their learners, they know how to structure the material to be learned and they usually keep good order in the classroom. Postlethwaite and Ross (1992) further explain that these teachers also obtain systematic feedback from their learners on what the learners have mastered and what they have not, giving an indication of where the learner must be assisted.

It is also claimed by these researchers that these teachers will have a superior grasp of the education system's aims and a better knowledge of which strategies are most likely to succeed in addressing them. And finally, these schools are well-managed, with the principal helping teachers through enthusiastic and creative leadership in terms of school pedagogy.

Postlethwaite and Ross (1992, p.2) offer the following advice:

There are various 'movements' within the educational world that would tend to support one or more of these four reasons as the key to explaining variation among schools in terms of average student achievement. However, as with many social processes, the most likely answer is that the explanation lies in some kind of combination of all four reasons.

Zimmerman (2010) cites Todd and Mason (2005) who highlight other factors that may impact upon learning achievement among children. They refer to the work of Wang, Haertel and Wahlberg (1993) who considered the power of proximal and distal factors in influencing school learning. There is the assertion by these writers that proximal variables such as psychological factors, instructional factors which are related to teaching, and factors

pertaining to the home environment, exert more influence on learning than distal variables such as demographic, policy and organisational factors.

Todd and Mason (2005) further argue that distal factors such as the sufficient funding for adequate school classrooms and textbooks, qualified teachers and catering for learners according to their socio-economic needs, may also impact on classroom learning, but once these are satisfied, learners and parents will matter most in the development of learning outcomes.

Mullis *et al.*, (2006) illustrate very aptly the dynamic interaction of factors relating to the home, school and the classroom that affects learner achievement outcomes as mentioned above as factors for learner achievement by Postlethwaite and Ross (1992). The figure that follows shows the “relationship and the influences of the home, school and the classroom on children’s reading development and how this interaction is situated within and shaped by the community and the country as a whole. Learner outcomes, both their achievement and attitudes, are a product of instruction and experiences gained in a variety of contexts.

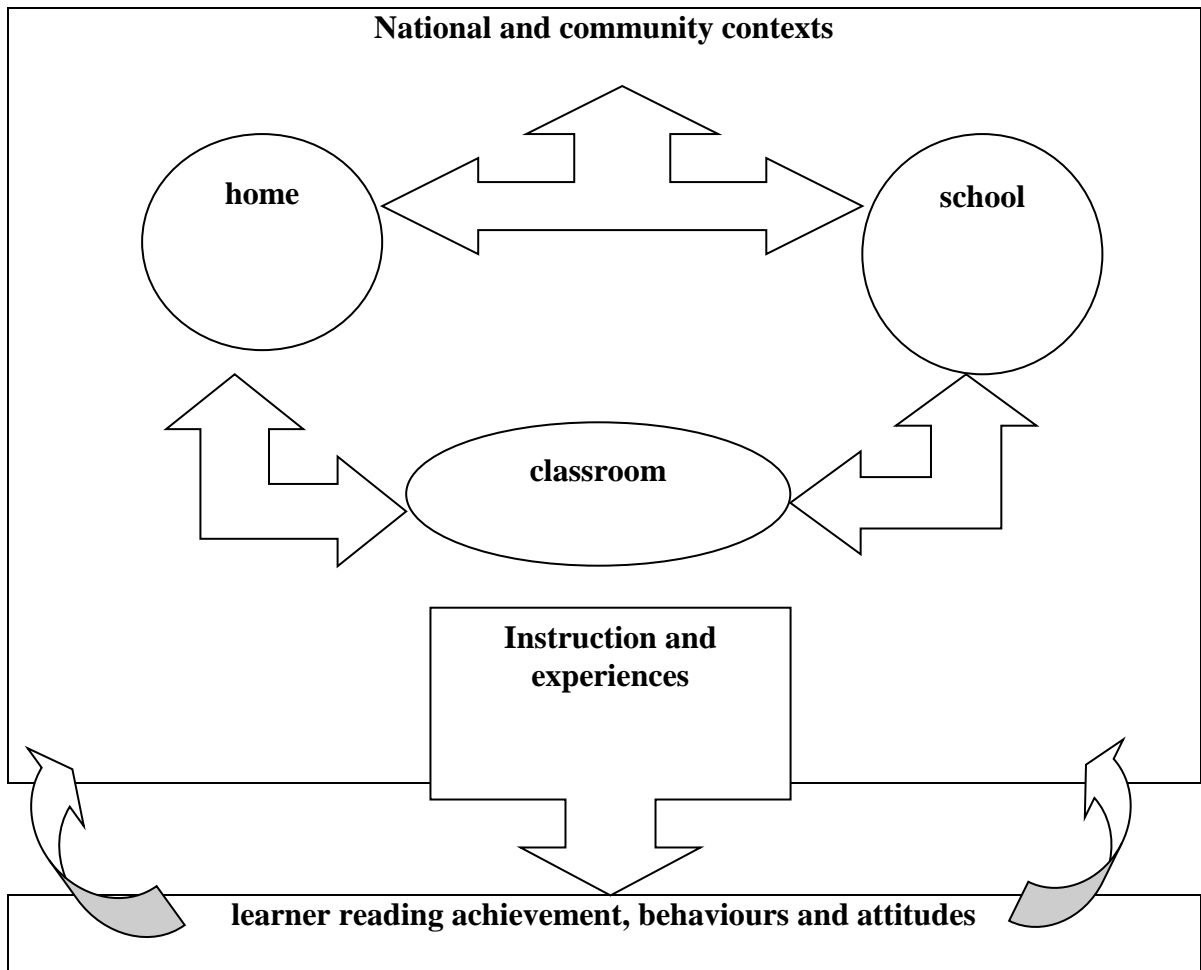


Figure 3.2 Contexts for the development of reading literacy adapted from (Mullis *et al.*, 2006, p.24).

The home context is recognised as being highly influential in learner outcomes. Factors linked to the home environment include some of the following: languages in the home, economic resources, activities fostering literacy and learners’ out-of-school activities” (Mullis *et al.*,2006, p.24).

This thesis will unpack home factors, classroom practices and the schooling conditions that may have an influence on learner achievement. The school factors include school policy and curriculum, school environment and school resources. At the classroom level, influential factors include: teacher training and preparation, classroom environment and structure, instructional strategies and activities, instructional materials and technology, homework and assessment.

In the next section I will expand in detail on the factors that play a vital role in determining a child's learning achievement.

3.4.1 School-level factors

In this section the researcher will outline the very important factors that can assist in the creation of effective literacy development in schools. Allington and Cunningham (2007) maintain that when schools have a few good teachers it is usually as a result of individual initiative, whereas when a school has many good teachers, it is a result of leadership. School management and shared vision will now be considered as influential factors in developing effective schools.

A: School Management and Shared Vision

Zimmerman (2010) cites Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) who claim that although choosing effective inputs is the first step towards improving learning, managing these inputs well at school level is also necessary. Sailors *et al.*, (2007, p.34) investigated the qualities of seven high-performing schools in reading literacy serving low-income South African learners. These schools had participated in a five year intervention focussed on school-improvement initiatives, training of teachers in effective teaching strategies and providing classrooms with high-quality learning materials. These schools stood out as consistently high performers across all measures of learner achievement in the sub-sample of schools evaluated at the end of the intervention.

“Five broad themes were identified that had contributed to these schools becoming high-performing schools and classrooms from Grades 1 to 7. These were: (1) a safe, orderly and positive learning environment; (2) strong leaders; (3) excellent teachers who were competent, committed, caring and collaborative; (4) a shared sense of competence, pride and purpose for the school; and (5) high levels of school and community involvement. The findings confirm that these local effective schools had similar attributes to their overseas counterparts from the school effectiveness literature (Sailors *et al.*, 2007, p34).

Lockheed, Verspoor and colleagues (1991, p.12) also provided insights into the role of effective educational management. They state that “effective schools manage to transform their given inputs into children's learning, in spite of poor conditions in some instances. This is due to the fact that such schools have an orderly school environment, set clear goals, high

expectations for teachers and learners, and a sense of community and strong instructional leadership. There is good attendance by teachers and learners, clean facilities at school, and teaching materials.”

“There are high expectations and defined goals for academic achievement; a curriculum which is focused on teaching both basic and complex goals; the availability of resources for achieving these goals; sufficient time for teaching these goals and a continuous monitoring of learner progress to check whether goals have been achieved or not” (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1999, p.13).

The promotion and teaching of literacy skills must be viewed as a whole school responsibility involving teamwork and a co-ordinated approach between teachers and all other role players in the school. This means that there must be a common knowledge base between all teachers who must collaborate so that all learners will benefit. Thus, there must be a strong instructional leadership at school and the principal must devote sufficient time to co-ordinating and managing instruction. There must exist a strong sense of commitment and collegiality amongst all staff members and a participatory management style must be employed at the school.

Allington and Cunningham (2007) maintain that in nearly every study of classroom effectiveness in primary schools, it has been found that teachers who allocate more time to reading and language instruction are those whose learners show the greatest gains in literacy development. Such studies also show that the amount of time allocated to teaching reading and writing varies substantially from school to school. In effective schools more instructional time is allocated to reading and writing activities, while teachers use a variety of approaches to develop literacy skills and, very importantly, there is an integration of reading and writing skills into other learning areas as it is happening presently in some schools.

Assessment plans in schools will also contain learner data about their constant performance which can be used regularly to inform instruction. Successful schools also work to involve families. By this they mean that parents are not just expected to monitor homework but they also have to make decisions about the use of school resources, curriculum and schedules. Thus, parents become partners in the learning success of their children. In successful schools, substantial investments are made in teachers’ professional development, primarily to enhance

their instructional skills and to create teaching and learning environments that will support high quality instruction.

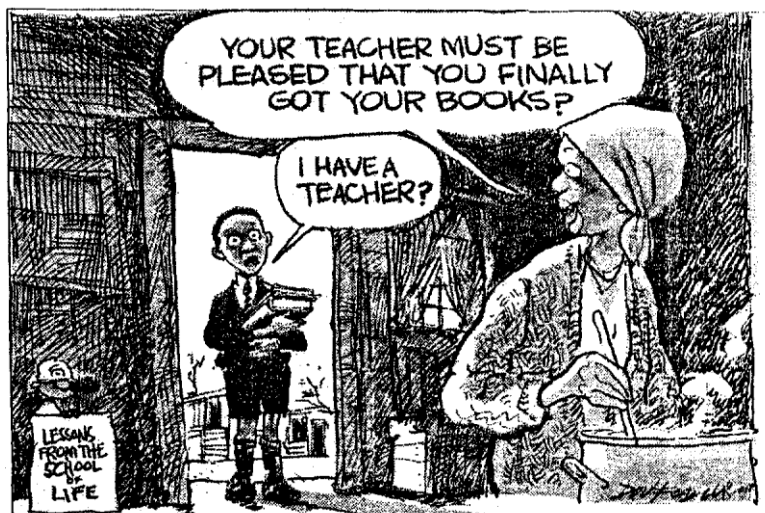
Ramdan (2009) in her thesis cites Singh (2005) who investigated the relevance of the Collegial Leadership Model of Emancipation (COLME) to produce effective schools. This model is used to transform traditional management practices in schools that may have contributed to poor learner achievement. COLME emphasizes the principles of collaboration and participation of all members and facilitates collegial leadership practices to flourish in an environment.

The focus is on creating an enabling environment in which all stakeholders (teachers, learners, parents, service providers and so on) can participate as partners in joint decision-making. In a collegial climate, schools make decisions and policies through the processes of discussion and consensus in pursuance of their shared vision. It is this type of environment that produces hard-working educators who work diligently so that their learners may reap the benefits of focussed learning and teaching in the classroom.

B: Material Resources

Pretorius and Machet (2004b) state that learners in well-resourced schools are inclined to attain higher literacy levels than learners from schools with high levels of poverty. Sedel (2005) confirms that the problems of quality in basic education in Africa are linked to a shortage of resources for education and the inefficient use of those resources that are available. Researchers have argued that there is a so-called 'book famine' in Africa. It has been observed that schools in rural areas experience great challenges in gaining access to books, and, even, where they are available there are not always enough for all learners.

Books and textbooks may be rarely found. Textbooks can be the only source of academic knowledge and information in the classroom especially in cases where the teachers are unqualified, poorly trained or have not obtained higher levels of education themselves. Because textbooks play a vital role, shortages of them will definitely have serious consequences for teaching and learning.



Cartoon 2: Resource woes, *The Independent on Saturday*, December 15, p.6

To my understanding the cartoon above by Seery (2012) depicts a situation which shows that the educator is the greatest resource in the classroom and many learners are completely dependent on their educators for opportunities to practice and learn to use language in the classroom. However, on the other hand it may also point to a delay in receiving resource material or a shortage of it. These challenges will inevitably impede literacy development at any school.

However, it must be remembered that textbooks are not the only source of knowledge. It is very important that learners from a very early age, are exposed to a wide range of reading materials such as the newspaper, magazines, catalogues, storybooks and so on, especially for English second language learners. Perry (2008) contributes to our discussion by adding that the scarcity of books may also mean that African children have little opportunity to read for enjoyment, and outside school, they may enter a nearly 'bookless culture.' I agree with Perry (2008) that the availability of resources is a very serious consideration for the language policy in African schools as many countries simply do not have enough resources to supply either the teachers or the materials necessary to provide local-language education to all children.

Ramdan (2009) in her study of the factors that affect educator work performance in primary schools, revealed that one of the major challenges that educators face is with regard to the shortages of resources and equipment at schools. The informants of her study mentioned that without the basic requirements or tools to teach, teaching learners has become a very

stressful job, for learners who normally associate meaning with content knowledge and therefore books or textbooks are a necessity. Scheepers (2008) maintains that in the township schools, children have to share the textbooks therefore the print environment in many of these schools is very poor.

Scheepers (2008) and Pretorius and Currin (2010) present another problem and this is that, in South African schools, there are very few if any storybooks or classroom readers in the African languages, and schools are poorly resourced, so storybook reading seldom occurs in the classroom. In South Africa, these problems are especially acute for learners who are studying through the medium of a second language (L2), for they have to acquire language, reading and textual skills in a second language in order to learn to read. The majority of these learners come from an oral rather than a reading culture.

This means that they are seldom exposed to storybook reading and they have little experience of the printed word before they start school. Because books are not an integral part of their lives from kindergarten, they often have difficulty learning to read. Therefore, when they do start school they rely heavily on the resources offered at school to assist them in their learning. With sparse resources, or often poorly managed resources and very few schools with adequate collections of narrative texts to attract children to the pleasures of reading and writing, learning in literacy is stifled.

The access to school libraries compounds the problem of poor literacy development of children in South Africa. It was reported that for the PIRLS 2006 main study, 60% of the learners were in schools without a school library. According to Howie *et al.*, (2007) those that were in schools with a school library fared far better in the assessments than their peers who were not. The DoE (2008b) National Literacy Strategy document confirms that it is rare to find schools with well-used general libraries. It is further acknowledged that some classrooms have no books and even those with sets of readers may not have them at a developmentally appropriate level.

Pretorius and Currin (2010) reported in a study that when high poverty schools were given assistance in making books available to learners and motivating them to read, their reading levels did improve. These authors stress that one crucial factor requiring financial outlay is that of making books available to learners. This is due to the fact that many poor schools

cannot afford to buy print resources on their own for their learners and therefore they will continue to produce poor readers and writers. It is in this light that school libraries are seen as the provider of all of the required resources for teaching and learning.

However, Mnkeni and Nassimbeni (2008) argue that regardless of the emphasis being placed on resource-based learning in the curriculum, school libraries were not referred to in the C2005 documents and neither are they mentioned in the Foundation Phase Curriculum and Assessment Policy statements (CAPS). Yet even in the RNCS documents special emphasis was placed on resource-based learning and teaching, with learners being given the opportunity to learn from a variety of resources. Currently, in the CAPS document there is also no emphasis on the use of school libraries to develop information literacy skills. With schools having no finance, with learners who are not exposed to reading and writing resources at home, it is no wonder that many of our learners produce poor reading and writing skills.

Currently working with primary school learners, I maintain that learners need a lot of resources to enhance their reading and writing development in the classroom. An educator cannot teach without the use of magazines, books, newspapers and other reading material. Every class should have a library which may be a collection of simple poems, stories, pictures and books. Children will become excited to use them in their learning and what they learn will become worthwhile to them. This develops in them a positive reading motivation. Those learners who may be struggling see their peers reading and they too will soon do the same. This opens up a wonder of opportunities making learning fun and practical. When learners read well they will begin to use their imagination and the language that they have learnt from their reading practices to improve their writing.

At the same time there are huge backlogs in school and public libraries in the communities disadvantaged through previous apartheid policies and practices. The Government seems to believe that libraries (and even books) are unnecessary for developing good literacy skills, that these can be replaced by the internet or by computers which will alleviate any or all of the literacy problems. There seems to be a lack of understanding that access to books and a range of reading materials is essential to develop literacy, especially the high levels of literacy required in the knowledge society.

Against this background of low literacy South African schools wrestle with questions of funding, equity and infrastructure. The problem is that there exists excellent policies on literacy issues but policy finalisation, rollout and implementation are very slow and sometimes non-existent which leads to a gap between policy and practice (Department of Education, 2005).

In their study of Grade 4 classrooms, Allington and Johnston (2002) found that the teachers used multiple curricular materials rather than just relying on a single text or curricular material. Although the teachers sometimes used textbooks of subject areas, they hardly ever followed a traditional curriculum plan. They varied their activities and the resource materials from week to week. Thus there was strong literacy emphasis in the classrooms and each had a library. According to these researchers the teachers used historical fiction, biography and information texts in the different subject areas other than language.

Learners and teachers drew information from the internet, from magazines or from other non-traditional curricular sources. This extensive use of other resources instead of just using textbooks as in the traditional approach to teaching provided greater opportunities for learners to read and to be introduced substantially to content.

This also allows learners to be exposed to different forms of language which will help them extensively in their writing lessons. The researchers also observed that the materials in these classrooms also reflected diversity in genres, of class experiences, of gender and of culture. There were also texts that varied in their range of difficulty, meaning that all learners were able to read and understand them. Difficulty, relevance and meaning were important aspects of text choices made by the teachers.

All of this was achieved, in spite of these teachers working with limited organisational support and they had to purchase some materials with their own funds. This is not an uncommon practice for educators. Ramdan (2009) in her interview with some primary school educators found that many of the respondents did state that they had to purchase materials using their own funds, to make their reading resources so that lessons in literacy could be completed.

C: Classroom Teaching Factors

Teachers play a fundamental role as part of a school's resources. Teachers' competency in teaching literacy skills has to be considered. This would include teacher qualities, teacher qualifications, teaching goals and literacy practices.

3.4.2 Teacher Competency

Zimmerman (2010) cites the Department of Education (DoE, 2008b) which lists teacher competency as a specific challenge for implementing its National Reading Strategy. The main concern is that teachers in South Africa may have an under-developed understanding of teaching literacy, especially reading and writing. They may not know how to teach reading or writing or may know only one method, meaning that they cannot adapt to the instructional needs of diverse learners in their classrooms.

“As a result of misunderstanding of the role of the teacher in teaching reading for C2005, the subsequent RNCS and of recent Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) many teachers mistakenly thought they did not have to teach reading actively but that they had merely to facilitate the process as children would teach themselves to read. Teachers were also expected to develop their own teaching materials and reading programmes as part of curriculum implementation, aspects which it is now recognised they did not have the experience to undertake” (DoE, 2008b, p6).

In a recent newspaper article (Leverton, 2012) entitled *What is being done to fix education woes* the calibre of educators we have today, is addressed with great concern. The writer of the article states that much chaos is caused in schools with regard to discipline because the character of educators that we have in our education system needs to be looked at. The main question remains whether many educators really do care about the learners they teach or are they there for the salary or the title? The writer argues that in most cases it is for the latter because the truly dedicated and caring teachers are few and far between. There is a challenge to the MEC of education to intervene and to bring back the interest, motivation and enthusiasm that most educators once had.

Section 29 of the constitution of South Africa includes a right to education for all citizens therefore it is the responsibility of the state to make education progressively available and accessible to all. Although the Government has allocated the largest part of expenditure to

education, our education system is failing us and is said to be the worst on the entire African Continent. It may not be about the money, but due to a lack of vision, political will and commitment by all stakeholders within the education system.

Yet again it has been mentioned that effective education in a school greatly depends on the intent, energy and commitment of the teachers, for these are indicators of quality, rather than the qualifications and years of experience to raise the status and standing of education. What is shocking is that despite being qualified on paper, many of the country's teachers do not understand their subjects or how to teach them. South Africa does not have professional teachers but we have workers who are not high level professionals (*Phoenix Tabloid*, 2012, November 10, p.4).

However, in a contrasting article entitled *10 million kids drop out yearly* (Mackay, 2012) the concern was that thousands of children could drop out of school if our Government does not quickly resolve the problem. But what is the problem? UNESCO's *Education for all Global Monitoring Report* confirmed that the target of having every child actually completing primary education by 2015 was now way beyond their reach. One of the problems mentioned were that teachers were not supported and rewarded enough in the job. It was mentioned that teachers were working with very low pay or pay that did not arrive from one month to the next. Due to this reason, Africa's best and brightest teachers have been moving to other continents for better opportunities. It is therefore necessary that salary and employment conditions for educators be addressed immediately.

Unfortunately educational achievements are not just about spending more money on education. South Africa and Kwa-Zulu Natal have already spent on a per capita basis much more money on education than does Tanzania which is more rural than KZN. Yet Tanzania does almost twice as well as South Africa and more than twice as well as KZN on both maths and language competencies. Questions remain as to how even rural areas in Mauritius who spend far less on education, do better at school than South Africa. What then are the educational and economic developments lessons form Tanzania or Mauritius that could be imported into KZN? At base level, the central lesson is to take education's fundamentals being, reading, writing and maths seriously at primary school level and to emphasise this throughout society (*The Mercury*, 2012, December 5, p.10).

3.4.3 The status quo for teaching reading and writing in South African primary school.

Much emphasis is placed on the teaching of decoding skills but this is often done in a superficial, haphazard and de-contextualised fashion. I agree with Pretorius (2002) that often children may read lists of syllables or words aloud from the chalkboard but we as teachers assume that when learners can decode they will be able to comprehend what they have read, therefore little attention is given to reading comprehension thus, the transition from decoding syllables or words on a chalkboard to meaningful reading activities, using extended texts does not happen easily.

Zimmerman (2010) makes mention of South African teachers' overall literacy teaching practices by referring to the SACMEQ 11 study that included an investigation into South African grade 3 teachers' personal characteristics such as their age, gender, training, time allocation for teaching, preparation and marking, viewpoints on learner activities, teaching goals, teaching approaches and assessment procedures. Specific questions were asked regarding reading such as their opinions about important learner activities for teaching reading, their decisions about the most important goals for teaching reading and to rate their most frequently used reading activities for instruction and assessment of reading.

Moloi and Strauss (2005) responded to this by stating that in the study, approximately 45% of teachers rated comprehension as the most important learner activity for teaching reading. 22 % rated learning new vocabulary and 13% rated sounding words as most important. A very small percentage of teachers rated listening to reading, silent reading, taking books to read, reading materials at home and reading aloud in class as most important. The teachers' ideas about the most important goals of teaching reading were also sought. It was found that only 15% of the teachers suggested that improving reading comprehension was the most important goal in teaching reading.

Small percentages of teachers referred to the improvement of word attack skills, extending vocabulary and opening up career opportunities as the most important goals. Teachers were also asked to rate their most frequently used teaching activities for reading according to the most often used. 91% of teachers reported that asking questions to deepen understanding was the approach, 88% mentioned asking questions to test comprehension, 84% talked of giving positive feedback, 72% used reading aloud to the class and 67% introduced the passage first before reading as the most often used strategies. Using materials made by the teacher was the

least often used strategy for teaching reading as only 36% of teachers reported using it. With regard to assessment in reading, 36% of teachers reported giving weekly reading tests whereas 41% reported only giving reading tests two or three times per month (Moloi & Strauss, 2005).

Considering the responses of the teachers, one assumes that teachers' understanding and perception of the concept reading is vast and varies amongst individuals. There may not be uniformity or a thorough plan for educators to follow. This survey also tackles superficial signs of teachers' understating of how to plan for, teach and assess reading in the classroom. It does not give us as researchers any indications of which working strategies teachers use or how they adapt them to cater for the diverse population of learners in their classrooms or how the school supports these strategies.

3.4.4 Teaching and learning in English for English non-vernacular learners

Matjila and Pretorius (2004) explain that our education system is tasked with promoting bilingualism due to literacy's link to academic achievement in bilingual education as well as to promote biliteracy. According to these writers there is an assumption that if one is proficient in a language the one will automatically be able to read in that language. However, although there is a strong link between proficiency in a language and reading capability in that language, the relationship between the two is asymmetrical. This is due to the fact that proficiency in a language does not guarantee reading fluency in it.

To illustrate this point further Van Staden (2010) maintains that the South African population is characterised by great diversity and variation. With 11 official languages, current educational policy in South Africa advocates an additive bilingualism model and students in grade 1 to grade 3 are taught in their mother tongue. Thereafter, when these students progress to grade 4, the language of learning and teaching changes to a second language, which in most cases is English. At this key developmental stage students are expected to advance from learning to read to a stage where they can use reading in order to learn.

Verhoeven (1990) adds that second language students face two types of difficulties, namely interlingual learning problems caused by mother tongue interference and intralingual learning problems, caused by the structure of the second language. Word recognition is a critical part of reading and in learning to recognize words, students will use phonemic mapping,

recognition of orthographic patterns and direct recognition of words already represented in memory. However, it is important to note that students acquiring reading in a second language may experience difficulty with all three of these recognition processes (Verhoeven, 1990). Thus the language profile of South Africa paints a very complex picture.

Pretorius (2002) also agrees that reading and writing problems tend to be masked by language proficiency issues. This is due to the fact that it is assumed that poor academic performance is caused by poor mother tongue proficiency. When learners have difficulty using reading as a tool for learning, it is again assumed that their comprehension problems are a product of limited language proficiency. However, the writer strongly argues that improving the language proficiency of learners does not automatically improve their reading comprehension. What really happens is that attention to reading improves reading skill and as a result language proficiency also improves.

Uys, Van der Walt, Botha and Van den Berg (2006) touch on another important issue when they point out, that in some South African classrooms, some teachers do not have the methodological and presentational skills or the language associated with effective second language instruction. These teachers are thus considered incapable of 'consciously promoting' functional language skills for content. Therefore, second language learners may experience reading comprehension in another language as an overwhelming task and teachers may not be aware of the difficulties that these learners may confront as they attempt to gather meaning from text in another language.

As an educator I maintain that very often we struggle to meet the language needs of all the learners in our classroom due to their linguistic diversity. Our formal training has not adequately equipped us to promote the literacy development of all the learners that we may teach. At this point in the discussion it is important to mention a research that was conducted by Theron and Nel (2005) into the needs and perceptions of South African grade 4 teachers who had taught English second language learners (ESL).

The sample included teachers at schools where English had been the medium of instruction from grade one. Information was sought from educators through the use of questionnaires on their perceptions about: learners with language barriers, language issues that exacerbate language barriers, demographic factors that complicate teacher support of English second

language learners and supportive strategies that teachers used for these English second language learners.

This study was relevant for it brought to the fore some supportive strategies that teachers could use in literacy development of ESL learners. About 86% of the teachers reported that they had experimented in the classroom by trying out new teaching methods, tools and techniques or by using alternative teaching practices such as stories, words and concepts that related to the learners' immediate environment, drilling of words with flash cards, role play, drama, dialogue and the development of vocabulary.

I can identify easily with some of the above mentioned strategies for I rely on some of these to assist in literacy development in my classroom. These strategies can help an educator to adapt in teaching ESL learners. However, it must be remembered that although one can extract some valuable ideas from this study, it was conducted with a small sample of teachers and their practices and experiences with ESL learners in English medium schools only.

There is now a shift in the Literature Review as we move on to discuss teacher goals, teacher qualities and teaching practices in developing literacy achievement in primary schools.

3.4.5 Teaching goals, teacher qualities and teaching practices

A: In the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase of schooling there is a need for learners to become good readers and writers. Below is the Phase overview (Grade R to Grade 3) for English first additional language, for reading and viewing and writing skills. This has been extracted from the recent Foundation Phase Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), 2012, p.8.

Table 3.4 Phase Overview (Grade R to Grade 3) for Reading and Viewing (Foundation Phase Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), 2012, pp.28-31).

READING AND VIEWING			
GRADE R	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3
<p>Environmental print</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises some common words in our everyday environment (e.g. STOP, Spar, KFC, MTN, Coke) <p>Shared Reading as a class with the teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listens to a very simple story read by the teacher from an enlarged text such as a Big Book or illustrated poster Talks about illustrations in the Big Book or poster using HL where necessary Learns some oral vocabulary in the FAL from the pictures After repeated readings joins in where appropriate Acts out the story Draws pictures capturing main idea of story 	<p>Environmental print</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begins to read some simple labels in the FAL (and HL) of objects in the classroom and wider environment (e.g. way in/out, open) <p>Emergent reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfers some of the knowledge and skills acquired in the HL to reading in the FAL such as book handling skills, basic concepts of print (e.g. concepts of words and letters, we read from left to right and top to bottom of a page) Recognises a few high frequency sight words (e.g. the, and, you, he, she, we, they, can) <p>Shared Reading as a class with the teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listens to a very simple story or non-fiction text read by the teacher from an enlarged text such as a Big Book or illustrated poster Talks about illustrations in the Big Book or poster using HL where necessary Learns some oral vocabulary in the FAL from the pictures Answers some simple oral questions about the story After repeated readings joins in where appropriate Through exposure to print, starts to develop a sight vocabulary of a few high frequency words (e.g. the, and, you, he, she, we, they, can) Acts out the story Draws pictures capturing main idea of story or non-fiction text 	<p>Shared Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads a short written fiction or non-fiction text (a Big Book or other enlarged text) with the teacher, using the pictures to develop vocabulary, the title for prediction and answering short, oral questions about the text Makes sense of a short written text with pictures (e.g. by sequencing pictures or matching a caption/sentence to a picture) Relates a text that is read to own experience Retells part of a story or summarises a non-fiction text with help from the teacher (2–3 sentences) <p>Group Guided Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads aloud from own book in a guided reading group with the teacher i.e. whole group reads the same story Uses the reading strategies taught in the HL to make sense of text and monitor self when reading (phonics, context clues, structural analysis, sight words) Uses diagrams and illustrations in text to aid understanding Reads with increasing fluency and expression Shows an understanding of punctuation when reading aloud Continues to build a sight vocabulary (e.g. have, some, when, them, very) <p>Paired/Independent Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads own writing and others' writing Reads independently books read in Shared Reading sessions and simple caption books and picture story books in the FAL from the classroom reading corner Uses children's picture dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual) to find out the meaning of unknown words 	<p>Environmental print</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads simple posters or headings of posters in the environment <p>Shared Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads fiction and non-fiction texts with the teacher, using the illustrations to support vocabulary development Answers literal and very simple inferential questions that support comprehension of the text Retells a story or recount, identifying the sequence of events Summarises a non-fiction text (e.g. information report) <p>Group Guided Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads both silently and out loud from own book in a guided reading group with the teacher i.e. whole group reads the same text Uses the reading strategies taught in the HL to make sense of text and monitor self when reading (phonics, context clues, structural analysis, sight words) Uses diagrams and illustrations in text to increase understanding Reads aloud, with increasing speed and fluency, using correct pronunciation and stress Demonstrates an understanding of punctuation for direct speech, by varying voice pitch when reading aloud Uses some self-correcting strategies <p>Paired/Independent Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads own and others' writing Reads aloud to a partner Reads independently simple fiction and non-fiction books, books read in Shared Reading sessions, and children's magazines and comics Uses children's picture dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual) to find out the meaning of unknown words

Table 3.5 Phase Overview (Grade R to Grade 3) for Writing Skills (Foundation Phase Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), 2012, pp.28-31).

WRITING			
GRADE R	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses handwriting skills already taught in HL • Draws and labels pictures with the help of teacher. Reads back what is written • Writes simple lists (e.g. shopping lists) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses handwriting skills taught in HL • Writes lists with headings • Chooses and copies a caption which accurately describes a picture • With help, writes a caption for a picture (e.g. The red car is big.) Reads back what is written • Completes sentences by filling in missing words • Writes sentences using a frame (e.g. I like _____. I do not like _____.) • Writes sentences using words containing the phonic sounds and common sight words already taught • Writes familiar words and sentences from dictation • Puts jumbled sentences in the right order to make a paragraph and copies it • Writes a paragraph of at least 3 sentences on a familiar topic • Writes some short, simple texts already taught in HL e.g. a message on a get well card • Using skills taught in HL, organises information into a simple graphic form (e.g. chart or time line) • With help, uses some nouns and pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, etc.) correctly in writing • With help begins to use simple present, present progressive and past tenses correctly in writing • With help forms the plurals of familiar words • With help, spells common words correctly. Uses a children's dictionary where necessary • Uses punctuation already taught in HL (capital letters and full stops) • Builds own word bank and personal dictionary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses handwriting skills taught in HL • Writes more complex lists with headings (e.g. <i>insects</i>: ants, bees, butterflies) • Writes sentences from dictation • Writes a simple text (e.g. a birthday card) • With guidance, writes a personal recount of experiences using a frame (e.g. 'Yesterday I..., Then ..., After that..., Finally...') • With guidance, writes a simple set of instructions (e.g. recipe) • Together with the teacher, writes a simple story and copies it (shared writing) • Organises information in a chart, table or bar graph • Writes sentences on a familiar topic (at least 6–8 sentences, one or two paragraphs) • Uses the writing process (drafting, writing, editing and publishing) • Uses punctuation already taught in HL (full stops, commas, question marks, exclamation marks and inverted commas) and apostrophes in contractions (e.g. can't, don't) • Spells common words correctly and attempts to spell unfamiliar words using phonic knowledge • Uses present, past and future tenses with increasing accuracy • Uses prepositions, nouns, verbs and pronouns with increasing accuracy • Builds own word bank and personal dictionary • Uses children's dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual)

These outcomes imply the continuous promotion of reading and writing activities in the classroom to facilitate learners' ability to read with comprehension and to write with understanding. However, a common problem is that teachers may interpret and act upon the outcomes or guidelines according to their diverse training, experiences and contexts. Many teachers are also reluctant to change and tend to continue to keep to familiar routines and to use old methods of training such as memorisation and rote learning.

It may be that the valuable teaching time during the literacy lessons is taken up by writing, corrections and taking dictation. National Education Evaluation and Development Unit

(NEEDU, 2009, p.p34-36) “came to the conclusion that the majority of teachers do not have the ability to reflect on their own teaching practices, abilities and competencies. How would they then be able to direct learners towards effective reflection of their work?

Teachers very often complain about their learners’ poor reading skills, but they themselves are not readers and their own literacy practices are poor.”

Ramphele (2009) argues that the poor knowledge base of teachers leads to the poor academic performance of our learners. Even more distressing is the lack of understanding of reading and literacy practices by decision makers. It is difficult to bring about a culture of reading and writing if some of the main role players do not or cannot participate in activities to effect the changes. Therefore it is necessary to ‘institutionalise’ the objective of reading and writing as lifelong skills and especially among the teachers who teach reading so badly to our children (De Jager, Nassimbeni & Underwood, 2007).

B: Teacher qualities

According to Topping and Ferguson (2005, p.20) “teacher abilities may have a greater impact on learner achievement than the actual instructional programmes. This is because competent teaching can alleviate the severity and consequences of reading and writing failure, especially for learners from second language backgrounds and also those learners with reading disabilities.”

As a class educator who spends many long hours with the learners, I can identify with some of the qualities of excellent reading and literacy teachers: (1) they must believe that all children can read and write, (2) continually assess children’s individual progress and link activities to children’s prior experiences, (3) know a variety of ways to teach literacy, when to use each method and how to combine methods into an effective instruction programme, (4) offer a variety of resource materials and texts for children to read and write about, (5) use flexible grouping strategies to fit instruction to individual children and (6) become good reading coaches in that they provide sufficient help strategically to all learners in their care.

Zimmerman (2010) cites a study by Wray, Medwell, Fox and Poulson (2000) which compares effective teachers of reading. It was found that such teachers taught a wide range of literacy skills and knowledge at the word, sentence and text level via shared text. There

were distinctive beginnings and endings to lessons, and learners were often required to present a review at the end of an activity. The teachers followed a brisk pace and used time-limits for sub-tasks within lessons. They re-focussed their learners' attention regularly to the task and used modelling and demonstration to teach processes of literacy. The teachers used a wide range of questions and asked learners open-ended questions in the lessons.

We as teachers and researchers can gain very important information from the contributions of Taylor, Peterson, Pearson and Rodriguez (2002) about effective teachers. These writers noted that effective teachers displayed some of these characteristics: they provided direct instruction which included making the goals clear, asking learners questions to check if they have understood the content of what was being taught and they provided constant feedback to learners on their academic progress. They also used modelling and explanation to teach learners strategies for decoding words and to understand the text. These effective teachers of reading used higher-order thinking skills more than lower order skills.

Learners were taught in small groups rather than in whole group instruction. The teachers tried to elicit high levels of learner participation. They also coach rather than just instruct as in traditional classrooms and learners were taught to take responsibility for their own skills and strategies. There was balance in their teaching programme which meant that they taught skills in reading and writing as well as the use of other literacy strategies. From this study alone one can extract very valuable techniques and methods to improve literacy achievement in our classrooms.

Edmond (2004) adds to the discussion that the teaching of literacy forms the foundation for learning as it encompasses reading, writing, communication skills and processes. Literacy is thus about making meaning. The following principles must be used by teachers as a guide to literacy learning:

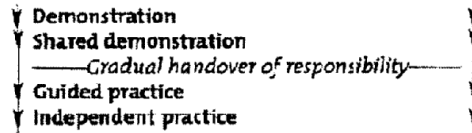
- Literacy must be used as a way to learn, to express and to create ideas;
- It is best developed in an environment that connects to and respects student's background, learning needs and their experiences;
- Literacy acquisition is developmental;
- Access to books and resources and allocating time to read and write are essentials to

literacy development;

- Literacy instruction is most effective when teachers provide scaffolding and explicit instruction of strategies then gradually releases responsibility to the student to use his or her own strategies.
- It is best taught in an integrated way.
- It is most influenced by the knowledge level and the skill of the teacher.

The use of these principles are further explained in the Optimal Learning Model Across the Curriculum, below (Edmond, 2004). The figure below is a representation of this model. It explains, explicitly, the gradual handover of responsibility from the teacher to the learner as literacy is taught. It starts with demonstration and shared demonstration, the teacher models the reading and writing skills and strategies, leading and explaining to the learner. The learner will gradually take responsibility for his learning, practicing these skills and strategies with the teacher stepping into a guiding role. The ultimate goal is for the student to independently practice the skills and strategies, to self – monitor and to apply the learning as the teacher observes.

Table 3.6 Optimal Learning Model across the curriculum (Edmons School District (2004, p.10).



Optimal Learning Model Across the Curriculum

DEPENDENCE		INDEPENDENCE			
<i>To Learners</i>		<i>With Learners</i>		<i>By Learners</i>	
Demonstration	Shared Demonstration	Guided Practice	Independent Practice	Handover of responsibility	
<i>teacher</i>	<i>teacher</i>	<i>student</i>	<i>student</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● initiates ● models ● explains ● thinks aloud ● shows how to "do it" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● demonstrates ● leads ● negotiates ● suggests ● supports ● explains ● responds ● acknowledges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● applies learning ● takes charge ● practices ● problem solves ● approximates ● self-corrects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● initiates ● self-monitors ● self-directs ● applies learning ● problem solves ● confirms ● self-evaluates 		
<i>student</i>	<i>student</i>	<i>teacher</i>	<i>teacher</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● listens ● observes ● may participate on a limited basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● listens ● interacts ● collaborates ● responds ● approximates ● participates as best he can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● scaffolds ● validates ● teaches as necessary ● evaluates ● observes ● encourages ● clarifies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● affirms ● assists as needed ● responds ● acknowledges ● evaluates ● sets goals 		
<i>Instructional context</i>	<i>Instructional context</i>	<i>Instructional context</i>	<i>Instructional context</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reading and writing aloud ● shared read aloud ● direct explanation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● shared reading and writing ● interactive reading ● shared read aloud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● guided (silent) reading ● reciprocal teaching ● literature conversations ● partner reading ● guided writing experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● independent reading and writing ● informal conferences ● partner reading ● homework and assignments 		

Whilst the model and the information supplied are very useful in assisting teachers with literacy development, certain teaching factors may only apply depending on the context of the teaching situation. In addition to this Reynolds (1998) suggests that teachers of literacy should be:

- Generating warmth and positivity;
- Getting a response from learners before moving on to new materials;
- Presenting small segments of material with practice before moving on and showing how bits fit together;
- Putting concrete concepts first, emphasising knowledge and application before abstraction;
- Delivering strong and well-planned lessons;
- Using individual differentiated materials; and
- Drawing upon the experiences of learners.

From my reading of Allington and Johnston (2002, pp.214-215) on the practice features of successful grade 4 exemplary teachers, I have extracted information which includes their classroom talk, curriculum materials used, the organisation of instruction and their evaluation procedures and have presented it in table 3.7. Primary school, educators should find this table very useful because it offers guidelines as to how teachers of literacy can go about teaching literacy effectively amongst a diverse population of learners.

Effective teachers would emphasise academic instruction with learning as the main goal in the classroom. Instructional time will be spent on curriculum-based learning activities in a task-orientated, relaxed and supportive environment. The classroom is well organised and there are minimal disruptions or learner misbehaviour. The learners are active rather than passive participants in their own learning, with the teachers asking many questions and involving the learners in class discussions.

Table 3.7 Some practice features of successful Grade 4 exemplar teachers of literacy. Adapted from (Allington and Johnston, 2002, pp.214-215).

CLASSROOM TALK	Learners talk to each other. Supportive and productive talk is expected, modelled and taught. Teachers actively learn about learners. They encourage learners to engage with each other's ideas. Teachers support the partially correct, turn attention to the process, and encourage further thinking or reflection. Teachers admit their limited knowledge of various topics, their mistakes and their own interests. Emphasis is on making meaning through problem solving and inquiry processes.
CURRICULUM MATERIALS	Instruction is multi-sourced and multi-level with texts varying with difficulty. Relevance and meaning are important aspects of curriculum materials selected. There is emphasis on meaning acquisition and interest in words.
INSTRUCTIONAL ORGANISATION	Instruction is personalised for teachers know learner's interests, strengths and needs. More individual and small-group than whole-class instruction. Collaborative, meaningful problem-solving is common. Learners learn how to learn, to teach and to interact in ways to foster mutual learning.
EVALUATION	Improvement, progress and effort are valued more than achievement of a single standard. Personalised attention is given to individual development and goals. Self-evaluation is widely encouraged, shaped and supported.

However, the table above serves only as a guide that educators could use or they could extract information from this that would be suitable for their own classroom situation. I mention this due to the fact that the value of this information could be questionable in for example the following scenario: a deep rural school without facilities, poorly trained educators, no parental support and high incidents of violence and disruptions.

3.4.6 Specific instructional strategies in literacy

The researcher is of the opinion that successful teaching of literacy would entail allowing for learners to draw on their phonic knowledge, word recognition skills, grammatical knowledge and contextual information when reading and writing is done. Teachers in their everyday lessons would need to make use of phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and understanding in reading and writing exercises. Each aspect of literacy must never be taught in isolation but learners must be encouraged to integrate all of these skills to complete a given task. For example, in a single reading task a learner should be able to use his or her phonic knowledge, vocabulary and comprehension skills to read a text. Similar skills will allow him or her to manage a writing task.

Rasinski and Padak (2004) agree for they observed that after years of debate about which effective approaches to use in literacy such as the whole language or phonics, skills –based or literature-based based instruction, comprehension-oriented or word-based approach, it was concluded that they are all important and that they all need to be taught. These authors further argue that a balanced approach must be used in literacy instruction and that in a truly balanced system, one element of literacy will influence the other parts of the curriculum. This is due to the fact that they are all interrelated and this interrelation of the parts must be considered.

- **Phonemic awareness, phonics and fluency:**

Zimmerman (2010) cites Taylor (2008) who states that most learners, especially those in the first grades of schooling, will benefit from systemic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge. Effective systemic phonic instruction will include letter-by-letter decoding and decoding by onset and rhyme. Oral reading can be used to develop decoding fluency during which learners will receive guidance and support from the teacher. Below is the Phase Overview for phonic development in the Foundation Phase.

Table 3.8 Phase overview (Grade R to Grade 3) for Phonic Development in the Foundation Phase

GRADE R	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops phonemic awareness in the FAL through rhymes and songs (e.g. 'We're going to the zoo, zoo, zoo; You can come too, too, too.') With the teacher's help identifies some rhyming words in a song or rhyme Segments oral sentences into individual words by clapping on each word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops phonemic awareness in the FAL through rhymes and songs (e.g. 'The cat in a hat, His name is Pat') Identifies some rhyming words Recognises initial sounds in familiar words (e.g. 'z' in 'zoo') Segments oral sentences into individual words by clapping on each word Claps out the syllables in familiar words Distinguishes the first sound (onset) from the remaining part of a syllable (rime) in simple words (e.g. c-at, m-at, f-at) Recognises plurals ('s' and 'es') aurally 	<p>Phonemic awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinguishes aurally between sounds that are often confused (e.g. 'a' and 'e', 'ee' and 'i') <p>Phonics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies letter-sound relationships of single letters starting with those that are the same in the HL and FAL Identifies letter-sound relationships that are different from those in the HL Builds up and breaks down 3-letter words using sounds learnt (e.g. p-e-n, p-en, pen) Recognises common endings in words (e.g. 'ed', 'ing', 'y' and 's') Groups common words into word families (e.g. bin, pin, tin) Recognises common consonant digraphs such as sh, ch and th at the beginning and end of words Builds up and breaks down simple words beginning with some common consonant blends (e.g. fl-at, sl-ip, cl-ap, pl-um; br-im, cr-op, dr-ip, gr-ab, tr-ip) Recognises at least 3 vowel digraphs (e.g. 'oo' as in boot, 'ee' as in feet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies letter-sound relationships of all single letters in HL and FAL and is aware of any differences Recognises consonant digraphs (sh-, -sh, ch-, -ch, th-, -th and wh-) at the beginning and end of words Recognises at least 10 vowel digraphs (e.g. 'oa' as in boat, 'ar' as in far, 'er' as in her, 'ir' as in bird, 'or' as in short, 'ur' as in hurt) Recognises silent 'e' in words (e.g. cake, time) Uses consonant blends to build up and break down words (e.g. ri-ng, i-nk) Recognises known rhyming words, (e.g. fly, sky) Distinguishes between long and short vowel sounds (e.g. 'boot' and 'book') Distinguishes between onset and rime in more complex syllables (e.g. 'dr-eam', 'scr-eam') Recognises more complex word families (e.g. 'catch', 'match') Recognises and uses some suffixes (e.g. '-es', '-ies', '-ly', '-ing', '-ed') Builds and sounds out words using sounds learnt

Table 3.8 Phase overview (Grade R to Grade 3) for Phonic Development in the Foundation Phase

• **3.4.7 Vocabulary:**

Vocabulary development is equally important in effective literacy teaching and learning. Moats (2009) advocates that many learners will need robust instruction in decoding and

teachers must realise that there may be learners in the classroom who have an oral language vocabulary. McKeown (2010) suggests that a target vocabulary would be 1 000 words a year through elementary or primary school. The weak readers and writers must be given the opportunities to learn as many new words as they can.

McKeown (2010) exposes one common problem that occurs in schools with regard to vocabulary development. This being that, there is very little vocabulary instruction in schools and most of such instruction is organised around a dictionary as a source of word meanings. This is an ineffective practice by teachers for learners will not be able to make sense of the information offered by a dictionary. Otherwise, most vocabulary is learnt incidentally from context during the lesson itself. Thus, there is a need for teachers to provide learners with the opportunity for vocabulary growth during the literacy lessons to keep pace with academic literacy demands.

I agree with writers who stress that beneficial vocabulary instruction techniques involve the direct teaching of specific words, pre-reading instruction in words, learning to use strategies to determine words meanings and learning words in rich contexts or learning words incidentally. The teaching of vocabulary can also enhance comprehension skills.

- **3.4.8 Comprehension:**

Reading comprehension is recognised as a multidimensional process that is an essential component of the learning process. It consists of a number of different factors such as various levels of comprehension, the readiness of the reader, the actual text and the activities associated with the task itself. Lesaux, Lipka and Siegal (2006) state that there are two types of reading comprehension breakdown for English language learners.

There are those learners with poor comprehension who are readers with lower-level processing skills and secondly, there are learners with poor comprehension who experience difficulties with higher-level texts despite having good word recognition skills. It is very important that teachers understand this, for the latter may battle with higher-order processing skills such as inference making, working memory and story structure knowledge.

According to Zimmerman (2010) the U.S. National Reading Panel's (NRP) Teaching Children to Read (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2000) offers a guide to eight types of comprehension instruction after completing an analysis of 203 studies on comprehension strategies. The table below shows this guideline to teaching comprehension skills effectively during literacy instruction.

Table 3.9 Guidelines: Teaching of Comprehension Skills. Source: NICHD (2000, pp. 4-6).

INSTRUCTION TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Comprehension monitoring	The learner is aware of his or her understanding during reading and learns procedures to deal with problems in understanding as they arise.
Co-operative learning	Learners work together to learn strategies in the context of reading.
Graphic and semantic organisers	Allow the learner to represent graphically through writing or drawing the meanings and relationships of the ideas that underlie the words in the text.
Story structure	The learner learns to ask and answer who, what, where, when and why questions about the plot, events in the story and characters.
Question answering	The learner answers questions posed by the teacher and is given feedback and corrections.
Question generation	The learner asks himself or herself what, when, where why, how and who questions.
Summarisation	The learner attempts to identify and write the main or most important ideas of the text into a coherent whole.
Multiple-strategy teaching	The reader uses several of the procedures in interaction with the teacher over the text.

As primary school educators we too can teach simple comprehension strategies so that when learners go into the Intermediate Phase, there is continuation of the teaching of these skills, for Gill (2008) suggests that the teaching even of one comprehension strategy can improve learners' comprehension. A teacher could through literacy development, activate a learner's prior knowledge, ask relevant questions while the learner is completing the task, allow for prediction, retelling, deciding what is important, allowing learners to summarise that which was read and so on. Comprehension skills will improve when teachers help learners to understand important vocabulary and concepts they will encounter in their tasks or demonstrate the important strategies that they can use to work out unknown words as they read or complete written tasks.

3.5 Key Literacy Issues that this literature review has yielded

The key literacy issues that this literature review has yielded is that despite continued Government initiatives incorporating both international and small scale empirical studies in South Africa to promote literacy development in schools, there exists a gap. The findings in the literature review show that there is little research relating to literacy development in primary schools. This research project will attempt to address this gap. Its findings might also be used to inform language and education policy decisions on promoting literacy in young children through the use of suitable teaching practices.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has emphasised that literacy development is a foundation skill that should be developed throughout a learners' time at school, because it is a basic tool that paves the way for further learning. I strongly support the idea that primary education should have a firm foundation in the development of literacy because a literate population contributes to a nation's social, political and economic growth and the ability to read and write is essential for personal growth.

This research project owes a factual and interpretive debt to worldwide issues on literacy development and the role of international comparative studies as discussed in this chapter to trace the progress of literacy improvement. International Assessments were also mentioned for these could serve as guidelines for educators. This study differs from others in that it investigates the literacy teaching practices of three grade three primary school

educators in a peri-urban school. It will investigate what educators are actually teaching in their literacy lessons. The information can then be contextualised within the vast corpus of research literature from other countries which examines the practices of effective schools and effective educators for literacy development. This research is also aimed at illuminating the factors that may impede literacy development at the sample school.

This thesis adds to and builds upon the insight that although there have been some Government initiatives to improve learner's performance in literacy, gaps still exist and more focus must be given to the work of literacy development by increasing educator content knowledge and their knowledge of how learners learn in this area, along with the teaching practices that would most likely create conditions for this success in the classroom. I support the idea that quality classroom teaching has the most influence on successful outcomes for learners, therefore it is important to investigate educator's literacy practices.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

“Education must be orientated not towards the yesterday of a child’s development but towards its tomorrow” (Vygotsky)

4.1 Introduction

As stated in chapter One, this research aims to explore teaching practices for the implementation of the literacy curriculum for Grade three learners and to investigate factors that affect learner’s performance in literacy in a primary school.

For the purposes of this research, literacy is defined as the socio-cultural practices implemented by the Grade three educators in promoting their learners through literacy practices that acknowledge their own funds of knowledge. In this chapter the conceptual framework that the researcher used was influenced by the New Literacy Studies, the New London Group, the development of multiliteracies and a social constructivist view to learning. The Vygotskian perspective of language is explained in detail. These lenses are used to view the Grade three educators in their teaching of literacy in the Foundation Phase, Grade three classrooms.

This chapter will add to and build upon the insight of the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky and Bourdieu’s social practice theory. The reason for highlighting these theorists is to show that language and literacy is interconnected as social meaning systems.

According to the Department of Education (2002a, p.9) the “literacy identity of a lifelong learner, is one who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled and compassionate, who respects the environment and who is able to participate in a society as a critical and active citizen. “ However, Moore and Hart (2007, p.15) criticise inappropriate teaching, systemic constraints and a progressive Outcomes Based Education curriculum for problems with literacy and reading. These writers argue for the urgent need for systematic and explicit teaching of reading and writing such as scaffolding and more overt instruction across the curriculum and through different levels of schooling.

I strongly agree that unless attention is paid to the explicit teaching of literacy skills, through all levels of schooling, schooling will continue to be a vehicle for widening inequality. Moore and Hart (2007, p.16) hold the view that the introduction of Outcomes Based Education, Curriculum 2005, the subsequent Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS 2002) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS 2006) are all responsible for the deepening crisis in our education system today.

I concur with writers Rose (2006), Pretorius (2002) and Macdonald (2002) that due to the devastating effects of a lack of literacy skills such as, how to read simple instructions, how to summarise information, how to apply reading and writing strategies to given tasks and how to make use of their own funds of knowledge, these problems could lead to poor reading and writing skills. In the Foundation years of schooling, explicit teaching of reading and writing skills must be taught, especially for those learners whose experience confines them to decoding in their mother tongue (for example in IsiZulu) and then sometimes they are left to their own devices to learn how to read and write in English.

In a study that was conducted by Moore and Hart (2007, p.28) it was pointed out that although our education curriculum supports literacy development in theory, in practice, it does not focus on fundamental skills of literacy such as teaching learners how to restate their understanding and how to articulate their thoughts. Instead much of the focus is on assessment tasks that learners have to complete and a large number of administrative tasks for educators, which replaces focused literacy support and development in the classroom.

4.2 Conceptual framework for the study

In this section the relevant concepts and an important model that addresses possible factors that affect the education system, are explored. The overall approach or theory will be discussed later.

I also acknowledge that teacher's practices are influenced by the context in which they teach, their teaching interactions with their learners, and their own conceptions of literacy. They are also guided by policies on the teaching of literacy and about the curriculum from which they must teach. Thus, it becomes imperative to mention in this chapter, three vital elements which will be incorporated as part of the conceptual framework for this study. The three key elements are: (1) the teaching context, (2) the teacher, and (3) the

curriculum. The amalgamation of these concepts gives birth to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) model which becomes necessary to discuss in this chapter for it brings to light what literacy encompasses.

Zimmerman (2010) cites Schmidt, Jorde, Cogan and Barrier (1996) who explain that the curriculum consists of three levels being, the *intended*, the *implemented*, and the *attained*. Each of the three dimensions represents a particular set of variables and a societal context in which they are embedded. The *intended curriculum details* the education system's goals, visions and aims. This is presented through documents that are used to guide the education process.

The *implemented curriculum* pertains to practices, activities and institutional arrangements at schools and in the classrooms. These practices occur to implement the visions, aims and the goals as specified in the intended curriculum. The *attained curriculum* is concerned with the outcomes of schooling evidenced by what learners have actually attained through their educational experiences. It must be remembered that what students learn is influenced by what the education system has intended for them to learn.

This thought is further propagated by Van den Akker (2003) in the form of a typology of curriculum representations, as seen in the table below, whereby each level is further broken down into sub-levels. To understand this better the researcher quotes the following example: the *intended curriculum* comes in the form of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (the formal / written curriculum), this is implemented by educators who will interpret its contents (the *perceived curriculum*) taking into account the school context and then will operationalise it in the classroom (*the operational curriculum*).

Table 4.1 A typology of curriculum representations (Van den Akker, 2003, p.3)

INTENDED	Ideal	Vision (rationale or basic philosophy underlying a curriculum)
	Formal /Written	Intentions as specified in curriculum documents and/or materials
IMPLEMENTED	Perceived	Curriculum as interpreted by its users (especially teachers)
	Operational	Actual process of teaching and learning (also: curriculum-in-action)
ATTAINED	Experiential	Learning experiences as perceived by learners
	Learned	Resulting learning outcomes of learners

Travers and Westbury (1989) state that encompassing all these elements of the curriculum and referring to it as ‘curricular content’, the IEA model that is viewed below, also incorporates the education system, the school or classroom and student levels. Most importantly, the model takes into account the role of the education system features and conditions, the community, the school context, student and teacher characteristics and the curricular context in the implementation of curricular content.

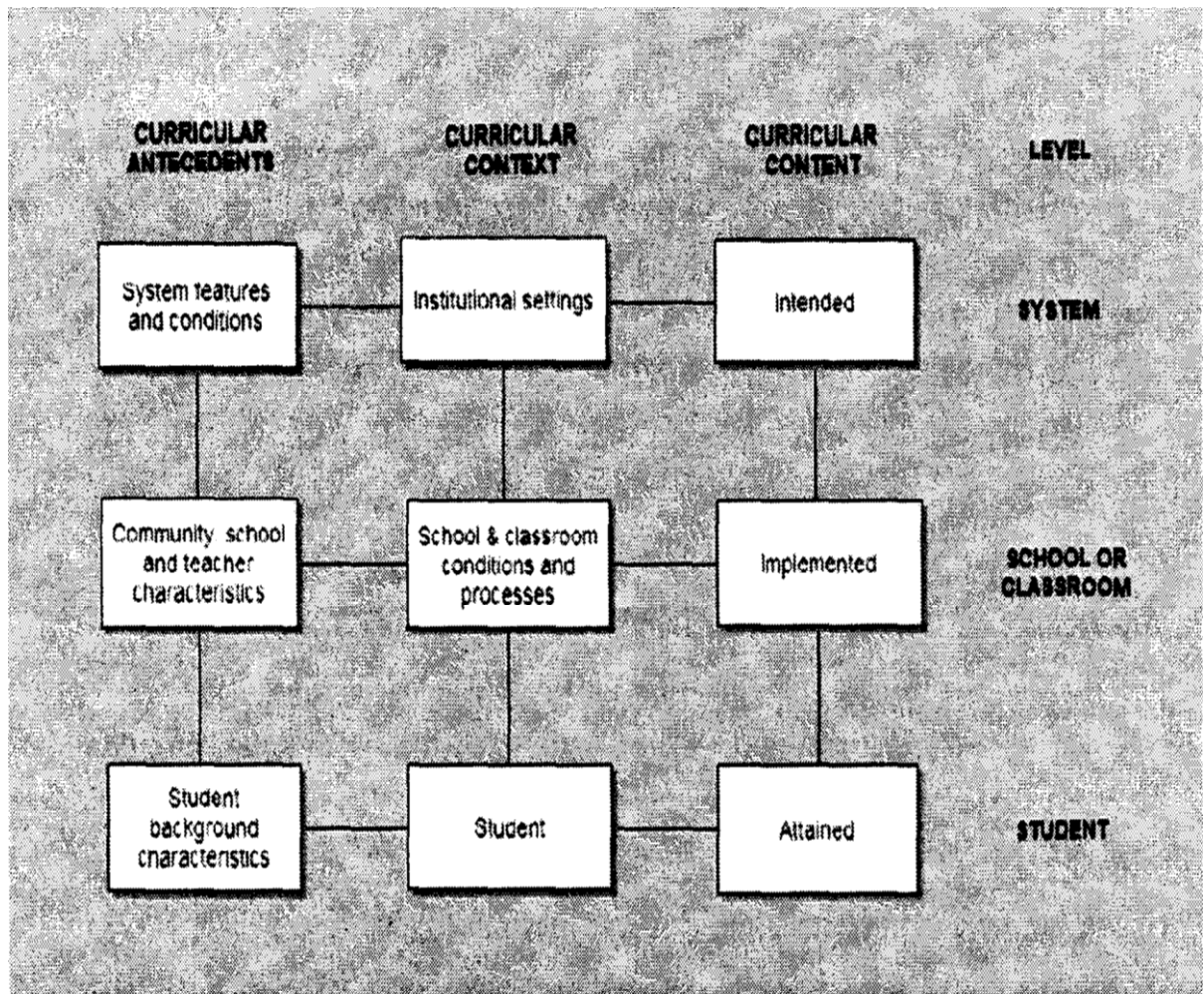


Figure 4.2: Model of an IEA research study (IEA, 1998, p.53; Travers & Westbury, 1989)

I am of the opinion that this model is worth mentioning for it presents the notion that learners' curricular experiences reflect the complexity of the education system as a whole, depicting the many factors that have an impact on education. As can be seen, there is no single, isolated aspect of the education system because of the interrelated nature of the many aspects that make up this system. Teacher's practices are linked to learner achievement and the context in which they teach. What this means is that one cannot judge the effectiveness of a teachers' practices solely based on learner achievement. According to Schmidt *et al.* (1996) this model is based on the notion that any given system's provision of educational experience is limited, thus no education system can provide for all possible experiences. Thus decisions made will impact on what is and what will not be included.

To sum up what the IEA model represents in the education system, a very apt explanation is offered by Schmidt *et al.* (1996):

...[It is] not possible to identify and measure every possible factor that affects an educational system. However, this model of students' educational experiences recognizes the interconnections between major components of the educational system in a way analogous to conceptualizations of many proponents of systemic educational reform.

This model is, then, an important tool for placing teachers' teaching practices within the context of our larger education system to show the possible interrelationships between the components of this system.

4.3 Theories of learning which underpin literacy teaching approaches

I will now provide a theoretical background of the approaches of best literacy practices that can be used by educators intentionally to promote literacy development in the Foundation Phase. In my literature review, I explored how current research in the area of literacy informs our thinking and our understanding about how effective teachers are, in the literacy development of their learners. The theoretical lenses that I use are influenced by the New Literacy Studies, the New London Group, the development of multiliteracies and a social constructivist view of learning.

Vygotskian and Neo-Vygotskian perspectives of language to Gee's (1996) notion of Discourse are also used. These lenses will be used to view the Grade 3 teachers in their teaching of literacy in the Foundation Phase Grade 3 classrooms. Studies by Pressley (2006); Kapp (2006) and Tiemensma (2007) reaffirm that to improve literacy instruction, one must examine teaching expertise rather than expect a panacea in the form of materials. Therefore, the intention of the researcher is to make use of theories with the hope that they will offer productive ways of thinking about the roles of teachers in promoting children's literacy practices.

According to Cope and Kalantzis (2002), Luke and Freebody (1999a), Kress (1997) and the New London Group (1996) many current literacy approaches continue to focus on behavioural and cognitive psychology of learning, where the focus is on the individual rather than the social practices that are required for coping with change. Street and Lefstein

(2007) contest this by adding that such approaches are not capable of developing education that inculcates creativity, innovation, ease with change and other dispositions that are highly valued in the 21st century.

Currently, these are some of the approaches or methods in use in the Foundation Phase classrooms: firstly the behaviourist view of reading is a de-contextualised approach that sees reading as progressing from the parts to the whole (bottom up). The learner would need to reach a certain level of technical and mechanical skill before they are exposed to authentic books and reading situations (Joubert, Bester & Meyer (2008, p.296).

Secondly, we as educators often make use of the phonics method in which one encourages children to read each word separately in a sentence. However, by using this method, comprehension is hindered because there is an enormous difference between reading words and reading a text. A third common method is the look-and-say method, a method that is based on the Gestalt theory and it focuses on the whole and not on the parts. Educators use flash cards where the learner is guided to recognise and read the words or phrases from books. However, it must be remembered that in this method, recognition of the word being flashed is emphasised without a context.

The alphabet method is also commonly used. It is an archaic reading method that requires the learners to know, recite and identify the alphabet long before they can start reading. The intention here is that learners would sound out the letters of the alphabet as they break up the words to assist them in reading the word, then the sentence as a whole. However, the researcher agrees with Joubert *et al.* (2008) who confirms that this is a de-contextualised method where the mechanical reciting of the letters of the alphabet is required.

There are many methods that are currently being practised by Foundation Phase educators; far too many to mention. In comparison to the above method of teaching literacy, the psycholinguistic aspects of reading concentrates on phonological awareness, decoding of words, word recognition and literal comprehension such as recall rather than on the higher order thinking skills.

Thus, in this method literacy becomes restricted to rules, monolingual and monocultural focussing on specific skills of language (New London Group, 1996). Judging from the

above mentioned methods being practised by primary school educators, it is clear that literacy cannot be prescribed in a narrow way, rather it becomes necessary to take into account the learners' language development levels and to adopt a view of literacy that exercises a more balanced approach in developing the literacy identity of the learner.

Lawrence (2011) in her thesis, very briefly explains that some theories of learning which underpin literacy teaching can be classified as the Behaviourist theory with its emphasis on the acquisition of skills and where the learners are viewed as 'empty vessels', waiting to be loaded with tons of information, rules and knowledge. In contrast, the Constructivist theory emphasises the role of the learner as being actively involved in the construction of knowledge. The Social-constructivist theory in turn places great stress on the development of understanding through the need for social interaction, while the Social-cultural theory supports the view that literacy is a socially mediated process where learning and literacy emerge.

The problem with the traditional views of literacy is that they have failed to take into account the variety of ways in which learners read and interpret situations differently, how they share, convey and construct meanings about the world. Literacy today is far more complex than it was in the past, yet surprisingly, our National Policies, demand that we as educators must stick to one type of literacy, that we assess learners strictly according to specific standards and that we specify the single best way of fostering literacy in our schools.

We and our learners are confronted daily by increasing diversity and societal change because of the use of technology, and so there is a need for schools to respond to this change in our lives. Lawrence (2011) cites the New London Group (1996) who agree that the information age of technology has led to the proliferation of multimodal texts such as cell phones, videos, DVDs, iPods, the internet, and so on where language is no longer the major resource for making meaning because of visual, audio, gestural and spatial meaning.

Tiemensma (2007) concurs that literacy cannot be defined without taking into account an individual's social and cultural context. For the purposes of this research, literacy is defined as a socially situated practice which entails how the teacher acknowledges the language, thinking and culture of all his or her learners and considers these to mediate the language

development of the learners in the classroom. From all the research that has been presented in this thesis, it is clear that the traditional view of literacy as de-contextualised skills is not adequate in these modern times.

Literacy is a complex issue and since our Government's intervention efforts are not producing the desired results, in increasing the literacy levels of the learners, continued demands are being made on educators to promote literacy development. The researcher will adopt the Socio-Constructivist and the Socio-Cultural approach in the thesis, which will emphasise the development of language and literacy as an urgent priority.

4.4 The New Literacy Studies

According to Lawrence (2011) the New Literacy Studies (NLS) was a movement in the early 1980's that took part in a larger 'social turn away' from a focus on individuals and their 'private' minds, towards interaction and social practice. The NLS is based on the view that reading and writing only makes sense when studied in the context of social and cultural practices.

The approach does not focus attention on the acquisition of skills, as in other dominant approaches, but rather views literacy as a set of social practices. It acknowledges multiple literacies and asks the question 'whose literacies are dominant and whose are marginalised or resistant.' The NLS is based on the idea that reading, writing and meaning are always situated within specific social practices and within specific discourses. Thus, this approach is rooted in social theory and it is concerned with discourse and power (Gee, 1996; Street, 1995).

Baynham and Prinsloo (2001, p.84) cite Barton and Hamilton's (2000, pp.15) characteristics of the NLS perspective on literacy:

- ✓ "Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices which are observable in events which are mediated by written texts.
- ✓ There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- ✓ Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relations, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others.
- ✓ Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.

- ✓ Literacy is historically situated.
- ✓ Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making, as well as formal education and training.”

Keeping all of the above-mentioned characteristics in mind, Prinsloo (2005a) states that the NLS argues “that literacy is not to be studied as an individual skill, but it acknowledges the social, cultural and political practices of the learners.” The researcher is of the opinion that school-based literacy practices should be integrated with learners’ homes, communities and society. This means that learner’s backgrounds are to be respected both culturally and linguistically and diversity amongst learners must be acknowledged.

Many researchers in their studies aim to prove and emphasize the importance of context in which literacy was being practised, that multiple literacies should be acknowledged and that literacy should be studied as a social practice. The aim was to stress the social and cultural practices of literacy rather than to compartmentalise literacy into the acquisition of individual skills. One such researcher was Heath (1983, 2001) whose study was of the communicative practices of three local communities. The aim of this study was to highlight the important role that the community plays in the acquisition of literacy and language and Heath argued that the “literacy event is contextually and culturally embedded” (Heath, 2001, p.12).

Heath (in Prinsloo 2005b, p.15) in a study highlights that children’s language and their social behaviour often demonstrate the rules of communicative competence which they learn and acquire from their communities. In attempting to understand the problems and challenges in the classroom, such as problems when learners struggle to read and write, educators should focus on the communicative practices and traditions that children from different socio-cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds bring to the school context.

Heath’s work (2001) focused on the direct observation of the social practices of the learners. She moved away from literacy as a formal practice in the classroom to multiple forms and practices of literacy in the community, and her aim was to see the effects social practices have on the learners in the school environment.

There is much information that a researcher can gather from Heath's (2001) study. Her findings revealed that learners from middle-class backgrounds were more likely to be successful at school because the values and practices in the home were similar to those at school, whereas other learners were marginalised because their home and social practices were not valued and acknowledged because they did not synchronise with the school's practices. They were continually disadvantaged, because their funds of knowledge were not accessed, their life experiences were ignored.

Street (1984), in a study of literacy practices, examines power relations. Street exposed the autonomous model of literacy which posits literacy as a de-contextualised set of skills with universal application as just another literacy ideology. The autonomous model is seen as a narrow, culture-specific literacy practice that assumes a single direction, which makes the assumption that 'cognitive consequences' will result from one acquiring literacy.

Street and Lefstein (2007) pose an ideological model of literacy, which focuses on the social practices and conceptions of reading and writing. What this means simply, is that when a child reads or writes, he or she bring their prior knowledge, their life experiences and their socio-cultural knowledge to the reading and writing task, and all of these are deeply rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. Thus we can argue "that literacy is embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles and are not just technical skills to be taught and learnt" (Street & Lefstein, 2007, p.6).

Gee (1990) as cited by Lawrence (2011), was another proponent who viewed language and literacy acquisition as forms of socialisation. This researcher asserts that, in order for a non-mainstream social group to acquire mainstream school-based literacy practices, with all the oral and written language skills this implies, these individuals must recapitulate the sorts of literacy experiences the mainstream child has had at home. This approach fits perfectly with Scribner and Coles' (1981) practice account of literacy. In line with Street's ideological approach to literacy, it claims that "individuals, who have not been socialised into the discourse practices that constitute mainstream school-based literacy, must eventually be socialised into them if they are ever to acquire them" (Street & Lefstein, 2007, p.10).

To sum up, the above-mentioned researchers encourage us as educators to think about how literacy is enacted and manifested in distinct ways in people's lives and how it is shaped by the dynamics of social power. They challenge educators to design pedagogies of multiliteracies that connect with real and situated uses of literacy that are relevant to the lives of the social and cultural world of the learner, that will inevitably encourage the learners to think critically and independently.

Prinsloo (2005a, p.25) proposes the four-resource model which explicitly considers the kinds of knowledge and practices children need to learn to acquire useful literacies. This researcher argues that to become a successful reader, an individual must "develop and sustain the resources to play four related roles as code breaker; text-participant, text-user and text-analyst."

According to Street (2005) the New Literacy Studies considers a new tradition in the nature of literacy, for it focuses not so much on the acquisition of skills as in dominant approaches, but rather views literacy as a social practice. It acknowledges multiple literacies, and asks the question 'whose literacies are dominant and whose are marginalised.' Therefore, one can conclude that this approach to literacy is based on the idea that reading, writing and meaning are always situated within specific social practices within specific discourses.

Flint (2008, pp.6-10) offers valuable information on the three models of schooling that have an impact on literacy development. I will use this knowledge to understand better the context in which the learners read and write and what model of schooling is being implemented as this will affect the nature of literacy instruction in the classrooms.

In the industrial model of schooling the schooling practices are developed to be efficient, uniform and competitive. Here, the focus is to create individuals who are compliant, punctual and accountable. The literacy materials will be standardised and the emphasis is on skills development. The aim is to attain accuracy in the tasks and performance of learners are measured against pre-determined standards (Flint, 2008, p.7)

According to Flint (2008, pp. 9-10) the second model of schooling is the critical model and this raises questions about power, gender, social structures and identity, offering a more global context for learning. Here, the focus is on ways which various literacy and cultural

practices privilege and or marginalise people. Simply it encourages learners to interrogate the text and the curriculum, wondering whose voice is missing and how the story might be told from a different perspective.

The aim would be to move beyond the text and into social action. However, the researcher agrees with Chaffel, Flint, Pomeroy and Hammel (2007) that this critical perspective is not appropriate for younger children as in the case of the grade three learners for the texts are too difficult and the issues may be too complex for them to understand fully. However, the educator can introduce critical awareness in learners by using very simple texts and asking simple questions about what is being read or viewed.

Younger children would definitely need more scaffolding and demonstration for them to understand important issues. It must be noted that although fewer schools adopt the critical ideology, this model recognizes that reading and writing do not take place in a vacuum but occur in larger social, cultural, political and historical contexts and it is for this reason that educators have to instil in learners the skill of critical awareness.

4.5 The New London Group

According to Lawrence (2011), the New London Group is a group of researchers including Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, Kalantzis, Kress, Luke, Michaels and Nakata who met to discuss the state of literacy pedagogy. These researchers called for a new approach to literacy because of the multiplicity of communication channels and increasing diversity, both culturally and linguistically. They called for multiliteracies which is in contrast to the previous traditional view of literacy, the focus being to design and re-design literacy approaches.

The New London Group (1996, p.62) emphasised that “literacy pedagogy account[s] for the context of diversity, for example, the numerous cultures and texts, such as multimodal ones and not just those involving print.’ The argument here is that culture, language and gender were not to become barriers to educational success.”

The New London Group (1996) sees literacy education as it is currently being implemented, as being inadequate for the task of preparing learners for full participation in their working community and personal lives. This Group argues that the literacy curriculum needs to

change to take into account the multiliteracies of the 21st century and the multiliteracies of the learners' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, hence pedagogy of multiliteracies.

Cope and Kalantzis (2002) state that they view diversity and multiliteracies as resources in pedagogy. They argue that people have multiple identities because they belong to many different communities and people use many different discourses. They see listening and reading as productive forms of designing because the listeners and readers make meaning by combining what they are taking in with their own experiences.

The New London Group views literacy in a much broader view compared to the autonomous model and their approach is referred to as 'multiliteracies.' As a literacy educator, I agree with these researchers that the traditional approach to literacy is too restricted, too formalised, it is monolingual, mono-cultural and too rule-governed. It is for this reason that the New London Group's *four part pedagogy of multiliteracies* promotes learning conditions that will ultimately lead to educators acknowledging all of the interests that learners bring to the classroom and to the curriculum.

Four critical aspects that these researchers propose for literacy education include the following:

- ✓ ***Situated practice***: this involves the attainment of real-life practices through critical engagement of relevant and meaningful tasks, in order for the mastery of skills and knowledge, by means of meaningful experiences and authentic literacy practices.
- ✓ ***Overt instruction***: this is developing a language and an understanding of the reality of texts in order to enable students to gain a conscious awareness of and control over what is being learnt through their engagement with various texts and their interactions with other students and teachers.
- ✓ ***Critical framing***: critical interpretation of the social and cultural context of particular meanings in order to assist learners "frame their growing mastery in practice (from situated practice) and conscious control and understanding (from overt instruction) in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological and value-centred relations of particular systems"
- ✓ ***Transformed practice***: this is the creation and re-creation of designs of meaning from one context to another. In this way, learners will have the opportunity to apply what

they have learnt and to reach their own goals and to fulfill their own values” (The New London Group in Cope & Kalantzis, 2002, p.34).

There is a need to mention this *four part pedagogy* as it will be used later in this study, as one of the lenses in the empirical investigation of the way in which literacy is being taught to learners in the Foundation Phase classroom. In conclusion to this approach to literacy teaching, The New London Group’s multiliteracies approach demonstrates that there is a vast change taking place in the world, such as access to technology, for example, the i-pad, the tablet and so on. It is for this reason that literacy teaching needs to address and negotiate diversity in the classroom.

In addition to the four above mentioned aspects that guide literacy teaching, from my reading of Flint (2008, pp. 11-17) there are six additional guiding principles and that are worth mentioning:

- ✓ “literacy practices are socially and culturally constructed: this involves reading and writing events to include groups of learners working together for the classroom can be seen as a collection of racial, ethnic and cultural groups of learners working together.
- ✓ literacy practices are purposeful: the educators should create opportunities in the classrooms to engage children in real-life, social experiences involving literacy. Learners can write journal entries, write letters, record facts, read texts and so on.
- ✓ literacy practices contain ideologies and values: literacy practices are not neutral for they carry with them values, ideologies and beliefs about how the world should be organized and operate.
- ✓ literacy practices are learnt through inquiry: educators should nurture inquiring minds by allowing learners to make observations, collect, analyze, synthesize information, draw conclusions and solve problems.
- ✓ literacy practices encourage readers and writers to use their background knowledge and cultural understandings to make sense of texts. A child’s cultural experiences, for example, what type of texts are available at home? Is English the learner’s second, third or fourth language? These questions play a significant role in relation to which ones are valued in the school context.

- ✓ literacy practices include everyday texts and multimodal texts: from this we glean that children live and operate in a world where language is not the only form of communication but images, graphics, sound and nonlinear nature of texts are also very significant.”

4.6 The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky

Les Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Russian psychologist whose main aim was to bridge the gap between the social and psychological human aspects of behaviour. He worked in the 1920's and 1930's. He was concerned with the social origins of thought. By this we mean that Vygotsky investigated how children's 'internal' thinking develops out of their social interactions with other people. Thus, it is of great significance to this study for the intention of the researcher is to investigate if and how the social and the cultural factors that learners are influenced by, have a bearing or not on literacy learning at schools.

Tiemensma (2007) explains that Vygotsky argued that children are social beings who develop and learn through their interactions with teachers and parents. The social milieu in which learners acquire literacy will influence their development. The main implications of Vygotskian theory for teaching is that learners need opportunities to learn with the teacher and skilled peers.

Vygotsky's theory is relevant for it underlines the assumption in this thesis that the role of the teacher is of vital importance in the literacy development of the Foundation Phase Grade 3 learner, for example, how the teacher guides, shapes and facilitates literacy learning in the classroom. Vygotsky asserted that the social and cultural context strongly influenced how children learn.

As an educator teaching very young learners, I agree with aspects of the socio-cultural theory, which advocates that children learn through their relationships with other people, particularly in the dialogue between each child and a more knowledgeable person. From Lawrence (2011) we are made aware that Vygotsky emphasised the importance of family, social interaction, adults and more capable peers, and that learning occurs first on the social level and then on an individual level. There are three major concepts constituting the socio-cultural theory and they are as follows:

- the zone of proximal development: This is the distance between what a child can do independently (actual level) and what the child can do with assistance (potential level). This is called the zone of proximal development. This influences children's learning when they encounter a problem to solve.
- Scaffolding: this is a support system between adults and children as they move along the learning continuum. In scaffolding, parents and teachers will be used as support mechanisms for learners; so that learners may accomplish more difficult tasks that they would not be able to do without collaboration.
- The role of the adult can guide children's learning in many areas. Vygotsky viewed supportive learning as a socially mediated process that adults and more mature peers provide as children try new tasks (Perez, 2004, p.24).

Vygotsky (1978) describes the skill of scaffolding in the following metaphor unpacking the two developmental levels: the first or actual developmental level indicates a child's level of mental functioning on an independent task; the second level measures a child's accomplishments with the assistance of others. The zone of proximal development, argued Vygotsky, was the difference between a child's independent and potential levels of functioning, the latter being triggered through scaffolding.

In this twenty-first century classroom, scaffolding is a must for learners will be encouraged to question language and to respond critically to various texts to foster a conducive learning environment as they are assisted through a wide range of literacy strategies. Gibson (in Rodger, 2004) offers us some types of scaffolding techniques and they are: offering explanations, inviting student participation, verifying and clarifying learner understanding, modelling desired behaviour and inviting learners to contribute clues.

According to Pappas (2008) in Flood, Heath, and Lapp (2008) the difference between Vygotsky and neo-Vygotskians is that Vygotsky's theory viewed supportive learning as a socially mediated process wherein adults and more mature peers provide the strategies as learners try new tasks involving language. Neo-Vygotskians have a more practical application in that learners are seen as active meaning makers and knowers, so that learning is accomplished through collaborative interaction as teachers share their expertise to guide and assist learners to construct their own understanding.

Neo-Vygotskians differ from Vygotsky, in that they take his notion of learning and teaching further by suggesting strategies such as scaffolding and apprenticeship to support Vygotsky's learning and teaching theory. Neo-Vygotskians such as Wells (1999) and Wells and Chang (1992) with their socio-constructivist/socio-cultural perspectives and views, advise that teachers and learners work together so that knowledge can be seen as the joint construction of meaning.

We glean from research that each new researcher uses a different metaphor to suggest that teachers provide temporary support to enable a learner to work in ways that are a step beyond what the learner could do independently. For example, Vygotsky (1978) refers to this to as the 'zone of proximal development'; Halliday (1975) speaks of it as 'tracking'; Bruner (1978) describes the teacher's role as 'scaffolding' and Clay (1985) speaks of the importance of sensitive observation accompanying each stage of teaching.

Vygotsky's legacy can be of great value in suggesting directions in which to proceed in the development of literacy teaching. Lee and Smagorinsky (2000, p.18). present some important implications for the way in which we should think about literacy:

- The classroom must be seen as a collaborative community whereby there is a collection of individuals that work towards shared goals through collaboration;
- The activities must be situated and unique because it will involve the coming together of individuals in a particular setting, all of them will have their own histories, which in turn will affect the way in which the activity is played out;
- The curriculum is a means, not an end. By this it is meant that that the curriculum should not be thought of as the ultimate goal of education. Instead, the specified knowledge and skills that make up the prescribed curriculum should be seen as items in the cultural tool kit as a means of carrying out activities of personal and social significance; and
- The outcomes of the activities are both aimed for and emergent. This means that the outcomes are not prescribed in advance, however, it depends on emergent properties of the situation and resources available for finding solutions.

Vygotskian theory has its significance to education for it calls for an approach to learning and teaching in literacy that is both exploratory and collaborative. It also calls for a reconceptualization of the curriculum which will cater for activities that will challenge learners to go beyond themselves towards goals that have personal significance for them. Learners will have the opportunity to draw on multiple sources of assistance in achieving these goals and in mastering the means needed in this process.

Keeping in line with this thought, Lee and Smagorinsky (2000) contribute to the meaning of semiotic mediation in the Vygotskian theory. It is the dialectic dialogue or the give – and-take or an interaction amongst the individuals in specific, cultural, social and historical contexts where the young will learn their skills, values and knowledge of the community. Through social and language interactions, older and more experienced members of the community will teach the younger or less experienced members the skills, values and the knowledge needed to be productive members of that community.

Therefore, the main focus would be to promote skills and support so that “what the child can do in co-operation today he can do alone tomorrow.”(Lee and Smagorinsky, 2000, p.20). We sum up Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory by stating that it views literacy acquisition as a socially mediated process whereby an adult/teacher or a more knowledgeable peer provides the required assistance that a learner/peer needs in order to complete a new task or to construct new knowledge. In the Foundation Phase Grade 3 classroom this would mean that educators would have to provide ample opportunities to the learners to ask questions, share their knowledge through oral discussions, their drawings, their own interpretations of stories, poems and dramatizations of work that was started by the educator.

We have learnt from this theory that the learner’s mental abilities are important and that they must be extended fully in the classroom. Learning actually begins outside of school and is a continuous cycle. Learners must not be restricted by their age levels and by the development of other pupils in their class. It becomes important that the teachers take note of individual learner’s potential. In the Vygotskian theory, collaboration is seen as an asset in the learning process rather than a liability.

By adopting Vygotsky's principles in literacy teaching in our failing system of education, firstly, one will give voice to the voiceless, by building their self-esteem and confidence. Secondly, as Gee (1989) very aptly explains it will help learners to bridge societal gaps to be able to communicate effectively in society.

From my readings of this theory, my understanding of literacy has broadened to include the ability of learners to exploit the resources around people in order to make them understandable. All aspects of literacy must equip learners with the necessary skills that would enable them to cope with the challenges of the 21st century. Thus, for one to be literate, one must exploit all possible means to complete the given task. Once the learner can use these techniques all the time, this reflects literacy.

4.7 Literacy within a social practices perspective

We understand fully that definitions of literacy cannot ignore the social and cultural contexts of individuals. Currently in schools, the focus is on skill development of literacy such as encoding and decoding texts. In contrast Dixon (2007, p.ii) argues that literacy be seen from a socio-cultural perspective which seeks "to understand how children interpret who they are in relation to others, and how they have learned to process, interpret and encode their world."

To explain even further some of the assumptions of this theory, we touch on some of the following issues that are important to keep in mind as part of conducting this study. Social Constructivists believe that the reading and writing behaviours of very young children are reflective of their culture and has a specific purpose for them. For example, they may write about things that are of interest to them and from their own experience, such as popular fashion, cars and so on, depending on the age and gender of the learner. Their research also indicates that the sense-making process that young children engage in is not qualitatively different from those engaged in by older children and adults.

According to Gee (2000) and Barton and Hamilton (1998) within this socio-cultural perspective, the role of the teacher is of paramount importance. It is the teacher's beliefs and values that will affect her/his performance in the classroom because the teacher's assumptions will inevitably affect both the content and pedagogy of the curriculum, for example, how the teacher shapes gender-racial identities. Thus, within this perspective,

literacy is just not seen as the act of reading, writing and thinking, but as constructing meaning from the printed text within a socio-cultural context.

Lawrence (2011) explains that similarly, a critical perspective of early literacy builds upon many of the same assumptions as the socio-constructivist theory, such as the emphasis on the learning that recognises that children come from different cultural backgrounds so they bring different primary home-based discourses to school with them. By this we mean that children's primary discourses consist of not only their language, but their behaviours, values, beliefs and their culture and these serve to identify them with particular social groups.

I concur with Lawrence (2011) that early and recent literacy learning ignores the social practices of learners in their care. Often the home language of many of the learners is neglected as these learners have moved from their township or farms in pursuit of a better education.

The socio-cultural practices of these learners are not being acknowledged and valued sufficiently because many of the teachers are not equipped to teach learners in their home language. Perez (2004, p.12) explains very aptly that in this theory, "literacy is an interactive process where talk, verbal, oral and communicative competence play a significant role in defining and negotiating meaning, as readers and writers transact with the text in a socio-cultural environment."

The implications for the teacher are that in the Foundation Phase Grade 3 classroom, the teacher must allow for sufficient learning opportunities where learners are allowed to share their knowledge with each other during the oral lessons, through drawing, dramatizations, play activities, story telling and so on, as they interact with their peers, and in this way, they construct knowledge and develop their literacy dispositions and identities.

Therefore, if one is teaching young children, it becomes necessary for the teacher to expose them constantly to stimulating reading material and literature so that they may relate to it as they construct knowledge and make meaning of the activity. It becomes the task of the teacher to provide literacy experiences that would encourage and promote literacy as a situated social practice which is aimed at developing the literacy identity of the learners.

However, in a journal article by Kruizinga and Nathanson (2010), reference is made to a study that was conducted to evaluate how teachers understand and implement guided reading. Their study was carried out in three public schools in South Africa, in the grade 1 and grade 2 Foundation Phase classes. It is of vital importance that we make mention of this current study because Guided Reading is seen by the South African education system as a tool to improve literacy rates in schools.

Another important argument presented by Kajee (2011) offers us information about the literacy journey which includes home and family literacy practices and their congruence with schooled literacy. As educators we are aware that schools are important sites of social, cultural and ideological reproduction and one of their major tasks is to teach learners to be literate. Yet, Blackledge (2000) rightfully questions: how do we define literacy, and is it the same for everyone regardless of their social and economic status and diversity? Is literacy learned only in schools or in homes and communities as well? What role does literacy play where there are unequal relations of power among different groups?

In response to this argument, Gregory and Volk (2004) state that in multicultural multilingual societies there are diverse literacies which have different meanings for different groups of people. Rightfully so, we have observed that today's learners engage simultaneously with the traditions of several communities, for example, at school a learner learns to speak, read and write different languages such as English or Afrikaans.

It may be that while these learners may not show schooled literacy in the dominant language of the school *per se*, (usually English), in their home and community settings, they may be able to demonstrate complex language and literacy patterns and behaviours as they weave their way through multifaceted literacy activities. But the problem here is that schools may not recognise these multi literacies and they may make the assumption that parents who are literate in the dominant language are learner's primary support in language and literacy and thus in such instances, the levels of congruence between the home and the school are very narrow.

Thus, it seems that critical decisions are made which may limit some children's opportunities for learning. In addition to this, research has shown that a child's social class has a strong influence on the way teachers talk to and respond to children's reading and writing, how

groups are set up in the classroom, the volume of literacy opportunities offered, the difficulty and interest levels of reading material provided and so on. So how do we respond to these issues and anomalies as literacy teachers?

Matope (2012, pp.23-24) in her thesis talks about the relationship between individuals, the social context to which they are exposed and their achievement. She explains that “there is little doubt that social classes that have access to greater finances and cultural forms that facilitate learning would enjoy considerable advantage in navigating the education system through a combination of knowledge, resources, strategies and networks”.

Appadurai (2004) concurs with this researcher for he has observed that all learners aspire in similar and even ways, where working class learner’s desire for things in the same way as more affluent and powerful groups, however, their capacity to aspire is crucially shaped by social, cultural and economic experiences and it is these are not evenly distributed or accessible. The social context of an individual operates through the ways in which families and communities set standards for themselves and their children, their personal histories, the opportunities that are available to them, their role models and so on.

One response would be simply to suggest societal change to remove social injustice and inequality for we are faced with the realization that if learners who are not socialized into the discourse practices of the school are to succeed, they must eventually be socialized into them if they are to acquire the literacy practices that will ultimately empower them. To solve this dilemma, we as literacy teachers need to be less concerned with methods, schemes, administration and paperwork and permit and encourage interactions and relationships in our classrooms. We must also constantly reflect upon the discourses we promote in the classroom and the extent to which learners are empowered or disempowered by the discourses we privilege.

I am in agreement with Cairney (1995) who states that if we allow interactions amongst learners this will make a big difference to the literacy development of our learners. This would include for example, the way we organize our classroom physically (grouping arrangements, provision of workspaces), the way we control interactions (we insist that learners raise their hands before they answer a question, allow or do not allow movement of learners in the class), the role we play in the classroom (are we participants, learners or directors) and so on, all of

which will make a difference to the learning that occurs in the classroom. Issues such as these are just as important as teaching methods and curriculum planning.

We can examine our own lives to see how reading and writing are part of our culture. It emerges as a natural part of our lives. As we go about the business of our day, we jot down friend's phone numbers, addresses and birthdays. We send messages, apologies and requests. We make statements, maintain relationships, make demands and try to persuade people. When we read, we also do this as an extension of our daily lives.

We read certain types of books to impress others, we use the books to open conversations with others, and we read certain books or literature as an extension of our relationships with others. Thus reading and writing will always be viewed as social and inseparable from the contexts of which it is a part. This is so because any act of reading or writing is a response to other acts – an 'ongoing dialogue' as people act and react to each other (Cairney, 1995).

4.8 Bourdieu's social practice

Pierre Bourdieu was a sociologist who assumed that all social practices are political, enacting contested positions of power. Bourdieu (1991) refers to the relationship that exists between the type of cultural capital (that is, the experiences and ways of doing and thinking about things) which the school should build upon that a learner brings to school and the way in which the curriculum could build on this cultural capital. For example, if some of the learners' parents are farmers, explore this area of expertise and knowledge that it brings, in the lessons. Thus, in this way, the teacher will acknowledge the socio-cultural context of the learners and affirm their literacy identities (Bourdieu in Albright & Luke, 2008).

According to Albright and Luke (2008, p.41) it is for this reason that "the interconnections between language and literacy as social meaning systems emphasise that literacy is never value free." Bourdieu's (1991) theory of social practice highlights the significance of language in constructing power relations. In other words, this means that it will emphasise whose language and experiences are being acknowledged and whose are being ignored in the classroom.

I make use of Bourdieu's *Social Practice Theory* in this study, because this theory explores the many ways in which social structures influence actors and practices, such as the learners and

the school system. One may ask this question: so how does the school system influence the Grade 3's literacy levels?

According to Lawrence (2011, p.52) Bourdieu's theory suggests that we "analyse literacy events with an eye to the ways in which historical and social forces have shaped a person's linguistic 'habitus' or disposition of the learner, such as the values that impinge upon that learner's actions in the moment." A social constructivist view of learning acknowledges a wider social cultural field, such as the cultural capital theory of Bourdieu (1991) of learning and pedagogy.

"We have learnt from Bourdieu's social and cultural power theory that the middle class are the advantaged groups who have more access to facilities than those who don't, such as the township schools versus the Private Schools. This explains how educational practices are reproduced, being dependent on the social and cultural power that is unequal. A person's social capital will be dependent on who they network with, their membership, who they are related to, how they are validated, legitimated, acknowledged and valued. Children do not necessarily develop literacy in the same ways (Bourdieu, 1991, p.26).

They bring with them their different histories of privilege and disadvantage, what Bourdieu refers to as economic, cultural, social symbolism and linguistic capital and they also bring their sets of dispositions (habitus, ways of doing things unconsciously). In other words Bourdieu sees social practice as the interaction between a habitus and situation/field. In other words, how to act/behave comfortably in a situation, how used to it you are, how vocal you are, your acceptable language patterns, social graces and so on, these all make a difference to how children are accessed and to what they learn (Bourdieu, 1991).

From my understanding, Bourdieu's (2004) concepts of field, habitus and capital offer us a framework and way of thinking about the relationship between economic and cultural issues in the lives of learners and the ways they think about achievement. His concepts also help affirm that an individual's life cannot be understood fully except in relation to the social context in which the action occurs. This theorist shows, for example, how economic capital and social class background enables certain practices and experiences that learners translate into dispositions and capacities (cultural capital) over time. This thus leads to various learners negotiating different social spaces in the school differently.

4.8.1 The contribution of Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu has written extensively about education and everyday life. His primary contribution to the field of education has been his critical engagement with the nature and dynamics of power relations in everyday social life and in the realm of education, where he has highlighted how privilege and inequity are reproduced within modern societies and how structural constraints and unequal access to institutional resources intersect with social class, race and gender constructs in society. Bourdieu employs three key concepts to explain this, namely field, habitus and capital (Bourdieu, 2004).

The concept of field, according to Bourdieu (as cited in Lingard and Christie, 2003. p322) is that of a “structured social space and force field that contains people who dominate and people that are dominated.” There are a variety of fields such as the home, school, classroom, playground and so on. Within these contained spaces, enduring relationships of inequality exist alongside daily attempts to challenge or transform such places. Using the example of school performance, Bourdieu applies the ‘game metaphor’ to outline how learners compete to achieve qualifications using their individual capitals – in a space where the school was a field that played an active refereeing role in controlling, regulating and distributing the various capitals on display.

But how does the school fulfil this function? According to Matope (2012) schools do so by framing and legitimizing the particular knowledge that is considered important for the reproduction and replication of a particular and dominant societal view, and often discriminates in favour of those who know how to play the game and win the prize, and exclude those that don’t know or who don’t follow the rules of the game.

A number of fields can be in operation at one time and that different actions take place within each of these fields of interactions – with continuing inequalities in relationships and with different struggles to control the resources available. Basically, each field has a historically, politically and socially defined context in which learners, their friends, their families and their communities behave in ways to respond to the power that maintains the structure of that field.

Bourdieu (1990b), p.75) notes that “habitus is a system that leads to certain practices or regular behaviour and to learners behaving in particular ways in given circumstances. Habitus establishes the behaviour of individuals in particular fields.” Bourdieu further

emphasises that learners brought up in different contexts and circumstances invariably adopt different habituses, preferences and expectations.

What this suggests, is that for learners that come from affluent homes and where there is, for example, access to computers, a variety of books, as well as other cultural activities and forms of technology, this will broaden the child's knowledge and the child will perform better at school than those who don't have such access. This implies that habitus depicts how dominant relations in society are reproduced via the habitus and the everyday practices of learners.

The habitus of an individual may change within a very short time period and alter learner achievement and their future lives. Horvat (2003) asserts that learner habitus is a by-product of family and individual history that connects learners to aspects of their social class background, the social context in which they grew up and the capital that they possess or have developed. Bourdieu (2004) agrees that the individual learner is perpetuated by the amount of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital such as individual possessions.

Capital classifies individuals in particular institutions to the extent that those with capital are fortunate to continue holding onto social advantages while those without capital are constrained and restricted from forms of progress and success. According to Bourdieu (2004) learners are propelled forward in their schooling by the kinds of privileges and capital that each of them has access to. Capital exists in four forms, namely as economic capital, cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital.

Economic capital refers to financial resources and assets. This is capital that is instantly exchangeable for money and privilege and is quite evident and visible. Many parents believe that investment of time and effort in education will result in the necessary increase of cultural capital and knowledge that should ultimately give their children (learners) economic power (Bourdieu, 1986). To my understanding from readings, cultural capital is the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition and skills that are passed from one generation to the next. Marjoribanks (2002, p.47) adds further that "cultural capital is also what learners acquire via discussions between themselves, their parents and members of the community on cultural, political and social matters as well as from the books they read."

Cultural capital is also the vehicle by which background inequalities are translated into differential academic rewards. Katsillis and Rubinson (1990, p.270) describe this process in the following way: “the higher the social class of the family the closer the culture it cultivates and transmits it to the dominant culture and the greater the attendant academic reward.”

It is stated by Matope (2012) that learners from affluent homes are often more likely to be exposed to tastes, habits and mannerisms that stir up intellectual growth, and thus later yield good educational credentials. Thus, the cultural experiences in the home influence the ways in which learner adjust to school and how they transform cultural resources into cultural capital.

Social capital is linked to social networks and relationships and it provides value to individuals by producing critical networks that allow them to develop and progress. According to Bourdieu (1997) individuals are given access to information that enables them to act in knowledgeable and rational ways and by adhering to a set of norms of approved behaviour, learners are socially controlled to follow particular social conventions.

Ainsworth (2002, p.27) provides us with an example of social capital: “a neighbourhood where most adults have steady jobs, foster good behaviours and attitudes and the environment is conducive to learning, here children will be more likely to value education and adhere to school norms as well as work hard because that is what they see modelled for them by neighbourhood adults. Conversely, in impoverished neighbourhoods children are sometimes disadvantaged because the social interaction among neighbours tends to be confined to a limited set of skills, habits and styles that may not lead these individuals to positive social outcomes.”

In addition to the above capitals noted by Bourdieu, two further capitals can assist us to understand learner understandings of their life-worlds, that being emotional capital and familial capital. According to Matope (2012, p.19) emotional capital is made up of the knowledge, contacts and relations as well as the access to emotionally valued skills and assets that are available within social and family networks. It serves as a resource that allows individuals, families and institutions to be more effective in achieving common objectives. Familial capital is the cultural knowledge nurtured among families.

This form of cultural wealth includes a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include immediate family members as well as aunts, uncles, grandparents and friends. “The isolation of individuals is minimized when families become connected with each other around common issues and when they realise that they are not alone in dealing with a challenge or a problem” (Matope, p.20).

Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus and capital would provide one way of understanding learners, their social context, attitudes and learning patterns, family background and so on. Taking all of the above information into consideration, the data of this research will reveal the kind of social capital each Foundation Phase Grade 3 literacy educator is developing in the acquisition of literacy and in the development of each learner in the classroom.

4.9 Summary

In this chapter relevant concepts were discussed in detail for they address possible factors that affect the acquisition and development of literacy. Literacy within a social practices perspective was also outlined.

The traditional meaning of literacy is far too limiting for its emphasis is on skills development which is often taught in a very decontextualised way. This has very little relevance to the real life world of a child and to their own experiences. Little attention is paid to the socio-cultural experiences of the learners. It is for this reason that this thesis brings to the fore the new theories of learning which underpin teaching. These are the New Literacy Studies and the New London Group approaches.

The theorists Vygotsky and Bourdieu have also been mentioned for they have as their common thread in literacy the importance of the acknowledgement of the socio-cultural practices of the learner. Their views on literacy overlap in that a reconceptualization of literacy does now warrant a skills-based approach augmented by a more balanced socio-cultural approach that embraces other forms of representation, such as visual images and gestures, as well as new forms of literacy - multimodal, rather than just focusing on print.

The New Literacy Studies highlight the importance of the context of the learner and community. In contrast the New London Group reminds us of the need to remember that in preparing our learners, we should redefine literacy as multiliteracies. This chapter has also

focused on Vygotsky's socio-cultural and constructivist theory, which emphasises the significant role of the adult (the educator) during the construction of knowledge and learning.

This chapter also reviewed Bourdieu's theory of social practice, which highlights the need to examine the social relations within which literacy practice occurs and to be aware of how power relations are reproduced during literacy instruction. These lenses will be used to investigate the literacy practices of the three grade three educators in a grade classroom. This thesis makes use of these theories with the hope that it will also offer productive and innovative ways of thinking about the role of educators in promoting effective literacy practices.

CHAPTER FIVE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“Ultimately acquiring and using literacy is the key to and currency of education”

(Joseph, 2007)

5.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the literacy practices of three grade three educators in a peri-urban school. As supportive of the main intention of this thesis, the following issues will be discussed as they give insight and understanding to the phenomenon of this study: how these educators implement the literacy policy, how reading, writing and oral lessons are taught and how learners acquire and develop skills in literacy.

The study will also focus on implementing reading, writing and oral strategies to motivate literacy acquisition. In doing so, this research study will provide an understanding of the contextual, social and academic factors that may influence learners’ literacy development at the sample school.

This chapter discusses the type of paradigm, research methodology and methods that were used in this study. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in this thesis to gather, record and to analyse the data. The data collecting strategies that are appropriate for a mixed method design are explained as well as research designs used. A Case study design was used to unpack the factors that influence learner’s reading and writing skills in language literacy development in a single primary school.

The case study design is appropriate for this project, for the aim is to obtain rich descriptions of both the teacher’s and the child’s view on language literacy development of a small group of grade 3 learners, which will be supplemented by school records and learner samples of class work, and an exploration of teacher strategies which do or do not work for the children. It encompasses a longitudinal design whereby this study looks at the literacy language development of a group of children over a period of time.

The aim was also to explore in detail the approaches that Foundation Phase educators use to promote effective language literacy teaching. Understanding was acquired by observing,

analyzing and narrating participant's meaning of their literacy practices, beliefs, perceptions and behaviours. This aim is consistent with qualitative research which is concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participant perspectives (Babbie, 2004).

5.2 Research Objectives

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aims, the following objectives were addressed:

- To define the concept of literacy in the Foundation Phase;
- To describe the theories which underpin literacy teaching approaches;
- To describe recent approaches and practices in literacy development;
- To investigate the approaches and practices of the three grade three educators in the sample school; and
- To recommend and to describe what can be done to promote effective literacy development.

5.3 Research paradigm: Interpretative paradigm

In this study interpretative data is looked at in terms of human behaviour based on the participants that construct and understand it. According to Gray (2004), the methods of the natural sciences are not governed by law-like regularities but are mediated through the meaning of human agency. The researcher believes that the interpretative paradigm is more appropriate and effective in this study because it seeks an actual reality in a specific situation. This approach allows the focus of the researcher to be on understanding what is happening in a given context.

The interpretative paradigm advocates that the world should be studied in its natural state, rather than in controlled laboratory-type experiments and with minimum intervention by a researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). By using this paradigm the researcher allows the interviewees the freedom to express their views on the question without the intervention of the researcher. These researchers share the view that the interpretative paradigm involves wanting to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied and how individuals experience daily life. In this study, the researcher uses this paradigm to understand the social world from the point of view of the child living in it, with the intention of making sense of how children understand their experiences and how this affects the way they feel towards others.

This research paradigm was relevant to my study which investigated the learning experiences of learners and the perceptions and teaching methods of educators on literacy development. The interpretative paradigm enabled the researcher to share the feelings and the interpretations of the people she studied and to see things through their eyes. The next section explores the research design used in this study.

5.4 Case Study Design

The choice to use a Case Study was one of the early decisions made when planning this research. When considering my contemporaries involved in educational research, it did appear as if case study was the most popular choice. I will admit that this research method does appear logistically and financially more 'do-able' for individuals, I am referring to fulltime educators with social and family commitments who are students as well. The case which is investigated is often the school in which we work or one which is more easily accessible to us as part of our work life. However, the reasons for this are not merely out of convenience at the expense of valuable educational research.

In this research project, the case is a primary school. However, within this school, it is the grade three English literacy programme, the surrounding community and the education system that widely constitute the context of the case. In other words, happenings, challenges and changes within this school, the surrounding community and the education system will have a direct bearing on the case that is studied. The focus within this case is the practices of grade three literacy educators.

Some reasons for the choice of the popularity of case study are because of the unique position of the aforementioned individuals that is, that we are often insiders in the institutions and organisations which are chosen as cases. I would argue that we see institutions and the groups or individuals holistically and our research is an attempt to understand and report on the dynamism and interconnectedness of the particular case in its neutral setting, in a way that produces better educational research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.72) agree to this and they state that:

...contexts are unique and dynamic, hence case studies investigate and report the real-life complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance.

5.4.1 Definitions of Case Study Research

From some of my readings of Case Study research, I would define this broadly as a process of conducting systematic, critical inquiry into a specific phenomenon of the researcher's choice to generate data to contribute to the wide knowledge of the specific topic. Simons (2009, p.19) states that in a case study, the data are often unstructured, the analysis qualitative and the aim is to understand the case itself rather than to generalize findings to a whole population.

However, Stake (1995) argues that a case study should not be seen as synonymous with qualitative methods because it is a common misunderstanding. Qualitative methods do not define case study research. But rather, what defines it is the singularity of the phenomenon being studied. Merriam (1988, p.16) agrees adding that "case studies are particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources."

Simons (2009, p.21) offers a very detailed and apt definition of case study research: "it is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life context.' It is research-based, includes a variety of different methods and it is evidence-led. Its primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic, generate knowledge and to inform policy development, professional practice or community action." One can distinguish between three types of case study namely: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. In this research the type of case study is intrinsic where the case is being studied for intrinsic interest in the case itself.

A single case study will be used in this research due to the following reasons: it can be studied in great depth, the researcher has easy access to the case, and the researcher has experience of the case as a participant and thus has 'insider knowledge.' However, the researcher will consider some of the limitations of single-case research as offered by Rule and John (2011, p.21) and they are: the findings of this study cannot necessarily be generalised to other cases, there will be no comparative dimension within this study and the researcher must be wary for the bias of the researcher might restrict or distort the findings in unhelpful ways especially if the researcher has insider knowledge of, and prior assumptions about the case.

These are my reasons for choosing a case study design for this research project. I agree with Creswell (2007) who explains that a case study provides a comprehensive examination of a single example and delivers a unique illustration of real people in real situations. It involves the study of an issue, through one or more cases in a bounded system, with the goal of developing as full an understanding of each case as possible. Some strengths of case studies are that they can report on complex dynamics and also provide an in-depth description on a range of diverse schooling contexts, such as on the literacy practices in the grade 3 classes of the sample school.

According to Bassey (1999) case studies are based on the recognition of the embedded state and complexity of social truths. They do not give indications of causality when considering teaching and learning practices but they can provide rich descriptions of the dimensions and dynamics of classroom learning. This case was considered useful for it aimed at providing detailed illustration, insight, discovery and interpretation of teacher's teaching practices for literacy and the schooling contexts in which these practices took place, a goal of this research. It helps to provide a wealth of details in the way teachers teach and how learners learn literacy, a nuanced view of literacy teaching practices in their unique contexts.

From my reading by Merriam (1998) I have learnt that a case study does not have any particular methods of data collection therefore any methods of gathering data may be employed to address the research questions posed. Indeed, case-based research leads to detailed data about the phenomenon being studied, no matter what particular research methods have been used. Thus, given the range of data collection methods that could have been employed, Charmaz's (2006, p.15) caveat that "how you collect data affects *which* phenomena you will *see*, *how*, *where*, and *when* you will view them, and *what* sense you will make of them" was borne in mind during my selection of the actual data collection methods.

Yin (2009, p.1) offers guidelines of the simple steps that must be followed in case study research. This is shown in the diagram below. The researcher aimed to follow this process to conduct the single case study to investigate a research issue.

**Doing Case Study Research:
A linear but iterative process**

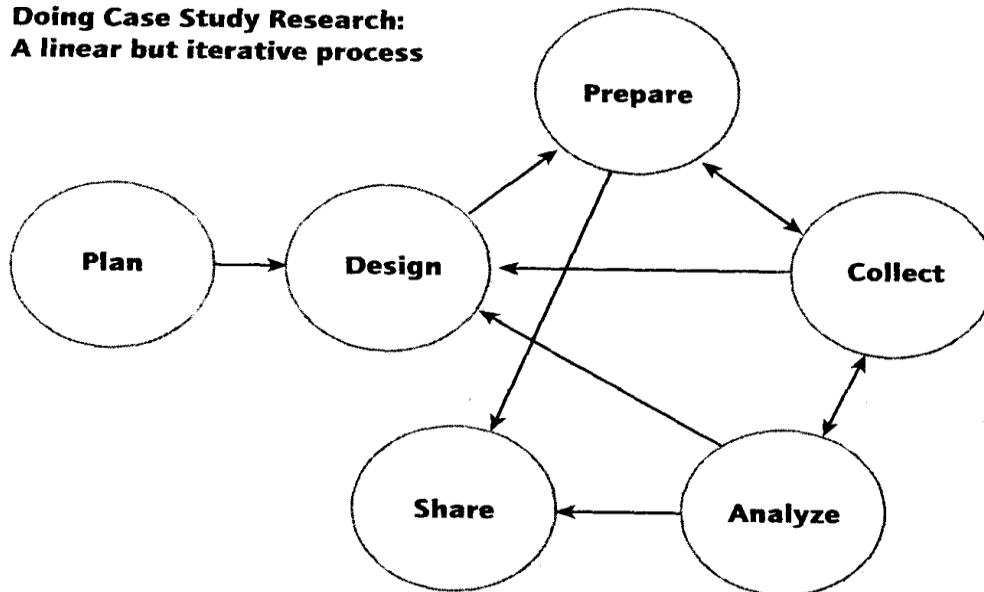


Figure 5.1 (Yin, 2009, p.1)

5.4.2 My reasons for choosing case study research

My choice was based on some of the following strengths of case study research design:

- ✓ It allowed me to document multiple perspectives, explore contested viewpoints of the participants and to explain how and why things have happened at the case study school;
- ✓ Through this research design I was able to explore and understand the process and dynamics of change, through closely describing, documenting and interpreting events as they had unfolded in the ‘real life’ setting;
- ✓ I chose this method because case study is flexible, that is, neither time-dependent nor constrained by a method. It was conducted over a year and was written up in different forms and lengths appropriate to the timescale; and
- ✓ It allowed me to engage all participants in the research process. I did not dominate the research process and all information was co-constructed through an understanding relationship between the participants and myself.

This research project is a descriptive case study (case study as word picture) for it aims to seek a rich, thick description of a phenomenon. Rule and John (2011, p.117) present a table below outlining three case study forms. They are not exclusive but often include elements of each other. The focus in my research project is not the unfolding of a story of the case but its various elements and how they relate to one another within the case as a ‘bounded system.’

For example, I explained the case using the table below. I examined the participants, policies, activities and structures of the organization as particular aspects of the case. I then described each of these elements and how they had shaped each other within the organization and how they related to the external environment. This case is also synchronic in the sense that it focussed on the case at a particular point in time rather than how it came to be that way.

Table 5.1 Outline of the three Case Study forms (Rule and John, 2011, p.11)

Case study as story	Case study as word picture	Case study as argument
narrative diachronic chronological events, periods, critical moments	descriptive synchronic thematic institutions, situations, person	discursive linear-analytical propositional / evidential application of theory to/ from case
What happened? Where and when did it happen? Who was involved? How did it happen? What changed? What did it mean?	What are the key elements? How do these elements relate within the system? What are the relations between system and context?	Why did it happen? How does it generate / exemplify / modify / theory ?

5.4.3 Limitations of case study research

It is important as a researcher to acknowledge some potential limitations that case study research presents:

- ✓ The subjectivity of the researcher maybe a concern for too much personal involvement in the research process can be a problem. There could be concerns about possible bias and of my being in a position of some influence as a researcher and an educator at the sample school.
- ✓ While the reports we write cannot capture the reality as lived, there is much we can do to highlight the timing of the study and the partial nature of interpretations so the readers can exercise their own judgements.
- ✓ The usefulness of the findings for policy determination is partly dependent upon the acceptance of the different ways in which validity is established and the findings are communicated in case study research.
- ✓ It is very important to mention that in case study research formal generalization for policy-making is not the aim. But the aim is to present a rich portrayal of a single setting to inform practice, establish the value of the case and to add to the knowledge of a specific topic.

In addition to the above-mentioned limitations, this study investigated the role of the Foundation Phase Grade 3 teachers in prompting literacy teaching. This is a broad topic to be researched and there is a great deal of debate around the literacy issue. To make it more manageable, I have focused only on those areas which were fundamental to the matter being investigated.

I made use of a small sample approach. This study was limited to one school only which comprised a small sample of grade 3 educators, parents and learners. This study focused on one phenomenon and that was to understand in depth, regardless of the number of persons or sites in the study. For this reason, the data collected is not generalizable in any way and is of limited predictive value.

However, McMillan and Schumacher (2002) explain that in qualitative research the aim is to extend the findings rather than to generalize the results. Descriptions allow others to understand similar situations and extend these understandings in subsequent research.

However, the findings do suggest patterns that occurred during the Foundation Phase teachers' literacy approaches that are similar and that also display some differences. Both were encountered in this small sample.

The question of the generalisability of findings emanating from case study research is the subject of ongoing debate. It must be noted that some writers have claimed that case study of a single case, is limited because its findings cannot be generalised to other cases. One writer expresses the view that 'the case study method is the logically weakest method of knowing' (Smith, cited by Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p.183). In my opinion the low status attributed to case study as read above, stems from the view that a case study of an individual case cannot make valid claims about patterns and the frequency of such patterns beyond the case.

But one can argue that this is not the purpose of a case study. If a researcher is interested in such purposes then a different research approach should be used. Case study research is fit for purposes of generating in-depth, holistic and situated understandings of a phenomenon and to my understanding it serves this sole purpose in this research project. Bassey (1999), Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) strengthen this argument in favour of case study research by adding that case studies have been used widely and most effectively and in South Africa, a study on post graduate educational research found that case study is now the most popular research approach (Rule, Balfour & Davey, 2011).

Each method used to collect the data acted to inform the implementation or analysis of the other methods. This is outlined in detail in the spider diagram below. As seen clearly, each method led to the convergence of evidence for the overall single case. All these methods will ultimately assist me to answer the research question and its sub-questions.

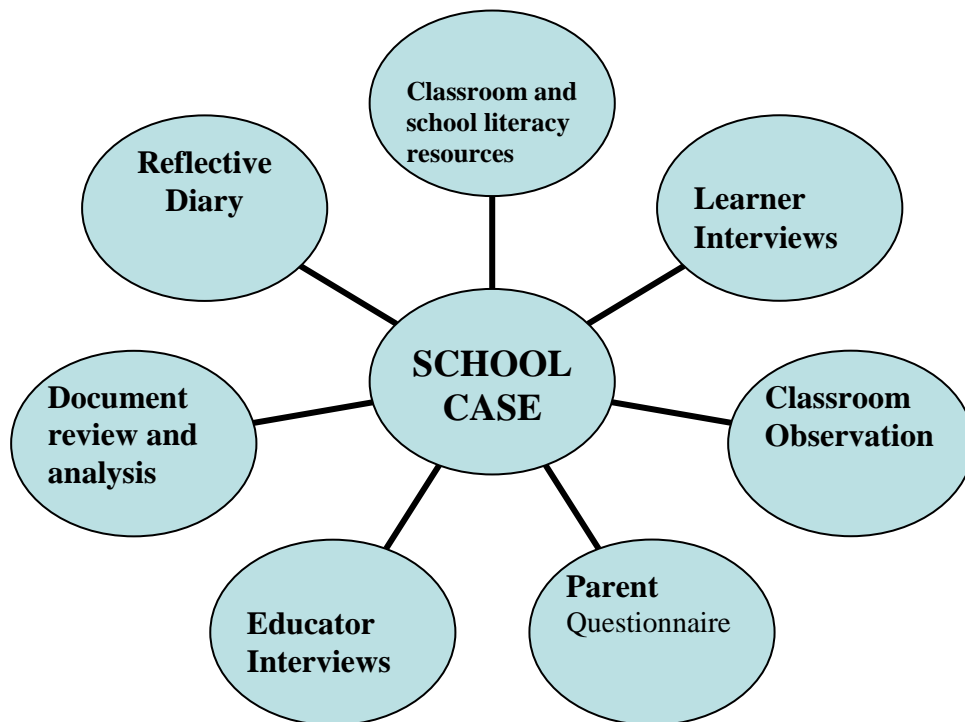


Figure 5.2: Case study data collection methods

5.5 Literature Study

I used both primary and secondary sources to provide a background to the empirical investigation. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2005, p.315) “primary sources are regarded as original written material of the author’s own observations and experiences.” In this study I also made use of journal articles, books and research reports. The secondary sources which were used are reviewed articles, reports, newspaper articles and the internet.

5.6 A Cognitive approach

This thesis uses the cognitive approach. Cognition means thinking and therefore cognitive theories are about the ways in which children come to think about, know about and understand the world around them. Theorists within this approach regard the child as an active participant in constructing knowledge. The two main cognitive theorists were Bourdieu and Vygotsky. The work of Lev Vygotsky has been discussed in detail in this study. Greig, Taylor and MacKay (2007, p.31) sum up the implications of using the cognitive approach in research as follows:

- ✓ “children think differently from adults and there are qualitative differences in the way children of different ages understand the world around them.
- ✓ the child’s learning, understanding and thinking is influenced by environmental conditions, social relationships and cultural conventions.
- ✓ the focus should be on supporting children’s potential at the point of development rather than on task performance.”

Researchers can view children’s behaviour from as many angles as possible when doing research. A researcher may draw upon a wide range of theories and methods. One such approach that I adopted in this study is called constructivism. By using this approach the child is perceived as a social, relational and dynamic being, who interacts and constructs joint meanings with others within a given context.

Greig *et al.*, (2007) further explain that constructivists find it inappropriate to seek samples, control, to isolate variables and to generalise to a larger population of people. Instead, the constructivist researcher will make an effort to understand how the worlds of children operate, by somehow entering those worlds, and by describing and analysing the social phenomena found there. This is just what was intended to occur in this research project and because constructivists believe that actions, intentions and meanings in research cannot be conveyed in an analogous way with numbers, this research adopts a more qualitative handling of data.

5.7 Research Methods

Various research methods are employed for the purpose of this study, including qualitative and quantitative methods, therefore my claim is that a mixed method approach is followed in this study. The researcher aims to gain an holistic understanding of a case, therefore collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data is required.

5.7.1 Mixed Method Design

According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009, p.7) mixed methods have been defined as a ‘type of research design in which qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in types of questions, research methods, data collection and analysis procedures. It can also be defined as research in which the researcher collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and

draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or programme of inquiry.’

A mixed method design was used for this research project. One method alone will not provide a complete answer to the research questions. This research will be a qualitatively driven project, with a qualitative foundation, and a quantitative sequential element. The qualitative foundation will focus on understanding the factors that influence language literacy development amongst the learners. Whilst the quantitative element will be a sample implemented to measure the test results of a control group and an experimental group, in an attempt to prove that the effective use of language literacy learning materials can lead to an improvement in literacy test results. In this research, I went back and forth seamlessly between statistical and thematic data analytic techniques.

Quantitative findings added to the qualitative foundation in this research and help to triangulate data by providing a statistical explanation of the many factors that may affect a learner’s performance in language literacy in a primary school. According to Richards and Morse (2002) a mixed method design will help better understand the needs of the target population. Using a qualitative driven approach with a quantitative sequential element will also provide rich and thick descriptions and confirmatory data so that the research questions of this study can be answered completely.

This research design departs from the understanding that both qualitative and quantitative research can complement each other. The goal of using a mixed method for this research is to add breadth and scope to the study, as well as to contribute to the knowledge base via examination and attempts to understand different aspects of a complex phenomenon. For this research a mixed method design is particularly suitable as there are multiple facets of the research questions that need exploring.

5.7.2 Data collection strategies employed: Qualitative Methods

Locke (2007) defines qualitative research as a systematic, empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a particular social context. By this we mean that given any person, group or locus for interaction it is a means for describing and attempting to understand the observed regularities in what people do or what they report as their experience. For example, a nurse in a hospitals’ intensive care unit might be the focus for the study. It is the

participant's experience in that context that the researcher seeks to capture and to understand in this kind of qualitative investigation.

Adam (2010) explains that the term qualitative research implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured. A qualitative researcher stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They argue that qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It is multi method in focus, involving an interpretative naturalistic approach. This means that qualitative researchers study themes in their natural settings attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative research involves the study, use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that include case studies, personal experiences, life stories, interviews, observational methods, historical methods, interaction methods and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings of individual lives (Adam, 2010). On the other hand Denscombe (2003) states that qualitative research is an umbrella term that covers a variety of styles of social research drawing on a variety of disciplines. I am of the opinion that this research approach is concerned with the way people understand things, the patterns of behaviour exhibited by an individual or a group of people on how they do things and therefore this approach is best suited for this study.

The objectives of qualitative design are to explore areas where limited or no prior information exists and/or to describe themes, trends, attitudes or relations that are applicable to the analysed units. Some of the methods or techniques used to collect the data may include participant's observation and surveys, using open-ended questions in questionnaires or in an interview schedule (Adam, 2010). Mwanje (2002) as cited by Makubalo (2007) adds that qualitative method relies on a detailed and complex description of events or people. Such a thick description is necessary in order to convey the complexity of events of the situation and to provide the reader with enough detail to conclude for themselves whether the researcher's interpretations of the phenomenon are relevant and justifiable for the circumstances or not.

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) concur with the above researchers and further explain that qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language.

Observations are recorded in the researcher's language and the data is analysed by identifying and categorizing themes. Qualitative methods assist to carry investigation where other methods such as quantitative methods fail. The researcher identifies the following advantages of using this approach in this study:

- It produces in-depth and comprehensive information; and
- It uses subjective information and participant observation. The researcher's method of collecting data was the use of interviews as well which required a setting where the participants were able to speak freely about their methods and views about the topic.

According to Greig *et al.*, (2007) the qualitative approach is based on the scientific activity of induction. Induction allows the generation of new theories in which, theory emerges from the data themselves. I am of the opinion that this is consistent with the view that the child is subjective in nature and that his or her understanding or knowledge is subjective too, and it emerges as they interact with others. Hence, in a qualitative framework such as this research project, the theory will be grounded in data such as observations, interviews, written reports and so on, and their interpretations.

However, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2002) one of the major disadvantages of qualitative research is that the very subjectivity of the inquiry leads to difficulties in establishing the reliability and validity of the approaches and information for it follows no strict rules. The researcher at all times avoided a situation where leading suggestions for the respondents were given. In order to ensure validity and to avoid subjectivity the researcher remained non-judgemental throughout the study process and reported what was found in a balanced way, for qualitative research should be done artfully but it also demands a great amount of methodological knowledge and intellectual competence (McMillan & Schumacher, 2002).

In this study qualitative information was collected by data gathering tools which included the following:

- Observation recordings
- Questionnaires

- Interviews
- The keeping of a reflective diary or research journal and
- Other documents that were germane to this Literacy Research such as educator work plans for reading and writing tasks, project schedules, work samples of learner activities and lessons plans for language literacy.

5.7.2.1 Interviews

The initial data were collected by means of interviews. This is a common technique in field research and in most interventions. According to Cohen *et al.*, (2007) an interview is an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest for production of knowledge. The interviews were conducted with the purpose of providing contextual information and background to teachers' own literacy practices as well as to gain insight as to what literacy resources there are in the home and the ways in which parents assist their children in undertaking reading and writing tasks. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three grade three educators and the grade three learners.

From my reading of Simons (2009, p. 43-44) these are some of the purposes of interviewing. Firstly, "it is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind." A second is the active engagement and learning it can promote in identifying and analysing issues. Thirdly, it offers flexibility to change direction to pursue emergent issues, to probe a topic or to deepen a response. And lastly, it has the potential to uncover and represent unobserved feelings and events that cannot be observed. From personal experience in using case study research, it has enabled me to get to core issues in the research project more quickly and in more depth, to probe motivations, to ask follow up questions and to set up a suitable interview environment in which the respondents could tell their stories in a comfortable manner.

On the basis of my recognition of the many benefits of this method of data collection, semi-structured interviews were initiated with both the grade three educators and the learners in the sampled school. The three grade three educators were interviewed out of school during their weekend break. The interview schedules in Appendices (M and N) outline the lines on inquiry for these interviews.

In sum, the educator interviews focused on the educator's understandings of and goals for teaching literacy, viewpoints of the curriculum for the teaching of literacy, descriptions of typical lessons, opinions on what experiences have shaped their teaching strategies, their experiences in interacting with their learners in teaching literacy and ideas about which strategies are most useful.

The learner interviews focused on learner's experiences in the classroom during literacy teaching, the type of written and oral work that is being set as class work or homework, some difficulties that are being experienced during the learning of literacy and how much of assistance is being offered in the different aspects of literacy. In total 90 learners were interviewed.

The interviews were held after school hours at the sample school for both the educators and the learners at their convenience. The interview schedule questions for the educators (Appendix M) consisted of twenty-three questions. The interview schedule questions for the grade three learners (Appendix N) comprised eleven questions. As far as possible I noted in point form the participant's responses as accurately as I could. I also observed gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice and general body language.

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed as preparing the data for analysis required transcription of the audiotapes. However, I did get the impression that some of the participant's were afraid of being recorded due to them revealing information. For this reason, I took care to reassure the interviewees who had expressed nervousness.

There were some language issues that arose during the learner interviews. This school has a large percentage of learners whose second language is English. Most of these learners rely on their peers to do interpreting and translating of words and sentences in their writing and reading tasks. This posed as a huge challenge. I therefore enlisted the help of the Isi-Zulu educator teaching at this school to assist as interpreter for the full duration of the learner interviews. She also assisted me in translating the questions into Isi-Zulu to speed up this process and for her easy referral during the interviews. The table below highlights this information:

Table 5.2 Interview information

INTERVIEWS				
NO OF EDUCATORS	NO OF LEARNERS	VENUE OF SESSIONS	INFORMATION RECORDED	ASSISTANCE GAINED
	90	At the sample school after school hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• notes compiled• Interviews tape recorded	Isi-Zulu educator assisted as interpreter and translated all questions from English to IsiZulu.
3		At the sample school during the weekends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• notes compiled.• Interviews tape recorded.	

During the interviews the researcher followed these guidelines to ensure good thorough interviews were conducted: the nature and purpose of the interviews were explained, participants were informed of their ethical obligations, I adopted a conversational rather than an inquisitorial style to build rapport with the participants and I was respectful and sensitive to the emotional climate of the interview.

I had used interviews because they gave the respondents a chance to narrate their stories and this has the following advantages. These advantages have been identified by Cohen *et al.*, (2007, p.42):

- People are more easily engaged in an interview than in completing a questionnaire. Thus there are fewer problems in failing to respond.
- In an interview, the interviewer can clarify questions and probe the answers of the respondents, providing more complete information than that which would be available in written form.
- Interviewing enables the interviewer to pick up non-verbal interviews, including facial expressions, tones of voice and cues from the surroundings and the general context.

I used semi-structured interviews because of the flexibility involved. According to Patton (2002) it allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and to expand the interviewee's responses. The atmosphere enabled the researcher to clarify points and to raise fresh questions so as to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews do not offer a limited, pre-set range of answers from which a respondent must choose, but rather the interviewer must listen to how each individual responds to the question (Cohen *et al*, 2007). I was granted permission by the respondents to use a tape recorder so as not to miss out on any of the important information that was given by the respondents.

Through the semi-structured interviews I addressed the following study questions:

- How do educators teach literacy skills in the Foundation Phase in a Primary School?
- What school and home factors influence the development of learners in their literacy performance?
- What roles do parents play in the development of their children's literacy in the Foundation Phase?
- What roles do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's literacy at the Foundation Phase?

The interview questions were ranged from simple to complex so that the participants could closely follow the questions which were open-ended and transparent. I used probing questions to assist me to progress smoothly and to ask further questions as prompts to elicit

from the participant information which I may have overlooked. Probing allowed me to encourage co-operation, to establish rapport and as far as possible to make as accurate an assessment as possible of what the participants really believed.

Adam (2010, pp.62-63) quotes Bless and Higson-Smith (1995, p.24) who present some of the following advantages of semi-structured interviews:

- “They help to clarify concepts and problems and they allow for the establishment of a list of possible answers or solutions which, in turn, facilitates the construction of multiple-choice questions, the elimination of superfluous questions and reformulation of ambiguous ones.
- They allow for the discovery of new concepts of the problem by investigating in detail some explanations given by respondents. The researcher used semi-structured and structured interviews to allow respondents to tell their stories as much as possible.”
- As much as interviews allow the respondents to discuss issues, they do however, have some disadvantages as cited by Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.42)
- “It is difficult to record responses, particularly if the interviewer is also responsible for writing them down. Thus, the quality of the responses, that is, their reliability and validity is dependent on the interviewer.
- If the interviewers are not competent they may introduce many biases. Also, recording the comments of the respondents is a delicate matter because of the great variety of answers and their complexity.
- Moreover, interviews are time consuming and thus expensive.”

However, I was able partially to avoid the above disadvantages by using a tape recorder.

5.7.2.2 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are printed sets of questions to which participants respond on their own or in the presence of the researcher. They provide an efficient method of collecting data from a large number of people in a short space of time and they are dependent on the careful construction of a set of clear, unambiguous field questions. Such questions, as in this case study, were tested in a trial setting before the final questionnaire was sent off to the

participants. The questionnaire (Appendix O) consisted of two sections. Section A had eleven questions that dealt with the biographical data of the participants and Section B consisted of twelve questions that related directly to reading and writing tasks at school and the learner's performance in these aspects.

A questionnaire was administered to the parents of the grade three learners to examine parent's views about the school-implemented literacy curriculum, the amount of literacy resources at home, home-school supervision methods, the need for teacher-parent consultations and the general progress in literacy of the child. I had sent out 90 questionnaires and consent forms and 60 completed questionnaires were returned to school. Some parents had indicated that there was no need for them to fill in the questionnaire and therefore it had not been returned to the researcher. Others left the form blank.

The questionnaires were sent to the parents via the grade three learners and brought back to school by the learners. Purposive sampling or non-probability sampling was used because it entailed the deliberate selection of a particular section of the population to include in this study for the purpose of fulfilling a set criterion which was to answer the research questions. They were selected on the basis of their ability to purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon of this research project.

The questionnaire was first compiled in English only and piloted to ten parents of grade three learners prior to using it. These parents were chosen by me. However, I realised that some questions were not answered by these parents due to them not being able to read or write in English but they could do so in the IsiZulu language. Having considered this challenge, the second questionnaire administered was also translated in IsiZulu to assist them to answer the questionnaire independently at their own leisure.

With questionnaires, a process of numerical coding usually precedes data analysis. Each response on the questionnaire will be assigned a predetermined code number. However, this is simple to do with closed questions where the possible responses are known and limited. But in this research open-ended and closed questions were used thus, one can expect a wide range of responses.

Therefore, it became difficult for the researcher to code the responses numerically. In this project the researcher analysed the data in a more qualitative fashion by developing a set of named categories or themes to which the responses appear to belong. The data was then entered into various graphs according to the themes that emerged.

5.7.2.3 Lesson Observation

Observation played an important role in gaining insight into various situations in my research context. It covered events in real time and on the site of the literacy activities as well as in the context of events in non-structured environments. Non-participant observations assisted towards gaining understanding of the case and provided me with the opportunity to investigate teachers' practices *in situ* instead of just from second-hand accounts provided via the other data collection methods used in the study.

To my understanding these were some of the advantages of lesson observation:

- It allowed me to observe the lessons in an unobtrusive manner and to achieve first hand experience of happenings as they unfolded;
- It gave me a comprehensive perspective of the problem under investigation; and
- This method of data collection allowed me to study attitudes and behaviour patterns of the participants in a very natural setting.

As a result, this allowed me to see things that may otherwise have been missed and to explore areas of practice that educators may not have spoken about or reflected on in the interviews. This meant that the observational evidence was used to provide additional information (Yin, 2003) about educators teaching practices, and, was not used as the main source but rather as a supplementary source of information.

I observed the formal writing and the reading lessons daily for one week per month for each grade three class. The lesson topics were already planned out at the beginning of the year by the educators and they worked from a schedule and from their schemes of work for the terms in order to prepare these lessons. This observation was done for the above time frame for each grade three educator from the second to the fourth term. My role here was that of a non-participant observer, in that, I was present in the educators' classrooms and my role as

researcher was known to the educators and to their learners, but I did not actively participate in the social interactions and the teaching undertakings in the classes observed.

I undertook a preliminary trial run which lasted for one week, in which I observed the formal reading and writing lessons in one grade three class. This allowed me the opportunity to ascertain whether or not this data collection method was suitable for this research project. Thereafter I began with the structured observation lessons.

Specific foci for these observations were organised around four areas as outlined in the table below namely, the physical, human, inter-actional and programme settings in each class and the specific focus areas for each. This idea came from the reading of Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000, p.305). However, I adapted the table and used it as a guide during the lesson observations.

Table 5.3 Broad focal areas for classroom observation

SETTING	FOCAL AREAS FOR OBSERVATION
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for reading and the writing lessons in the classroom in which the observation took place such as books, worksheets, reading charts, reading cards and flash words and writing strips.
Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The characteristics and makeup of the learner cohort in the classroom in terms of gender, diversity and behaviour, attitudes to learning and social relationships.
Interactional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching interactions that took place, either formal or informal, verbal and non-verbal between the teacher and the learner. • The nature of questions asked and quality of responses given.
Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching resources and their allocation. • The events or sets of activities that took place and the sequence of these events or activities. • What the teacher was trying to achieve of stated and and non-stated goals.

5.7.2.3 a Conducting the classroom observation

In the classroom observation and the gathering of the data boils down to the actual observation and the taking of field notes, which should cover of everything the researcher sees and hears. I am of the opinion that field notes should be written up in well-formulated reports, at the first available opportunity. As suggested in the work of Silverman (2005), field notes made at the time of the observation were kept to systematise the process. The observation data in this study was then subjected to content and thematic analysis.

The researcher carefully observed the Grade 3 Foundation Phase educator's literacy lessons and made detailed and comprehensive notes on everything that was taking place during the literacy lessons. After the observation I also interviewed the teacher about the lesson. Moreover, each reading and writing passage used in the lessons, was collected for later comparison.

These passages and the questions were then compared in terms of complexity of ideas and level of questions, the level of the vocabulary used, number of words, and developmental appropriateness for the grade three learners in a multi-ability classroom.

b Administration of observation notes

I had a mammoth task in making accurate field notes and systematic notes during and as soon as lesson observation had ended. By keeping the objectives of the qualitative research in mind I was able to stay on track. Through numerous readings and interpretations of the field notes, I was able to analyze and identify themes as they arose and the pattern that emerged at the various stages of the data collection. I was able to make detailed descriptions of the events, the participants, their actions and objectives in the setting.

A summary of the observations undertaken is reflected in the table below:

Table 5.4 Grade Three: Classroom Observation

Name	Time commenced / ended	Duration	Number of observation sessions per class
Grade 3A	second term – to end of fourth term	one week per month per each grade	45
Grade 3B			45
Grade 3C			45
Total number of days of classroom observation	135 days		
Total number of days of observation for each grade three class	45 days		

These are some of the reasons why the researcher chose this method of collecting data: Through observing respondents the researcher was able to gain a comprehensive ‘picture’ of the site and ‘a sense of the setting’ which cannot be obtained solely by speaking with people. It also provides ‘rich descriptions’ and a strong basis for further analysis and interpretation. Another advantage is that the researcher was able to discover the norms and values and the culture of learning and teaching which are part of the research site. The lesson observations also provided a cross-check on data obtained in the interviews. This helped to strengthen the validity of this research project.

5.7.2.4 Reflective Diary

I recorded my observations in my reflective diary and made entries after each visit to the classroom, from the beginning until the end of this research. These entries largely focused my on personal experience of viewing literacy lessons in progress and other classroom activities that the educator and the learners were engaged in. I made notes on what happened including any changes, what needed to be done and on what I had learnt in the process. The entries range from brief notes to more in-depth reflections. During the writing of this dissertation I read and re-read my personal raw data so as not to leave out any information that may be vital to drawing up the conclusion to this study.

5.7.2.5 Document review and analysis

Mouton (1996) explains that document analysis refers to the analysis of descriptive data collected through methods such as journals and reports. The meaning of the data is more important than the specific meaning of its parts. A wide variety of documents may be used to generate data such as documents that formally represent the organization such as annual reports, examination time tables, vision statements, rules and regulations of the institution and informal documents such as bulletins, memos and newspaper articles, all of which may contain clues as to how the organization envisages itself or how the programme of work has evolved.

The researcher is of the opinion that document analysis is a useful place to start data collection in a case study, particularly if the research design includes other methods such as interviews and observations. Starting with the documents provided a sense of the case, its different parts and the history of the organization. Such a sense may also help to prompt important questions about the case which could be pursued by means of the other data collection methods.

The documents from which I generated data are the learner literacy workbooks, assessment tasks, literacy work schedules, school reading policy document, class time table and educator lesson plans. With regard to the learner literacy workbooks, the quantity, quality and the type of activities evident, especially for the reading and formal writing activities were recorded as well as the quality of the learners' written responses to these activities in terms of amount, content and developmental level.

According to Prosser (2000, p.64) “written documents may be viewed for clues to understanding the culture of the organization, the values underlying policies and the beliefs and attitudes of the respondents. Document analysis is often a helpful precursor to observing and interviewing, to suggest issues it may be useful to explore in the case and to provide a context for interpretation of interview and observational data.”

The data from the document analysis supported and guided the qualitative side of the research as the information it provided, guided me on how to approach the interviews, classroom observations and the standardised test. The instrument that was used was Appendix P which was produced specifically for this research but the idea owes its origin to the work of Mgqwashu (2007) and Singh (2003) because both these studies make use of document analysis related to language pedagogy.

From my reading both these studies clearly show how data analysis can be used as an effective research tool to provide quantifiable easily understood data which can then be used to ‘illuminate’ the data which then comes from the qualitative part of the study. It allows the researcher to gain detailed insight into how educators are guided in language teaching and why they teach and complete assessment tasks in the way that they do.

5.8 Quantitative Methods

Mouton and Marais (1990, p.155) describe quantitative research as “that approach to research in the social sciences that is more highly formalized as well as more explicitly controlled, with a range that is more exactly defined, and which, in terms of the methods used, is relatively close to the physical sciences.”

In this research quantitative data that was collected was based on the statistics for reading literacy levels. Baseline entry and exit reading levels were determined to monitor and assess the reading levels of the learners. Tests were conducted on a regular basis throughout the school year.

The researcher made use a true experimental design, whereby there were two groups of learners to which the language literacy tests were administered during the course of the research year, a control group and an experimental group. There were a total of twenty learners in each of these groups. In order to prove more strongly that effective language

literacy learning materials can improve learner's literacy test results, I made comparisons between the test scores of the two groups of participants.

The control group did not receive the educational intervention, and the experimental group received the educational intervention from me. Educational intervention meant that these learners did receive some assistance from me during the administration of the test. They were given additional key words and support to complete the task correctly. Using this true experimental design, the learners were allocated to the two groups by random selection. This meant that each learner had an equal chance of being put into the experimental group or into the control group. The researcher flipped a coin to determine to which group a learner was allocated. The learners wrote two Formal Writing Tests and their performance was compared and recorded.

5.9 Triangulation

The complexity and scope of this research calls for triangulation of data. According to Mouton and Marais (1990, p.91) triangulation refers to “the use of different or multiple methods of data collection which can increase the reliability of observation.” Richards and Morse (2007) add that triangulation measures validity by using multiple sources that support one another and directly address each other's findings. According to Simons (2009, pp.127-128) “triangulation is a means of cross-checking the relevance and significance of issues or testing out arguments and perspectives from different angles to generate and strengthen evidence in support of key claims.”

Denzin (1978), p.130) explains that there are two types of triangulation, methodological triangulation which explores significant similarities between methods, and data triangulation, which is used in this research, whereby different data sources are used to gain an understanding of issues. This form of triangulation is common in case study research.

I am of the opinion that it is better to look at something from different angles than to look at it in only one way and a study using both quantitative and qualitative research is more comprehensive. The main emphasis in this study is on qualitative information, but it is supported by the quantitative data. To provide supporting evidence from multiple sources, this study will compare previous literature published about language literacy in a primary school and implement qualitative and quantitative methodology.

Questionnaire	Parents of grade three learners	Questionnaire sent to parent via the learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Home-school interaction -Resources available at home -Supervision of learner's work by parents -Parents bio-graphical data -Learner's progress in literacy.
Standardised Tests	Learners	Learners placed into control and experimental groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Learners wrote two Formal Writing Tests. - An intervention was done to assist learners in experimental group. - Comparison of learner performance in the two tests.
Document Analysis	Educators and Learners	Analysed documents, lesson plans and learners workbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -School literacy policy -ANA results in literacy -Activities set by educator -Learner achievements

5.10 Approach to analysis

According to Charmaz (2006) in qualitative research, data are collected and interpreted by looking for themes grounded in the participant's responses. The first step in the analysis process was to initiate coding of each of the data sets of the research. Qualitative coding is the first analytical step towards moving beyond concrete statements in the data to making analytic interpretations. Coding can be seen as the groundwork to analysis that prepares the way for a much more intensive study. Coding entails breaking data into concepts and categories and categorizing segments of the data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each segment.

Firstly each verbatim data transcript was read thoroughly to get an overall impression as to the emerging themes inherent in the text, and then the transcript was read again. Codes were attached to each of the units of meaning that were singled out from the transcript and the outcome was a condensation of what each participant originally said or did.

After the initial coding was completed, more selective, conceptual and directed coding was undertaken. This focused coding involved using the most significant and/or frequent codes to filter through the large amounts of data. Decisions were made as to which initial codes made the most analytical sense to allow for more incisive categorisation of the data. Then a summary of each of the categories or themes elicited were described (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

The researcher took up Charmaz's (2006) proposal of asking questions to evaluate the quality of the data and this included my reflecting on: whether I had gained detailed descriptions of the participant's views and actions or not, whether the data revealed what was *beneath the surface* or not, whether I had gathered data that would enable me to develop analytic categories or not and what kinds of comparisons I could make between data. I also tried to achieve consistency in coding the raw data in simple ways so that another individual could understand the themes and arrive at similar conclusions.

Once the coding had been completed and sections of the text in interview transcripts, observation notes, document analysis had been assigned codes, the next stage was to involve a content and thematic analysis of the data analysis. This meant working with the codes to identify patterns such as similarities and differences. As the analysis proceeded, codes were

grouped logically into categories which were given a name. Further analysis of the categories and the search for patterns would lead to the generation of themes. Discussion of the themes would thus be part of the descriptive and explanatory portrayal of the case (Rule & John, 2011, p.78).

The written transcriptions consisted of the material received from the interviews and the questionnaires and the researcher interpreted the verbal and written responses in order to discover the trends, recommendations, opinions and feelings of all the participants. An audio tape was used to record the activities and the language literacy lessons conducted in the classroom. This gave the researcher the opportunity to review the transcriptions to ensure accuracy.

From my reading of the text by Rule and John (2011, pp.103-104) the researcher gathered that there are strategies and processes that have to be implemented to ensure the quality of this case study research.

The figure below depicts these processes in a very apt manner for it indicates that quality in a case study is not concerned with only the procedural aspects of the research, such as the phases of data collection and analysis, or the final product of the research, but also with the people involved in the research and with the relationships that make the research possible. The researcher intends to use criteria to ensure quality by taking into account all these aspects mentioned in the diagram.

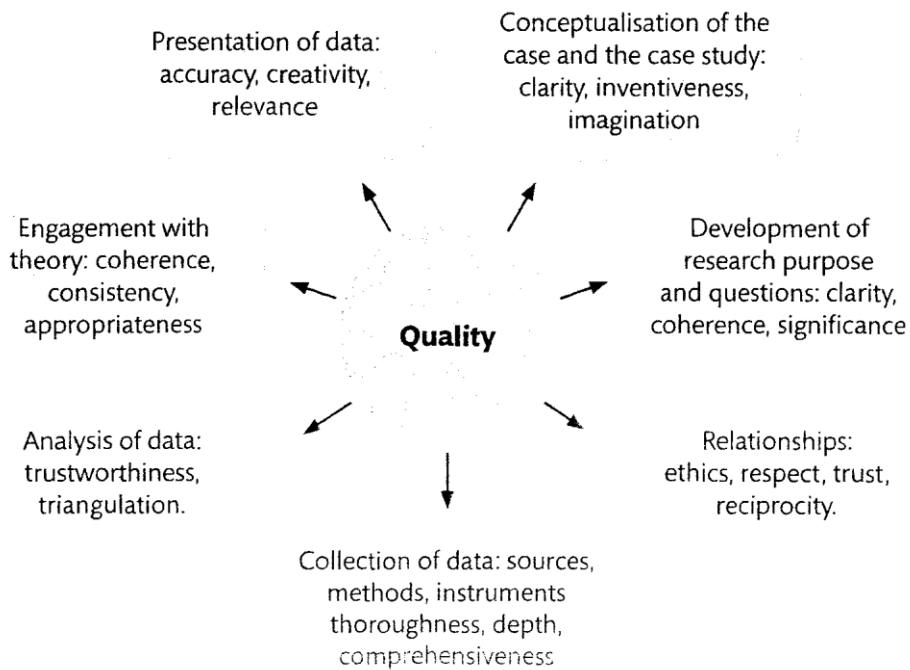


Figure 5.3 Criteria to be used to ensure quality in case study research (Rule and John, 2011, p.103)

5.11. Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Qualitative research should be credible and dependable. This is referred to as trustworthiness. Trustworthiness strategies are linked to credibility, validity and dependability, all of which ensure rigour without sacrificing the relevance of this qualitative investigation.

5.11.1 Credibility

Bryman (2004, p.12) is of the opinion that the credibility of a study is viewed “as the fit between participants’ views and the researcher’s representation of these views. “This can be demonstrated by means of strategies such as triangulation, member checks and audit trials, amongst others. I hoped to achieve credibility via the following means: I used a collection of multiple sources of data evidence for this single case study, for quality check, the respondents had the opportunity to review, corroborate and revise the research findings, should they deem it necessary through a process of member validation. Member validation was also used within the interview process as topics were confirmed, rephrased and probed to gain access to the holistic and subtle meanings of the participant’s viewpoints.

5.11.2 Validity

In all research, issues of validity arise. Reason and Bradbury (2006, p.350) provide several issues or questions of validity to consider as mentioned here and a researcher needs to ask and answer the following questions: Is the research:

- ✓ Explicit in developing a praxis of relational-participation?
- ✓ Guided by reflexive concern for practical outcomes?
- ✓ Inclusive of plurality of knowing?
- ✓ Ensuring conceptual-theoretical integrity?
- ✓ Embracing ways of knowing beyond the intellect?
- ✓ Intentionally choosing appropriate research methods?
- ✓ Worthy of the term significant?
- ✓ Developing towards a new and enduring infrastructure?

In any research rigour is achieved by combing qualitative description and critique with quantitative measures as is the case in this study. Greig *et al.*, (2007, p.95) offer the following advice on improving the validity of questioning since the researcher is using primary school children as the participants in this study: to improve validity, the researcher must break events or issues into simple, manageable units because these respondents may be unable to keep two concepts in mind at once; use yes/no questions followed by more open-ended ones; take individual differences into account because some children maybe learning disabled or may prefer to reveal information slowly over longer periods of time.

To ensure internal validity, the researcher checked with the respondents that her reporting of their perspectives, matched their 'telling and their meaning.' To establish external validity, the researcher checked with a range of stakeholders and other researchers whether they found the case study credible and useful. Since triangulation of data was used whereby there was cross-checking of the significance of data from several sources, this increased validity.

The researcher also intended to stay reflexive throughout this research project to prevent being biased. When the findings were being presented, the researcher did not over-claim but stayed close to the evidence and demonstrated how the interpretations and the findings were reached.

5.12 The sampling approach

In this investigation I made use of purposeful sampling. A small group of individuals were chosen who are knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest. This is what this study hoped to do: to explore and describe the phenomenon through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context. These included classroom observation, interviews and document analysis.

In my opinion the sample size was appropriate as the size of the sample is not a major consideration in case study as *“the concern is not so much for a representative sample (indeed the strength of case study approach is that the case only represents itself)”*. (Cohen *et al.* 2011, p.294). The ease of access to this sample is a bonus in that it allows for an easier process, but it was not a primary consideration when planning this research. More of a consideration was that larger amounts of data generated by a larger sample would, *“by implication be difficult to process, analyse and interpret.”* (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.294).

Being a case study of a school to which I had access and an existing working relationship with the participants implies that I am well situated to understand and represent this case so as to *“separate the significant few from the insignificant many instances of behaviour. Significant rather than frequency being one of the hallmarks of case study* (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.294). The researcher aims to enquire into, reflect on and describe as completely as possible the particular case in this school.

5.12.1 Personal reasons for my choice of this research approach

When I started to explore the advantages of using a case study method in the dissertation, I felt it would contribute more in a personal and broader context to this study. It provided me with an opportunity to bring a different perspective to the teaching of literacy skills in a primary school, in spite of the fact that many proven researchers have already made a significant impact in this area of research. I strongly believe that a case study research guards me against the easy route of purloining ideas unintentionally and provides an opportunity for original contribution to the knowledge in my field of study.

The policy document *Norms and Standards for Educators* (South Africa, Department of Education, 2000) formalised specific roles for all educators and trainers including that of “scholar researcher and lifelong learner.” Wessels (2010) comments on this by stating that

the document states that the educator “will achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth through pursuing reflective study and research in his or her learning area, in broader professional and educational matters, and in other related fields.” Therefore, I am of the opinion that using a case study method in research can be an empowering tool to educators in becoming reflective and scholarly educators in their own school environment. This research caters for just such an opportunity.

Another point I found interesting and very relevant was the convergence between case study research and learning. Outcomes Based education and our current CAPS curriculum is underpinned by the process of ‘meaning-making’. Therefore, this research design became ideal to use in this study for it focuses on a search for meaning, knowledge creation, learning and understanding (McNiff, 2006). A cycle of events will follow that will include: planning, observing, implementing, monitoring, reflection and evaluation. It is crucial that teachers and learners reach a level of independent or self-regulated learning.

Du Toit (2006, p.39) makes a valuable contribution by pointing out that effective learning only takes place if the whole brain is involved in the learning process. I am of the opinion that it is worth mentioning the whole- brain thinking model which is seen below. This was developed by Herrmann (Herrmann brain dominance, 2008), for it characterises the various learning skills and can be seen as a tool for researchers to understand learning including the understanding of how learners attain reading and literacy skills.

THE HERRMANN BRAIN DOMINANCE MODEL

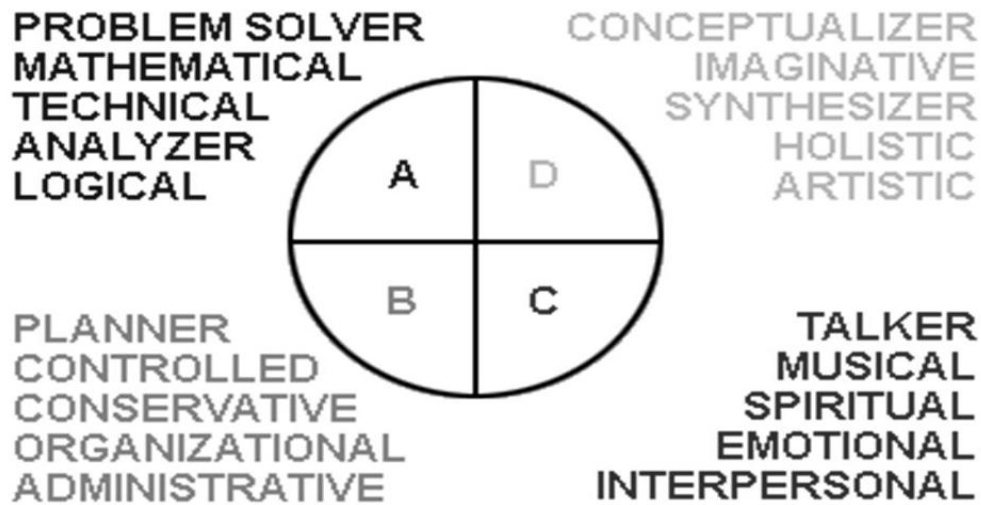


Figure 5.4 Whole-brain learning according to Herrmann ,(2008, p.12).

Webster, Beveridge and Read (1996) devised a framework with various models to explain literacy learning and I recognise reflections of these in the whole-brain learning model. The model of literacy as a set of skills to be handed over (for example how to decode) reflects the planner educator in quadrant B (sequential thinking) and is teacher- driven. The model of literacy as ‘a garden of delight’ where the learner is immersed in books, is child-driven and activities such as listening to and expressing ideas and looking for personal meaning, is reflected in quadrant C (interpersonal thinking) and quadrant D (imaginative thinking).

The model of literacy as a dialogue in the making is learning-driven and can be seen in quadrants A (analytical thinking) and again in quadrant D (imaginative thinking). I believe it is worthwhile to recognise the roots of this whole-brain learning for it has influence on the understanding of literacy learning. Tyrer (2008) stresses the importance of stimulating whole-brain learning in the learning of literacy to ensure that learners retain literacy skills.

5.12.2 Why Foundation Phase educators were selected

The Foundation Phase Grade 3 learners were chosen because of the concern about how low literacy level results were and also because Grade 3 is the exit grade from the Foundation Phase to the Intermediate Phase. In this study the researcher selected the three Foundation Phase educators from the sample school. These are three very effective educators with long-standing teaching reputations acquired after many years of teaching service and they would be likely to be able to assist in providing the information about the phenomenon under investigation. This is considered an adequate sample for reliable data analysis in qualitative research. However, it was envisaged that the data collection would continue until the data was saturated.

In this investigation the researcher made use of purposeful sampling which McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p.598) define “as a strategy to choose small groups or individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest.” In this type of sampling the researcher selected cases that would provide contrasting experiences. This is what this study hoped to do: to explore and describe the particular phenomenon through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context. These included classroom observation, interviews and document analysis.

5.13 Ethical Measures

Clearance to undertake this study was received from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Appendix D). Permission was also sought from the KZN Education Department (Appendix B). Permission was granted on the condition that no classes would be disrupted. Thus, this literacy project is supported by the Department of Education. A memorandum presenting details of the outcomes of this research were sent to the Department of Education.

Ethics is a critical part of the research process from the initial formulation of the research issue to the interpretation and reporting of the research findings. To my understanding researchers follow the guiding ethical principles in order to respect the rights of the research participants and to safeguard their integrity. The Principal of the school, educators, the parents and the learners who participated in this study were made aware of the purpose of this research study and that data and information collected and analysed during this project can be used in research publications and other academic activities. The appropriate consent

forms were given to the respondents. The school and its participants have the right to confidentiality and to stay anonymous. I refer to the school and the respondents under pseudonyms throughout this study.

In following the above-mentioned ethical principles, as a researcher, I adhered to the principle of respect for participant's integrity by obtaining their informed consent, and by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and by undertaking to protect them from any harm during this research project.

5.14 Pilot Study

The pilot study, according to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2002, p.210) is “one way in which the prospective researcher can orientate himself to the project he has in mind. The pilot study forms an integral part of the research process. Its function is the exact formulation of the research problem, and a tentative planning of the modus operandi and range of the investigation.”

In this research project for the pilot study the researcher asked the learners and the educators a few open-ended questions with the intention to see whether the questions were appropriate and understandable to the participants. The main intention of the pilot study was to improve this research and to explore the potential issues pertinent to this study prior to a more structured format being put into place. The researcher used the information from this pilot study to determine whether or not the data would relate to the research questions. During the actual study, the semi-structured interviews used a set of predetermined questions to engage the participants.

Through the use of the pilot study I was able to anticipate possible difficulties that might be encountered in terms of question wording. I made provision for open-ended, unbiased and non-judgemental questions to allow the respondents to express themselves freely.

5.15 Permission

For research conducted at an institution, such as a university or a school, permission and approval for conducting the research should be obtained before any data are collected. Thus, permission was sought from the Principal of the sample school to carry out the research. The Principal agreed to the researcher's request.

The researcher also sent in a letter (Appendix B) to the Kwa-Zulu Education Department to ask permission to conduct the research because the study included observing the educators during school hours as they taught the different aspects of literacy. Permission was granted on the condition that official programmes and classes were not disrupted.

5.16 Selection of participants

The three grade three educators and a group of grade three learners were chosen as participants for this research project. The three educators have English as their first language. This school has a large percentage of learners whose second language is English. Most of these learners rely on their peers to do interpreting and translating of words and sentences in their writing and reading tasks.

To deal with this language issue, the researcher enlisted the help of the Isi-Zulu educator as the interpreter for the duration of the learner interviews. This allowed the participants to understand the questions and to be able to respond to them.

The interviews were held after school hours at the sample school for both the educators and the learners at their convenience. The interview schedule questions for the educators (Appendix M) consisted of twenty-three questions. The interview schedule questions for the grade three learners (Appendix N) consisted of eleven questions.

5.17 Research ethics

According to Johnson and Christensen (2000, pp.63-64) “research ethics refers to a set of principles to guide and assist researchers in deciding which goals are most important and in reconciling conflicting values. Ethics deals with the conduct of research with humans, which has the potential to create a great deal of physical and psychological harm”. Researchers need to be sensitive to ethical principles because of their research topic and face-to-face interactive data collection methodology.

The following guidelines were followed to ensure the ethical acceptability of this study. In this study the purpose of the classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires, was explained to the teachers, parents and the parents of the learners who participated in this study and it was emphasised that there were no right or wrong answers, but that their openness and honesty would be appreciated.

The participants were also informed that they could refuse to participate at any time but they all gave their consent to participate in this research. Confidentiality was explained to the participants from the beginning of the research programme. The aim of the research was explained to the participants, and they were assured that data would only be used for research purposes with the view to improving education. Anonymity of the participants and their schools were guaranteed to all participants.

5.18 Summary

This Chapter outlined in detail the research design approach and the various research data collection methods that support and assist this research process. A case study approach was chosen and I hoped to achieve integration between theory, research and practice and this research design act as a framework to guide my research. It allowed for research that was simultaneously, investigative, participative and contextual. In this Chapter I also motivated my own reasons for choosing this research design for my study.

The selection of the participants, the sample size, research role, data gathering instruments, the data analysis, issues of validity and reliability, triangulation of findings, the research ethics and limitations of the study were discussed.

In the next Chapter the discussions and interpretation of the findings will be presented.

CHAPTER SIX PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

“The point of my work is to show that culture and education aren’t simply hobbies or minor influences” (Pierre Bourdieu)

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter the presentation, discussions and interpretation of the findings will be given. The previous chapters dealt with the literature study and the research methodology. In this chapter the data gathered in the empirical study is analyzed and discussed in the light of the research question.

In this research study, the case is the Grade three English literacy programme within a school. It is the school, the community and the education system that widely constitute the context of the case. In other words, happenings, challenges and changes within this school, the surrounding community and the education system will have a direct bearing on the case that is studied. This one primary school that was observed is situated in a semi-urban area in the Phoenix Region serving learners from privileged, non-privileged and some very disadvantaged homes.

The average class size at the school ranges from between 40 to 50 learners per class and this school caters for learners from Grades R to 7. The school fee for the year is R1 000 per learner and the school fee recovery rate per annum is a low 20 percent. A total of 901 learners attend this school and there are 34 educators on the site with three administrative staff members.

The vast majority of educators are Indian but the majority of learners are black (493 learners). Approximately 55 percent of the learners do not have the language of teaching as their home language, that being English. The availability of resources for educators and learners is high as were indices of the principal’s perception of school safety and a conducive school climate. Some learners that were observed and interviewed were spontaneous, confident, resilient, active, enthusiastic and respectful. However, there were some learners who were rude, disruptive and disobedient even to the other educators.

In Table 6.1 the researcher presents an overview of the themes as related to the research questions, and the sub-themes which were formulated as a result of interrogating the qualitative data. The aim is to give an account of the various factors impacting on the process of literacy development in the Foundation Phase. What appears here is a complex picture of layered causal factors that emerge, generated by the various social mechanisms involving social systems, structures and specific interventions by various social agencies.

Table 6.1 Themes and sub-themes to the research questions

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. How do Foundation phase educators develop reading and writing competences in a primary school? 2. Why do Foundation phase educators develop reading and writing competences in the way that they do?	6.2 Educators' experiences of literacy development at classroom level.	a: understanding the concept of literacy b: approaches and practices of educators c: strengths of educators d: responses from the semi-structured interview
3. What are the learners' attitude and experiences in the development of reading and writing practices in the classroom?	6.3 Learners' attitude and experiences of reading and writing practices.	a: reading and writing competences b: effects of learners' attitude and experiences on literacy development c: influences of parents and mother tongue education on literacy development d: the effects of learners academic ability (in literacy acquisition and development) e: Findings from learner's written work

<p>4. How are Government literacy policies implemented in practice in the classroom?</p>	<p>6.4 The implementation of Government literacy policy at classroom level.</p>	<p>a: The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) b: policy implementation and classroom reality</p>
<p>5. What are the underlying social factors or challenges that can be seen to impact the practice of literacy development at the case study school?</p>	<p>6.5 Social factors or challenges impacting negatively on the development of literacy.</p>	<p>a: inadequate literacy personnel b: workload of educators c: overcrowded classrooms d: lack of resources e: lack of support from parents f: The role of the School Governing Body (SBG) in promoting literacy g: The school budget h: Researcher's general observations of practices at the school</p>
<p>6. What recommendations can be achieved from this project for future literacy development and support?</p>	<p>6.6 Teacher training and support.</p>	<p>a: educators' personal literacy ability b: inadequate teacher training and support c: impact of teacher unions</p>

6.2 Educators' experiences of literacy development at classroom level

In this section the data found to answer research questions one and two are analysed. The first theme is educators' experiences of literacy development at classroom level with the sub-themes as follows: understanding the concept of literacy, approaches and practices of educators, strengths of the educators' teaching practices as observed.

6.2.1: Understanding the concept of literacy

It was evident from the educator interviews that they had a clear understanding of the concept of literacy, that all learners should be able to read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding, and use their skills in speaking and listening to explore, articulate and extend their understanding of texts. However, the researcher observed that this is clearly not the case in the sample school. Educators commented as follows:

“Although I have an understanding that literacy encompasses many aspects, I focus on teaching the skills of reading and writing mainly.” (Interviewee one)

“...literacy is a difficult concept to explain. I think it is about focusing on learners being able to read and write correctly in order to attain academic success.” (Interviewee three)

The research participants' understanding of literacy is similar to that which is found in the literature. However, Pally (2000) cautions readers that literacy entails far more than just reading and writing tasks. It includes the complex integration and co-ordination of many cognitive perceptions and it is also thought to involve analytical and critical thinking.

6.2.2: What are the approaches and the practices that Foundation Phase Grade 3 educators use in promoting effective literacy teaching?

Data was gathered by means of classroom observations of educators and learners, semi-structured interviews of educators and the learners, questionnaires administered to grade three parents, analysis of the written work of learners, interviews with grade three learners and the researcher's general observations of literacy practices at the sample school. The researcher intentionally chose the grade three learners and teachers because of the concern

about the low literacy level results at the school and also because grade three is the exit grade from the FP to the Immediate Phase.

This is considered a very important shift. The motivation for choosing this sample was discussed in Chapter 5. As a qualitative researcher, I seek to understand a phenomenon as it occurs in its broader context. In the case of this study, one primary school was purposefully selected where I have been teaching for the past nineteen years. I intend to understand the factors that have contributed to learners performing poorly in literacy.

6.2.2.1 Overview of the classroom observations of educators and learners

This section will describe the observations of each educator's teaching practices, the use of instruction techniques and the acknowledgement of the socio-cultural background of the grade three learners during the formal writing and reading lessons of literacy teaching. The researcher has used key aspects to categorize important information into themes.

6.2.2.1.1 Overview of Educator 1's teaching practices

Educator one is a very experienced educator for she is a master educator in the profession and the most senior educator in the Foundation Phase Department of this school. She has twenty five years of teaching experience and she displays a warm, pleasant, confident and a patient personality. She does not show anxiety about insignificant issues and problems in the classroom for her focus is geared towards allowing the learners to learn without fear but with respect for all and a sense of responsibility towards their work. Thus, she is completely relaxed as she teaches her lessons and does not expect too much from these young minds.

There is a creative vibe in the classroom. She commands the respect from the learners by being stern to those who do not obey the classroom rules and there is plenty of encouragement and support offered to those who show eagerness to learn. Although there is a buzz in the classroom during group activities, the learners are not loud and unruly but they are aware of their responsibilities in their groups. It is clear the learners do engage in group work often for each group has their own group leader who takes charge when the educator is busy working with a single group at a time.

The educator facilitates her group work in a very structured way. She also interacts with her learners in a very relaxed manner, and is aware of their particular learning needs. The

educator encourages the learners to get the support of their peers as they check each other's work and offer suggestions. In this conducive learning environment learners are stimulated as they engage in interesting and relevant classroom activities pertaining to the aspects that were taught during the lesson. They are also given many opportunities to apply code-breaking strategies and to make meanings when engaging in reading and writing tasks.

Educator's use of instruction techniques

Educator one makes use of many resources to deliver her lesson such as the chalkboard, relevant wall charts, worksheets and readers. The classroom is a rich print environment and there are many colourful posters, pictures, books, reading cards and work cards relating to ongoing themes. A clever creative mechanism is used by the educator to control the noise level. This is the star of the week chart. At the end of the week a child who has displayed the best behaviour receives a star next to his or her picture on the chart and a congratulatory token. The educator from time to time would also say to the children, "if I cannot hear the teacher next door, then the talking is too loud." This somehow signals to the learners that they would have to whisper and not scream to each other.

She encourages critical thinking when she challenges them to think about examples they are using such as "predict a suitable ending to this story." She skilfully provides conceptual scaffolding to her learners so that they are able to construct new knowledge and learning. She clarifies and constantly checks to see if her learners are aware of what they are expected to do in the activities that are given to them. She reads each instruction thoroughly and walks amongst the learners to assist those who are experiencing difficulties working independently.

She displays excellent explanation skills and is very thorough in her instructions. She uses a lot of repetition because there are many English second language learners in the class. The educator associates new words with simple examples to reinforce vocabulary skills. She seamlessly integrates literacy, mathematics and life skills into the work she is focussing on.

The educator teaches through demonstration using the learners as well as a variety of resources. She has a mixed ability class therefore plenty of drill work of flash words and phonic work is completed. The educator makes use of a variety of teaching techniques to cater for all ability levels. The tasks are graded into three ability groups and this fosters independent thinking.

Educator's acknowledgement of the socio-cultural background

Educator one stimulates the learners in a non-threatening way to make use of their imaginations for different exercises. For example, "Today you are going to complete your own birthday party invitation." All new work is done in a very encouraging and empowering manner. The educator is very comfortable with code switching and from time to time she makes use of Isi-Zulu in her lessons, acknowledging the two most commonly spoken languages at the school, those being English and Isi-Zulu. All the activities that are set are linked to the learners' daily experiences such as a visit to the shopping mall, safety at home and school and so on.

6.2.2.1.2 Overview of Educator 2's teaching practices

Educator two is filling in for an educator who is currently on sick leave. She has been teaching for the past five years. The educator is a very dynamic and an enthusiastic person who is always ready to listen to suggestions and new ideas to better her teaching practice. She has been working very closely with the other two educators in the grade for the planning of lessons, setting of tests and assessments, homework tasks and ideas for daily classroom activities.

She models good manners for the learners to emulate by demonstrating it, for example, when a visitor enters the classroom, children are reminded to stand to greet, she also encourages the use of words such as "please, may I, thank you, sorry." Although there are 40 learners in this one classroom, she maintains good discipline throughout the lesson. The learners take to her very easily due to her kind, motivating and caring nature.

The classroom is characterised by a high level of learner engagement and interaction. This educator is aware of the time constraints for the different aspects of literacy such as daily news, phonic development, language usage, reading task and a writing task, all to be completed within the time frame for literacy in the morning session. The learners are constantly reminded to work faster, neatly and to check all written tasks thoroughly.

This educator engages in a combination of whole class teaching for some aspects in literacy and small group teaching for other tasks. It is clear that the learners engage in this manner often because whilst a small group of learners was called to the carpet corner or to the chalkboard to be tested on reading or to be taught a specific concept, the other learners were

kept busy doing occupational work which covered aspects that had previously been taught. This educator handled the task of keeping all her learners creatively busy while focussing her attention on one group of learners at a time.

The learners were also acquainted with the rules of co-operative learning when working in a group such as, listening to and looking at each other, waiting patiently for a turn to read, listening to the reader attentively, and helping friends when necessary. It is clear that this educator has an excellent rapport with her learners. The learners are used to expressing themselves freely, for this is evident from the way they relate and communicate with the educator and their peers. The educator follows a structured programme during the lessons.

Educator's use of instruction techniques

The educator encourages the learners to think creatively and to work independently. For example, often learners are asked to write their own sentences, draw their own pictures to show meaning of words and so on. Learners enjoy the lesson prepared by the educator for it caters for all ability levels in this class. She makes use of physical activity too, which the learners love doing, to create a happy working atmosphere. She provides explicit moral intervention; for example, "it was wrong of you to say that. I think you should say sorry to your friend, for you have offended him." The educator has the ability to integrate the reading and writing tasks very effectively.

Excellent questioning skills were executed by this educator, encouraging the learners to think independently. During the literacy and the reading lessons, she models decoding skills such as sounding out the letters to recognize the word in the passage and simple comprehension strategies such as looking for key words in the sentence. This was done to assist some learners who had experienced difficulty comprehending a simple story and answering the questions.

Vocabulary was extended when new words were taught. A lot of drill of the flash words and phonic sounds was done to reinforce learning. This educator used constant repetition as a technique to cater for the slow or the weak learners. She encouraged the learners to form their own little dictionary where she would write down the spelling of new words for the learners to foster good sentence construction skills. Good scaffolding is provided in this class. She insists on learning for meaning and with understanding. The learners are

encouraged to ask relevant questions as the lessons are being taught. For the application of a language activity, meaningful sentences and examples were given by the learners, who were totally involved in the lesson.

Scaffolding occurred frequently as the educator made use of the learner's responses to encourage them to construct knowledge, to solve a problem, to articulate more clearly their thoughts or to explain how they had arrived at their particular answer. The educator practices buddy reading and she encourages some learners to assist their peers to read sentences frequently. Her instructions were simple and clear. She made use of a wide range of questioning techniques.

Educator 2's acknowledgement of the socio-cultural background

The educator makes an effort to accept a variety of answers from all the learners. She is sensitive to the fact that there are many English second language learners in her classroom and some of these learners would need plenty of support and encouragement in learning a new language. The educator also makes use of simple examples that relate to their life world, their prior knowledge, their 'funds of knowledge' or their 'cultural capital' for example, a day at the beach, and my responsibilities at school and so on.

This effort on the part of the educator whereby she accepts a variety of responses from the learners is an indication of the reconceptualization of literacy as multiliteracies, where the focus is not just concentrated on linear print for these grade three learners. Situated and cultural practices are an indication of background knowledge and funds of knowledge of a learner and the educator makes use of this knowledge in her teaching. She also encourages the learners to make use of their imagination and 'pretend play' which they thoroughly enjoy, for example, 'pretend you are a rag doll or a walking stick of a very old man. Now show me your movements.'

6.2.2.1.3 Overview of Educator 3's teaching practices

Educator three is a senior educator in this Foundation Phase Department. Although she qualified as a Secondary School educator, she has been teaching in the Foundation Phase for the past twenty-three years and she is thoroughly enjoying it. She has many years of teaching experience in the grade three classes. This educator is very thorough in her approach because she works logically and systematically and stimulates her learners to think 'outside the box'

or to think critically, in preparation for them as they will soon be entering the next phase of their schooling career.

She also organises and manages her class and her lesson in a very structured way. The Lesson Plans are prepared well in advance for the entire week and the educator constantly checks to see that all necessary work is covered for the day as it was planned. In most of the lessons, the educator starts off with whole class discussion such as for discussion about the news, weather, language revision or phonic work and then she moves on to teaching one small group of learners at a time whilst the rest of the class is kept busy with occupational work. The learners are used to this routine and they do not need to be constantly reminded to “get on with their work.”

Individual tasks are set out for the different ability groups of the learners and the work is explained in a simple manner with lots of demonstration and examples. Her teaching style is very thorough and it is clear that she understands the learning and thinking process of the learners. She is clear and audible to the forty learners seated in the one classroom and she is respected by her learners. She displays a firm attitude to those who may not show an interest in her lesson and the tone of the lesson is set immediately at the sound of the siren that signals the start of the literacy lesson.

The learners are not seated in groups and this is due to the fact that the classroom is too small to house for forty learners and therefore space is a huge problem. Nevertheless, the classroom is neat and tidy with new solid desks and most of the learners are very well behaved throughout the lesson. The classroom context of educator three is one of a class of ‘eager beavers at work’; many of them ready to please the educator because they are so readily affirmed for their efforts, big or small. They have a good rapport with the educator and with their peers.

Her good listening skills and her ability to interact with the learners creates scaffolding opportunities that allow the learners to construct knowledge. The spontaneous responses from her learners during the discussion on ‘Children’s Rights’ are an indication of how she supports her learners to express themselves without fear. In a very calm and supportive manner, she corrects learners with regard to incorrect pronunciation, spelling errors and concord.

Educator's use of instruction techniques

For the formal writing lessons, the educator organises her class by means of first whole class teaching, then group work, followed by independent work. For her reading lessons, the educator incorporates group, individual and pair reading. The classroom is a rich literacy environment and a well resourced classroom, with many colourful, stimulating and relevant charts, pictures, books, posters and other teaching aids.

The educator incorporates guided activities for listening, speaking, reading and writing aspects in all her literacy lessons. During the lesson, the learners are actively involved and a variety of simple activities are set out for the learners. Some fun activities were done with them for example, the guessing game, fish for a sound and build a word, find my pair and so on, creating a competitive spirit amongst the learners.

She displayed extensive knowledge of her subject and presented the factual knowledge in a very explicit manner at a level which also challenged the learners to think. The educator models out neat handwriting on the chalkboard. It is bold and clear and is easily copied by the learners. She presents the link between reading and writing tasks at the same time. In her teaching she made use of code-breaking and decoding skills for example, 'sound the word, name and make the sound.' This educator also encouraged the learners to make use of a dictionary to write down new words that were learnt for the day. In the activities that were set out, the learners had the opportunity to make meaning, to interpret and infer the meaning, teaching them to 'read between the lines.'

During the dramatization of the story of Cinderella, the learners had the opportunity to give their interpretation of the actions, words and the story. The educator taught the learners simple strategies to apply for reading and writing skills. Critical thinking was encouraged for example, the educator asked the learners to 'Go and find out why the sky looks blue.' The educator was successful in integrating her literacy lesson, with learning areas such as music, numeracy, life skills and drama. The educator was fully prepared for the lesson with a broad content knowledge. She was flexible in her lessons especially when she integrates the curriculum and all the language components such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning and thinking skills. She also did incidental teaching as the need arose.

Educator's acknowledgment of the socio-cultural background

The educator constantly gently affirms her learners and she is totally relaxed with code-switching as she makes use of English and Afrikaans ('Ek is baie kwaad') and sometimes even simple Isi-Zulu words or phrases. As she progresses with the lesson, she reminds the learners to show respect and to treat everyone with dignity irrespective of the person's colour, creed or race group.

The educator speaks about equality and the freedom of learners to express themselves should they want to say something. The researcher understands that this is because of the diversity of learners in the classroom. She listens very sensitively and attentively to her learner's responses and uses these to provide scaffolding to facilitate further understanding and learning. Good interaction occurs during the question and answer session.

The class consists of some Indian learners with the majority of learners being Black. Some of these Black learners speak IsiZulu and others speak Xhosa at home. The educator is aware of this because she knows her learners well. Therefore, she is able to make connections between home and school in her teaching, for example, "How would you help mum or dad at home? What are some of your other responsibilities at home?"

- This educator makes use of the learners' prior knowledge or their cultural capital with great ease. She sensitively honours and acknowledges the learners' ways of thinking and talking. She goes about correcting the learners without embarrassing the learner. She offers suggestions and corrections. For some English second language learners, who display difficulty understanding the educator's instructions, she allows another learner to assist to translate the instruction into Isi-Zulu but at the same time, speaking in English is encouraged all the time since this is the medium of instruction at this school.
- The completion of homework and its supervision by their parents is often encouraged as a home-school link. She is also aware of their home situation as she asks different learners pertinent questions related to their own home situation such as, 'Is mum still working till late everyday or is she at home when you get back from school?' Her genuine concern for the learners in her care, is evident in all the lessons. The combination of very exciting activities

and class work such as poetry, filling out an invitation, drama, role-play and singing, contributes to enjoyable literacy lessons for these young learners.

6.2.2.1.4 The approaches and practices of educators as observed

The table 6.2 below presents an overview of the approaches and practices as observed by the researcher

Educator one	Educator two	Educator three
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Explicit and simple instructions -Creative work encouraged -Stimulating material provided to learners -Encourages meaning making such as ‘write own words’, sentences -Constantly repeats instructions so that all understand -Is firm, yet supportive and loving Uses a variety of methods such as poetry, quiz, simple games to maintain interest -Good content knowledge of subject -Good reading strategies reinforced -Plenty of praise and motivation -All tasks facilitated in a guided manner -Learners encouraged to have respect for all others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Is explicit and thorough in her instructions -Systematic unfolding of lesson -Encourages learners to work co-operatively -Shows respect and patience to even the weakest learners -Encourages independent thinking, reading and writing -Demonstrates good questioning skills -Good resources used -Encourages full learner participation -Scaffolding – mind map -Prediction strategy -Structured activities for writing -Graded tasks for different ability groups -Allows learners to express their opinion about things -Understands learner’s individual needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Is very interactive, well prepared and dynamic -Teacher guided lesson -Encourages team work -Makes use of physical activity to maintain interest in lesson -Encourages critical thinking -Speaks in English, Afrikaans and Isi-Zulu for all to understand -Encourages code-breaking text user eg. ‘use word in own sentence’ -Makes use of peer teaching as well -Guided writing practice -Integration of language and other learning areas in the curriculum -Link aspects of lesson with home activities -Good communication skills encouraged -Co-ordinates her micro-teaching effectively while the

-committed, passionate about literacy teaching -encourages good penmanship skills -completes remedial work and revision of tasks	-Sensitively responds to the linguistic and cultural diversity that her learners bring to the classroom. -All written tasks supervised daily	rest of class is busy with own tasks. -Encourages pride in their written tasks -Thorough in supervision of learner's written tasks
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6.2.2.1.5 Findings of the approaches and practices as observed

The **approaches and practices** implemented by the grade three educators during the literacy teaching as observed include the following: the three educators have an interactive approach with their learners. In all the classes, the learners were very much involved in the lesson because the educators encouraged maximum participation. In all three classes there were some learners who had difficulty communicating spontaneously in English. In trying to answer a question, these learners spend time trying to understand what was being asked of them and then become busy formulating the answer, therefore the response is not a quick one. All the educators made use of group work and class work.

All three of them were explicit in their instructions. For example, explanation of a task to be completed independently, explaining meanings of words and so on. They skilfully integrated the lesson with the other learning areas such as numeracy, science, drama and also taught the language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and reasoning in a holistic way. As experienced educators, they often provided scaffolding as they assisted and supported their learners in their understanding or construction of new knowledge.

It was noticed by the researcher that all three educators have a very thorough teaching style. However, due to time constraints very often they have to continue lessons as many learners are far too slow in completing written tasks, in spite of just a few examples being set for them to complete.

The educators recognize the value of reading aloud to their learners and the children enjoy this activity and attend with interest. The teachers are innovative and creative in the varied experiences and activities that they make use of in their mediating of literacy. For example,

they encourage skits, dramatization, role-play and imaginative play. They use many resources such as the computer, activity cards, work sheets, the internet, pictures and posters and they encourage the use of the local library. In their effort to assist all learners, they also make use of learners to assist with translations or they try to speak Isi-Zulu themselves.

The researcher is of the opinion that the educators are hard-working, try to do their best in spite of some challenges that they face having, over-crowded classrooms, learners with different learning abilities and language barriers. These educators also realise the importance of having links with parents, caregivers, guardians and the home to promote and support the learner's literacy growth and development. Therefore, often they do meet with them to discuss the progress of the learner. Most importantly, in a diverse class as theirs, they are aware of the need to embrace cultural and linguistic diversity and thus they encourage their learners to show respect for each other and often promote team work.

6.2.2.1.6 Effective Characteristics Displayed by the three grade three educators as observed by the researcher

From the table the researcher can maintain that the grade three educators also displayed some very effective teaching characteristics during their literacy teaching. This is due to the following reasons: they skilfully demonstrated knowledge about phonic instruction, phonemic awareness instruction, phonological instruction, vocabulary building skills, word recognition strategies, language study instruction, fluency instruction, comprehension techniques, handwriting skills, language study instruction and writing instruction. Although some discipline problems were experienced by the educators, they maintained their 'cool composure' to be firm and they continued with the lessons as planned. They were thus successful in facilitating the literacy skills with reference to the socio-cultural context of their learners.

Due to the large number of learners per class, maintaining direct supervision of them was a tedious task. The educators managed to encourage the learners to think, to express their opinions, and to use their imagination but the ability to think critically was not pursued sufficiently. This maybe a difficult task since three quarter of the learners in each grade three class were English second language learners and learning to speak and write in a second language was not an easy task for them.

One educator was a bit anxious at the beginning of the observation, however she soon settled down due to her preparedness for the lesson. All were creative and innovative in the presentation of their lessons. There was evidence that the educators had a vast knowledge of the content areas that they taught. All three educators showed their passion in teaching, were very ‘motherly’ to the learners, showed deep respect to each and every learner in their care, and were confident and dynamic educators with a very structured teaching style.

6.2.3 The table 6.2.3 below reflects the overall strengths of the three grade three educators in the formal writing and reading lessons

Strengths	Educator one	Educator two	Educator three
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use of imagination -Plenty of drill work and repetition -New vocabulary taught -Reading and writing of words and sentences -Stresses the use of and meanings of words in sentences -good rapport with all learners - Well resourced class -Simple instructions given -Affirms all learners -Gently corrects wrong responses -Encourages writing of own sentences and a paragraph -Phonemic awareness -Encourages independent and group work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Good listening activities -good oral stimulation -Encourages the use of own dictionary -Encourages independent thinking -Very interactive class -interesting activities -Educator follows a very structured lesson -Learners are challenged to think, to give meanings, to infer -Interacts sensitively to learners’ responses -Phonological awareness -Helps learners with decoding -Encourages team work -Rewards learners accordingly -Incidental teaching done -Scaffolding provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use of learner’s prior knowledge and socio-cultural context. -Good questioning techniques -Syllabification-clapping to sounds and phrases -Whole–class teaching and group work -Sensitive to needs of all learners -Good prior planning and preparation -Focus is socio-cultural -Encourages class participation -Explicitly explains instructions or new information -Writing is clear and bold on chalkboard and on worksheets -Plenty of resources used -Lesson integrated with

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prediction in story encouraged -Educator demonstrates reading skills appropriately -Good choice of stories chosen for reading lesson -Oral, reasoning and thinking emphasised -Lessons integrated with other learning areas -Use of flash words and phonic cards in reading lesson -standard of work appropriate for grade three learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Encourages all learners to try to read the sentences -Stimulates a culture of reading in the class -A variety of resources used in reading lessons -Explicit instruction given when needed -Learners work in pairs, alone and in a team collaboratively -Learners encouraged to be creative and imaginative when reading -Focus on fluency and simple word recognition -Variety of teaching techniques used in the lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other aspects taught in the day -Makes use of pretend play and games in reading -Oral and written comprehension completed -Acknowledgement of English, Afrikaans and Isi-Zulu in lessons -Scaffolding reinforces appropriate detail -Additional tasks set for advanced learners -Learners progress from one group to the next as their reading improves -Thorough supervision done of all written work
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6.2.3.1 Some common challenges faced by the grade three educators

- ✓ Classes too large for one educator to manage
- ✓ Some very unruly and uncooperative learners in the class who disrupt lessons often
- ✓ Many English language learners who experience difficulties in learning the concepts of the English language
- ✓ Communication is a problem because of the language barrier
- ✓ Insufficient space in the classroom. Learners are cramped and very little space provided for reading
- ✓ In spite of many attempts by educators to assist learners, many cannot read or write simple sentences
- ✓ Not sufficient support offered by many parents of these learners
- ✓ Not all educators trained for CAPS in all the learning area

- ✓ Non-functional library at school. This has contributed to poor reading skills amongst the learners
- ✓ Learners need plenty of assistance and repetition of instructions. This is time consuming
- ✓ Not many learners have access to a computer, television, books and other resources
- ✓ Some learners do not complete class tasks as well as homework. Lack of interest
- ✓ To cater for the different learning abilities of learners in one class – can be a daunting task
- ✓ Due to CAPS too many aspects to be taught in a term. Some slow learners cannot cope with the work load
- ✓ Educators have to share readers and other workbooks – not sufficient for all learners
- ✓ In one literacy lesson, the time allocated to teach an aspect is often insufficient. Educators have to continue lessons all the time.
- ✓ Far too many assessments to be completed in Literacy and this is very time consuming
- ✓ Learners performed poorly in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) because they cannot read instructions on their own. Many of these learners need plenty of individual attention. This can be very tiring for the educator.

6.2.3.2 General findings of literacy teaching as observed

The three educator's literacy teaching, as observed during the classroom observation, is influenced by their implementation of CAPS which supports a skill-based approach. The researcher uses ideas from Tyobeka (2006, p.45) in listing some areas that may be regarded as critical for literacy development:

- “Phonemic awareness (which is the understanding of sounds in spoken words)
- Phonemes (the linking of sounds to the alphabet and combining these to form words)
- Vocabulary (learning and using new words)
- Fluency (reading with speed, accuracy and understanding)
- Comprehension (understanding the meaning of what they read)
- Writing (constructing simple words, phrases, sentences and then a paragraph)

- Writing for a purpose such as completing a short story, filling out an invitation, writing a friendly letter”

The three educators are trying to be compliant with that which is required for them to achieve in their literacy teaching by the end of the year. In their teaching they also make use of a combination of teaching methods such as the ‘Psycholinguistic Approach’, with its focus on decoding and literal comprehension, a ‘Whole Language Approach’, which is nested in a ‘Constructive Approach’, with the emphasis being on the integration of language components with themes, comprehension and meaning.

Other common methods used were the ‘Look and say Method’, ‘Phonics Method’, ‘Language Experience Approach’, where language concepts and culture are linked and this is based on the developmental theory of language. The educators manage and organise their classes effectively with whole class teaching, group work and individual work. From the classroom observations it was seen that the educators make use of good questioning techniques which allows the learners to give their opinions when needed and questions are also used to reinforce facts and new information is taught. Their questioning skills are also used for scaffolding purposes.

6.2.4 Responses from the semi-structured interview

This section will present in summary form the data of the semi-structured interviews relating to the Grade three educator’s views about their class, their learners, their teaching practices and other general information. The findings for each area will also be given. See Appendix(3) for the questions in detail.

Q1: Years of teaching experience in the Foundation Phase

Educator one and three are seasoned educators in this phase. Educator two is a substitute educator for a teacher that is on leave. However, she has taught in this phase for the past five years at different schools. This shows that these educators do have good knowledge and experience to teach in this phase.

Q2: Description of social background of learners in the classroom

All three educators indicated that many of their learners were very poor. They are very dependent on things that are given at school such as lunch, clothing, food hampers, stationery

and so on. Many of the parents are separated so this means that learners may be staying with one parent, or with grandparents, aunts or uncles. Some of the parents are not in full employment and receive some form of grant every month. Educator two added that in her class, some parents work away from home and therefore children are left with relatives.

She also added that a few of her parents were HIV positive and had difficulty taking care of their children due to them needing medical attention often. Educator three stated that,

“completing homework is the last thing some of these learners think about. They have to do household chores and look after siblings or their sick parents, which takes priority over their schooling. It is very sad that many of them have to become adults in the homes.”

Q3: Impact of social background on learner’s literacy status

The learners who do have these problems, often experience difficulty in learning. It takes them longer to grasp concepts because often there is no consolidation of concepts taught due to the fact that homework and other tasks remain incomplete. Sometimes, there is no supervision at all at home therefore the learners may attempt to complete the tasks independently.

A lot of work has to be covered in the classroom for them to succeed in passing tests. One educator responded that, “it may not be that the learner is very weak, but because no support and assistance is given at home, this learner lags behind and may perform poorly at school.”

Q4: Approach or method used to teach reading

All three educators stated that they use the group method to teach reading in the classes. Although they have a large number of learners per class, for each reading lesson in a day, at least two groups are called out and supervised reading is done by the educator. The groups are alternated and the two classes had three groups whilst the one educator stated that, “I have four reading ability groups because the last group consists of learners who cannot read at all. They need special care and attention.” Using the group method makes it easier for the educators to assist the weak learners and to interact meaningfully with them. The other learners are given occupational work to complete whilst one group reads at a time. The reading is graded according to the ability levels of the learners in that specific group.

This common method was noticed by the researcher in all three classes: the educator first started off with revision of previous phonic sound that was taught, followed by a new sound for the day. All learners were encouraged to participate. Then the vocabulary for the reader was taught or revised thoroughly. At random, spot testing was done to ascertain whether learners are revising the vocabulary at home. Then each learner was given a chance to read for a few minutes whilst the other listened attentively. A variety of reading techniques were incorporated in the lesson such as peer reading, pair reading, individual reading and group reading.

In spite of having some discipline problems, confinement of space in the classroom, insufficient number of reader per class, learner's having lost their reading sheets, these educators did make an earnest attempt to teach reading in the best ways possible. There were lots of drill work for the phonic and the teaching of the flash words. However, one educator highlighted a very important problem, "The time allocated for reading (half an hour for structured reading) according to CAPS is really not sufficient especially for the weak learners to cope in developing good reading skills. This poses a huge problem at our school."

Q5: Approach or method used to teach formal writing

All three educators had indicated that they use the Whole Class Teaching Method to teach formal writing. First the concept is taught thoroughly with the class, and then learners are called out to complete some examples. The work is then set for the whole class using very simple examples and clear instructions. Educator two stated that, "For the very weak learners, I give them a few very simple examples and I assist them through as they complete it."

Educator three had mentioned that, "for my advanced learners more work is set out for them for example, using our prescribed textbook and the Department workbooks. All three educators agreed that a variety of resources had to be used to teach a single concept and plenty of revision was necessary.

Q6: Additional activities that may help learners to become competent readers and writers

Educator one suggested that everyday half an hour extra should be allocated for additional reading whereby the educator has to read a story or any other reading material to the class. The educator should choose a variety of reading activities per day. This will help to inculcate

a love for reading in the children. The other two educators suggested the following: membership at the local library since the library at school is non-functional. They indicated that the reading done in class during the reading lesson is not sufficient. The learners have to be taught to choose their own books according to their own interests, socialise with other young readers, be introduced to new story books by the librarians and to complete reading a book within a time frame. All of this cannot be done at school.

Q7: Other resources used in literacy lessons

All three educators mentioned that they use the following resource materials to teach literacy: their own personal books, Departmental guides and supplements, the newspaper, magazines, worksheets, own readers, dictionaries, and the internet. They are also guided in their lesson planning on television news, community news and current school news.

Q8: Grouping of learners and planning of lessons in literacy

The educators indicated that learners are placed into ability groups once they have been tested in reading and formal writing. These groups are changed when learners show progression in their work. In a single day for literacy whole class teaching and group teaching takes place. Lessons are planned for a specific group or for the class. Occupational tasks are planned as well as new concepts to be taught.

Q9: Assisting English second language learners to become competent in literacy

Educator one stated that she speaks to them in IsiZulu when necessary to reinforce what is being said. Other learners who are competent in this language, also assists the learners to explain the instructions. She said, “I also use pictures and music as aids. They love music and dance so they become very interested in the lesson. Concrete aids have to be brought in and I do not do a lot of writing on the chalkboard for them. It confuses them.”

Educator two stated, “I don’t speak Isi-Zulu very well but I do get the other learners to assist me. I also allow for ‘buddy teaching’ and this helps a lot. My instructions are simple. I do not give them too many examples to complete. I use a lot of pictures to show what words and sentences mean.”

Educator three stated that she speaks Isi-Zulu and understands the language very well and this means that she can communicate well with them. “I also encourage buddy teaching in

my class. Those learners who do experience difficulty in learning English, I work with them as a small group offering plenty of support and assistance.”

Q10: How are advanced learners kept stimulated and motivated?

Similar responses were given by all three educators that: more enrichment exercises are set for these learners. They complete more work than the other learners. They also assist their peers in difficult tasks. They are given additional responsibilities in the class because they can handle the tasks independently.

Q11: Parents interest level in their children’s literacy development

Educator one stated:

“yes, there are some parents who do take a keen interest in their children’s learning. They supervise and sign work that is sent home, they attend parent meetings, they send messages in the message book when certain things are not clear to them and this interest rubs off onto the learners. They themselves know that their progress is being monitored and this encourages them to do well.”

Educator two has observed in her class that there are some parents who do not show an interest in school matters pertaining to the learner’s progress, because they are illiterate themselves. This poses a problem because they may want to help but do not know how to assist.

Educator three stated that,

“only the parents of the bright learners will be concerned about the child’s progress and how they can assist at school and at home. There are some who do not care at all, some who work away from home and only get to see their children occasionally and some work till late hours to supplement the home income. Although in some cases letters from the office are sent home to call the parents to school, some parents do not respond to them at all. It is for the educator to see how best to help the child.”

Q12: Ways to motivate parents / guardians to encourage their children to read and write

All three educators responded to this question by suggesting that parents should be called very often to school via parent-educator interviews and parent meetings to discuss the literacy progress of the learner. All written work books must be seen by the parent including tests and assessments to bring to the parent's notice the strengths and weaknesses of the learner in this learning area. They mentioned that it is the task of the educator to outline ways in which the child can be assisted to improve or to develop further.

They mentioned that their parents are not familiar with CAPS training and the teachings of many aspects in English have changed from what it was therefore they have to be educated on these matters. Educator three suggested that,

“we introduce the parents to the resource books that educators will be using in the class to teach literacy and also provide a list of additional books to these parents should they wish to purchase the books to do additional work with the learners at home.”

Q13: Change of method of teaching literacy

Educator one stated that she does not change her teaching method often but from time to time she tries to better the previous method if she finds that something is just not working well in her class. She found that with each new group of learners, depending on their ability level, the educator may have to use a specific teaching style.

Educator two stated that she changes her method of teaching literacy on a yearly basis only. This depends on the ability levels of the learners in her care for that year. Whilst educator three like educator one, agreed that methods and approaches will change according to what concept is being taught and to whom it is being taught, that is to the class or a specific group and so on.

She added that, “one method cannot be used all the time. It will become monotonous and the learners will soon lose interest in the lesson. Sometime it is good to surprise the learners with new and creative ideas.”

Q14: Time allocated for literacy teaching

All three educators agreed that the time allocated for literacy teaching according to the CAPS policy that they are following, is insufficient. They all agreed that there are far too many aspects and concepts to be taught to the grade three learners in preparation for the next Phase and therefore the weak and slow learners do not cope well.

Educator three added that, ‘I feel very sorry to keep some learners in during the break but they have to stay in class to complete the given tasks.’ Educator two mentioned that, ‘We have the ability to teach the lessons, but there are far too many learners in one class and therefore supervising all the learners adequately is very demanding. Many of my learners just do not complete the written tasks timeously.’

Educator three added that, ‘Teaching through CAPS is very demanding. A lot more is expected from the educator and the learners.’ She did mention that she manages somehow to complete the concepts to be taught for the term by curtailing certain lessons to make up time for other longer lessons and she gives the learners just a few examples to complete independently. Consolidation of work taught can be done through homework, tests and class assessments.

Q15: Expectations of the learners in literacy development

These were the common responses made by the educators: they must read and write daily for at least half an hour for each aspect. They need to be supervised by a parent, guardian or an elder sibling to correct the learner as he or she works through the activities. Reading will assist them to make progress in all other learning areas. They must be able to recognise basic sounds and given vocabulary. Educator three made this valuable contribution by adding that,

“they must come to school with some prior knowledge having been taught at home on how to speak properly, how to write basic letters of the alphabet, able to recognise core words that were taught in grades one and two, how to construct a simple sentence independently, good mannerism skills, and how to speak basic English to be able to communicate to all in the class adequately.”

Q16: Greatest challenges facing educators in the teaching of literacy

Educator one indicated that she receives very little assistance and support from her parents. Due to the large number of learners in her care, it would be good to get that additional help when it is needed the most. Educator two stated that,

“due to the language barrier, many of the English second language learners cannot understand the tasks given to them and some do not complete the activities. It is sometimes difficult for me to deliver the lessons when they cannot understand what I am trying to teach them. The learning of English is very different from learning any other language. There are too many rules to learn. This can be complicated for a young child. Some of these learners speak Isi-Zulu at home and only learn English when they have to at school.”

Educator three aired her frustration especially with regard to the teaching of reading. “We work very hard to ensure that the lesson is prepared thoroughly and try our best to teach them the basic skills to be independent readers, however, many of the learners lack an interest in this skill. Flash words, phonic sheets and reading sheets are made and are sent home to be revised daily but some learners do not even attempt to make an effort to learn these. The lack of involvement from the parents makes it even more difficult to teach some of them. 40 Learners in one class is not an acceptable number to work with. Supervising them thoroughly, teaching and maintaining discipline is a very difficult task.”

Q17: Support received from The Principal, Head of department and Colleagues

All three educators did indicate that they received ample support from the Head of department of the Foundation Phase and from their colleagues teaching the same grade. They enjoyed working collectively in planning lessons, setting tests and assessments and completing administration work that is required of them. It was stated that they did not receive much support from the other educators in the Intermediate Phase.

However, an important issue was raised by educator three who mentioned that, “it would really help that when we had an issue to be discussed with the Head of Department for example, poor discipline of a learner who is being disruptive in the lesson, this matter must be dealt with urgently. It is been noticed that there is no follow up on urgent matters by the Head of department. The educator has to work around the problem and sometimes it snow balls into other huge problems which could have been avoided.”

Q18: Ways in which learners help each other in spite of their cultural and learning differences

Educator one and three stated that when they seat their learners they ensure that a bright learner sits close to a slow learner. He or she will offer support and assistance when it is required by the other learner. The educators also mentioned that learners are often placed into small learning groups for various activities with one strong leader to assist the others.

Children learn a lot when they watch their friends doing things. They also use show and tell methods to communicate key aspects. Sometimes they even speak a bit of 'broken IsiZulu' to convey meanings to their learners.

Educator two mentioned that she uses buddy teaching in her lessons and this helps a great deal. She also speaks fluently in Isi-Zulu with the English second language learners to make learning easier for them.

Q19: Views on the last ANA literacy test that was written by learners

All the educators agreed that, "some learners coped very well in the test. It was a paper of a fair standard. Some instructions were very simple to match learner's abilities. However, there were some aspects that were tested too early in the term and therefore they had not covered these sections when it was being tested in the ANA paper. Learners were forced to leave blanks to some sections that they did not understand."

It was suggested to the researcher by educator three that, "the panel of examiners of this ANA test should receive sample questions and questioning techniques from the current grade three educators because they are teaching that grade and know better as to which techniques to use. These educators implement the CAPS curriculum so they should be allowed to make an input in the compiling of this common test paper."

They stated these common difficulties experienced by the learners in writing this test and they were the following: learners could not read the instructions independently although some instructions were very simple. Some learners did not complete many of the activities because they did not know what to do. They did not look for key words as clues when answering a question.

However, these educators did mention other administrative problems such as: some questions were set and the answer was not given in the comprehension passage. Some learners did become confused due to this problem. Secondly, some key words were left out in the comprehension passage and therefore the spellings of these words could not be completed by the learner. Thirdly, there was no marking memo given and therefore educators had to use their own discretion as they marked the tests.

Q20: How to overcome these challenges

Educator one stated that she intends to do plenty of remedial work and revision before the next test. More challenging activities will be set for the learners. She does not mind having extra classes in literacy for at least half an hour everyday to cover important aspects that may be tested.

Educator two mentioned that she will be following the CAPS document very closely linked with the Departmental workbooks that were given to the learners. These aspects will be incorporated into their homework, class tests, assessments and structured tests.

Educator three stressed the point that she will be using a variety of questions and questioning techniques in her daily teaching especially in the teaching of comprehension skills. She will also use past year papers for revision purposes.

Q21: Any other additional information that the researcher should know

All three educators thanked the researcher for a very interesting interview and for covering all important aspects in literacy teaching. However, one concern was raised that these research findings must be made known to all educators in that school and be seen as a way forward in improving the teaching and learning of literacy at their school.

They are keen to learn of other successful methods and approaches that can be used especially to assist the English second language learners in learning to read and write in this language competently.

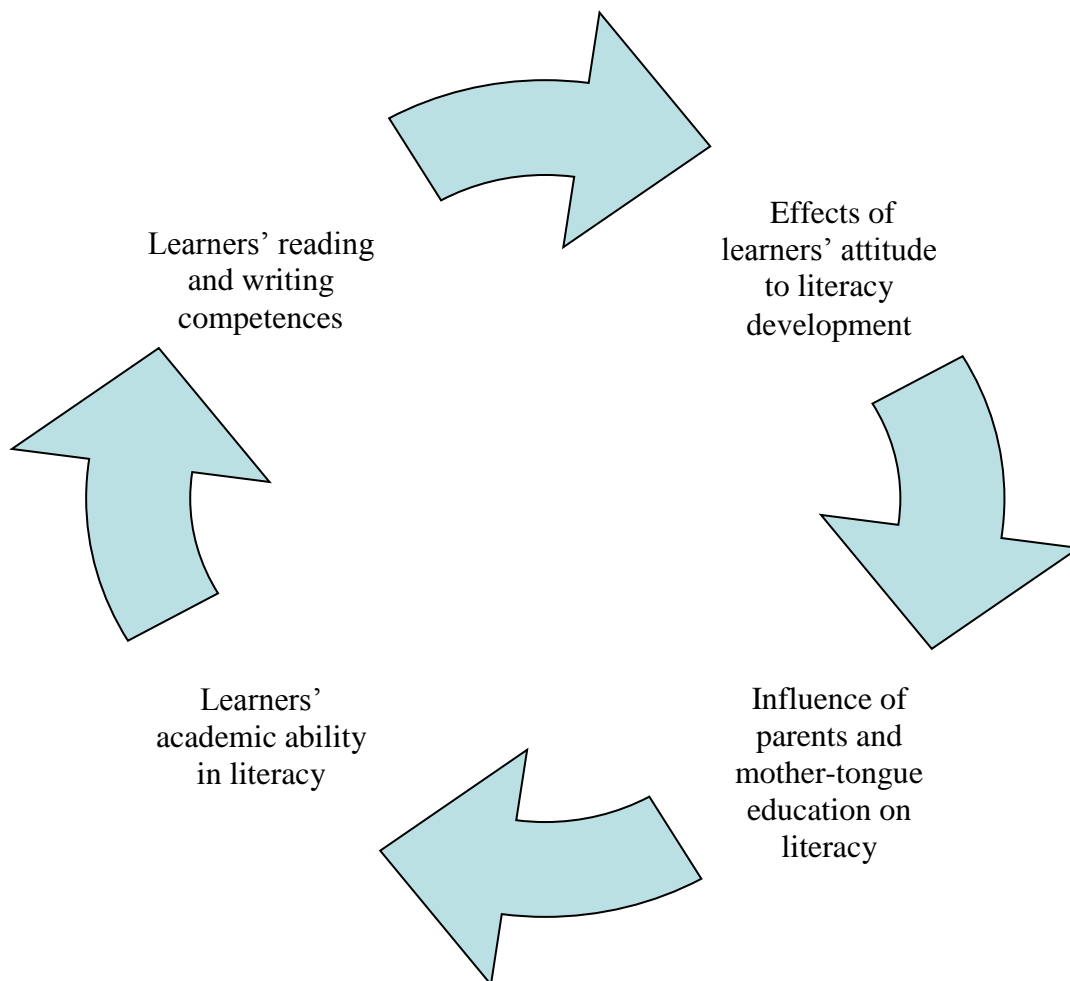
6.3 Learners' attitude and experiences of reading and writing practices in the classroom

This section presents data and research participants' responses to research question 3, that being, "What are learners' attitudes or experiences in the development of reading and writing

practices in the classroom?” All educators had stated that there were many different factors which impacted on learners’ performance of literacy development in the classroom. These factors hindered the learners’ from acquiring and developing the necessary skills in literacy.

As a Foundation phase educator the researcher is of the opinion that it is generally acknowledged that primary education is the most crucial stage in the life of a learner because learning and developing literacy skills are essential for they form the foundation upon which other skills are built. The figure 5.5 below illustrates the four inter-locking, key factors that may affect a learners’ performance in literacy and they are: learners’ reading and writing competences, the effects of learners’ attitude to literacy development, the influences of parents and mother tongue education on literacy development and learners’ academic ability.

Figure 6.1 Factors impacting on learners’ experiences of literacy



a: Learners' reading and writing competences

In declaring 2001 the 'year of the reader' the Minister of education did acknowledge that there is an enormous problem with regard to reading. According to Read (1998) the inability to read for meaning is a contributing factor in our high failure rates that costs the education system millions every year.

However, it is not only the skills of reading that may be lacking, but writing skills as well. For, all research participants at the case study school had claimed that it is quite difficult and a huge responsibility for them to assist their learners in reading and writing tasks because many of their learners lack the competence in reading and formal writing. This was further explained as seen in the excerpts below:

Educator one stated that,

“learners become very confused with reading and writing tasks when they have to work with more than one language. Presently, our learners are taught these skills in three languages being, English, Afrikaans and IsiZulu. Our learners cannot read and write properly in English let alone the others. These lessons precede each other and learners battle to complete tasks. Very often a lot of oral work and drill has to be done in the lesson.”

“Reading and writing is a huge problem at our school. We try to do our best. Many of our learners live with their grandparents or aunts and uncles. And you know that most black grandparents cannot read or write. Some learners take advantage of this situation that they do not have anybody to assist them to complete homework and they too become very lazy to try. Reading material is difficult to get to give to our learners and we do not even have a library.

But we assist our very weak and our gifted learners whenever we can. In my class I have simple words and instructions pasted onto cardboard and stuck on the walls. This is used during my discussion lessons early in the morning.” (Educator two).

These opinions are consistent with the findings of the Review Committee on curriculum 2005, which stated that there were reading and writing problems among learners because schools spent budget allocations on stationery rather than on learning support materials on reading and writing books (Department of Education, 2000). The researcher believes that

school –wide campaigns are crucial for South African schools to promote reading and writing skills.

Rose (2003) makes a valuable contribution by stating that a more significant factor is the role of parent-child interaction in interpreting the meanings and words of written stories. The researcher has observed that many African children are not exposed to this kind of orientation, which is crucial in preparing them to become independent readers and writers in school. The majority of children in South Africa start school without the necessary pre-literacy skills.

As a result, they have little concept of what reading and writing entails and they have not developed the necessary skills that will make subsequent acquisition of literacy easier. Thus, the researcher maintains that it becomes unrealistic to expect learners to be involved in reading and writing tasks at home because many homes are without books and reading is not a culture for many South African communities. Some learners also have onerous domestic responsibilities and have no or very little time to concentrate on doing their school work.

In spite of the many challenges the research participants attempt to use different approaches in order to try to assist learners to become lifelong readers and writers. But it was noticed that learners are not exposed to a wide variety of cultural stories or books to cater for the different needs of learners' backgrounds and their cultures. The educators have learners from diverse cultures, languages and religions in their classrooms.

One respondent states that,

“the diversity of the learners presents a great challenge to us when we have to teach reading and writing skills. The challenge for us is that these learners do not share the same language, culture and religion and the resources at our school are inadequate to meet their learning needs.”

Generally, resources in South African schools are inadequate therefore it becomes difficult to promote a strong culture of reading and writing. There is even a shortage of books written in English. Up to five children can be found sharing a book in a classroom. The situation is worse for reading materials written in indigenous languages. Therefore,

'bedtime story' does not exist in the African home vocabulary, especially in rural areas. This situation does not foster the habits of reading for pleasure and thus African children are at a disadvantage at school and do not become competent in reading textbooks designed to develop knowledge in different learning areas (Govender, 2011).

The socioeconomic gap becomes even wider when rich children move on to computer-based learning, while poorer learners continue not to have access even to ordinary books. The findings of this project have shown that the Foundation Phase educators are involved in developing learners' proficiency in reading and writing skills. The research participants did assert that these are essential skills to make life-long readers and writers.

Educator two stated that,

“reading and formal writing is a major problem, therefore we try to accommodate the weak and the gifted learners by doing group and whole class teaching, incorporating the CAPS curriculum and old, traditional methods that have worked well for us in the past such as teaching core words, using a sentence maker and drill of phonic and flash work.”

b: The effects of learners' attitude to literacy development

The interviews of the educators and the learners show that a positive attitude on the part of the learner plays a major role in literacy development.

“Some of our learners have a very negative attitude towards learning. We try our best to teach them but some of them do not want to learn to read or write. They want to play. If only they show a positive attitude or more interest in their work they will perform better in literacy. “(Educator three)

Educator two added that

“we are very serious about our work. we want our learners to succeed and we try to implement the curriculum in the best way possible. But we need the support and assistance of the parents or caregivers to make the difference. These learners need plenty of encouragement and attention. They need to be heard, noticed and to be cared for.”

“Learners have the ability to choose between possessing a good attitude or a bad attitude towards their academic progress at school. I have learners in my class that work very hard but are not very intelligent but some have the ability but are not willing to go the extra mile. There are some learners who show a keen interest in learning and we are grateful to have them in our classes.

I believe that the type of attitude a learners has, contributes to his or her performance in literacy. The attitude of learners flows into the ability of learners and this will show in their performance in school.” (Educator two).

A positive attitude is another very significant factor which assists learners to acquire and develop their literacy skills. The complexity of attitude of learners involved in literacy development is borne out of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). In 2006 forty countries, including South Africa, participated in this study. One of the findings revealed that South Africa rated last in the category ‘learners attitude towards reading.’ The PIRLS study also established that a positive attitude towards reading is essential in meeting one of the requirements for literacy acquisition and development. Flowing from this discussion another challenge to literacy development is the influence of parents and mother tongue education.

c: The influence of parents and mother tongue education

At the sample school many of the black learners speak IsiZulu but are taught in English, hence these learners find it difficult to cope adequately in English. This view was presented by one of the research participants:

“In our community many of our parents are not fully literate and therefore they find it difficult to support their children’s learning at school. Other parents have very low literacy levels and they cannot relate to what is happening in the school curriculum. However, in spite of this many of these parents want their children to be taught in English for they believe that this is a dominant language and their children will be successful if they learn to read and write in English. The challenges are even greater for they have to learn a second and a third language. Many of our parents do not understand the reasons why reading and writing are best taught in the learner’s dominant home language.”

In keeping with this argument in favour of mother tongue education, UNESCO (1968) defines mother tongue education as education that is the language which a learner has acquired in the early years and which normally has become their natural instrument of thought and communication. In South Africa many learners learn and write in a second language which makes it more difficult to acquire and develop skills in the Foundation Phase or early stages of primary education. It becomes clear then that urgent interventions are required to gain the necessary academic and social skills which only can come through literacy.

The information below was obtained from an interview with a grade three learner:

“My parents want me to learn English well so that one day I will be able to study in a college. We speak too much of IsiZulu at home and with our friends at school. I like English because it is better. I will learn hard.”

Many authors have documented the resistance of mother tongue instruction due to it aligning itself to the apartheid ideology. Furthermore, the results of the EMIS survey conducted by the Department of education, 53% of the learners do not regard the mother tongue as their home language, 93 % of the learners chose English as their preferred language of teaching and learning. This also suggests that both parents and learners have similar resistance to mother tongue instruction. Another problem is that South African schools do not have the necessary resources, in terms of personnel and learning material, to support the ideal mother tongue instruction in all learning areas (Vans Rensburg & Weideman, 2002)).

It is evident from the findings that parents wish for proper instruction in English from Grade R for their learners whilst Government policy calls for instruction in the indigenous mother tongue.

d: The effects of learners’ academic ability on literacy development

The researcher is of the opinion that another factor that contributes positively to learners developing literacy, is their academic ability. The research participants indicated that they have different levels of learners whom they have to plan for and to teach meaningfully in all learning areas. There are very few high flyers in each class of learners that were observed.

These learners grasp concepts quickly, can work independently with difficult tasks, and have good comprehension skills.

The average learner makes an attempt to complete work independently or with the help of the educator. It was observed that there were far too many weak learners in each class. These learners relied heavily on the educator for assistance to complete the simplest of tasks. It was observed that each educator had a heavy workload to plan and prepare daily for learners of different ability groups. There was not sufficient time to address all learners' needs at all these levels. But in spite of this, educators did try to cope as best as they could.

Educator three shared her view as follows: “many of our English second language learners have a very low academic ability because they may not have the necessary resources such as reading and writing material, books, television and so on. What I notice is that they can chat to you and like to speak their thoughts orally but cannot write or read correctly. Some learners from literate backgrounds excel at school because they are prepared in advance and are school ready. Every year I notice that the literacy levels of our learners are declining. We are getting more and more learners in our classes who cannot speak, read or write in English.”

The different levels of learner abilities should be addressed in the Foundation Phase if not these learners go into the Intermediate phase and the gap will broaden. Nomvete (1994) supports the view that all learners should be taught in languages which they can understand and through which they can learn. Therefore, teaching practices should be based on the belief that all learners can learn. Educators need to develop new approaches to teaching otherwise learners will continue to perform badly as is in our present situation.

e: Findings from learner's written work

This section will present in tabular form the analysis of the written work of the grade three learners. The researcher found that through this data one gets a glimpse of the educator's definition of literacy teaching, their theories of learning which underpin their teaching and their approaches and practices as reflected. The findings for each of these aspects will also be presented.

Educator one	Educator two	Educator three
<p>-The learner's work book displays great deal of word building, sentence building, narrative writing, sequencing of pictures and events, hand writing skills, phonic development, extended vocabulary, paragraph writing, writing of different genres such as completing a friendly letter.</p> <p>-Most of the learner's work are neat and correctly completed.</p> <p>-Books are marked timeously and corrections made as needed.</p> <p>-Many of the learners write confidently.</p> <p>-Educator encourages good efforts such as rewarding learners with a gold star etc.</p> <p>-Progression of work is seen.</p>	<p>-Many of the learners write confidently and creatively.</p> <p>-Evidence of good language and vocabulary skills taught.</p> <p>-The activities are suitable for the learners.</p> <p>-Educator encourages word, sentence and paragraph writing.</p> <p>-The learners are complimented on their work by means of a happy face stickers etc.</p> <p>-All written work is timeously marked.</p> <p>-Evidence of remedial work and revision completed.</p> <p>-Good handwriting skills are encouraged.</p> <p>-Evidence of graded tasks are seen.</p>	<p>-Many learners have developed good hand writing skills.</p> <p>-Work in most books are neat and correct.</p> <p>-Educator thoroughly supervises all written work.</p> <p>-There is evidence of word building, sentence building, phonic tasks, language usage, story writing and paragraph writing skills being taught.</p> <p>-Educator encourages the use of pictures, drawings and simple illustrations to convey meanings.</p> <p>-Correct space and layout of work is encouraged.</p> <p>-Learners are rewarded for good efforts with stickers, happy face stamps etc.</p> <p>-Progression of work seen.</p>

1. Table 6.4 Reflections of literacy teaching in the written work of the learners

2. Findings of literacy teaching in the written efforts of learners

The researcher is of the opinion that the educators are implementing a process writing approach. This means that the educators are allowing the learners to visualise, to use their imagination, so that it is not a purely controlled, guided and limiting exercise. This can be seen in the following exercises such as filling in a word, or completing a sentence. In all the books there was evidence of the various aspects of literacy being taught such as phonic development, language usage, formal writing skills, hand writing skills and other forms of genres such as letter or story writing tasks.

Learners are allowed to express themselves but are also guided through the activities. There are a wide variety of activities set for the learners to complete to meet the different ability levels of the learners. The educators are following the CAPS guidelines and are using the work books and the resources that have been given to the school by the Department of Education.

There is evidence of a Language Experience Approach and a Social Constructivist Approach being used by the educators that these approaches underpins CAPS. The data shows that the learners are actively constructing and creating their own knowledge from their own experiences for example, their books reflect creative writing activities in which the educator affirms and encourages good writing practices by rewarding them with comments, stars, happy faces and fun stickers.

3. **Table 6.5 Overview of the theories of learning as evaluated in the learners' written work**

The table below presents the overall theories of learning by the grade three educators as seen in the learner's written tasks:

Theories of learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language Experience Approach• Social constructivist Approach• Skills based Approach• Behaviourist method• Psycholinguistic Method• A process writing approach
See Appendices (Y) of the learner's written tasks

4. **Findings of the theories of learning in learners written tasks**

In the learner's written tasks of all grade three educators, it was reflected that there were attempts made by the educator to assist the learners in planning, drafting, editing and writing tasks. These educators encouraged very creative writing and motivated the learners to link their ideas with their own experiences such as home experiences, thus personal writing was seen in the books of many learners.

However, in some of the books it was evident that some learners cannot communicate effectively in the English language. There were far too many simple errors made and sometimes marking became a tedious task for the educator. The educator's role and approach to mediating literacy teaching is revealed in the pieces of written work that was seen by the researcher. The work is of a high standard and suitable for the grade three learners. In some instances it was good to note that preparation has started to gear these learners by slowly introducing them to aspects that will be taught to them in the Intermediate Phase.

Some learners have a good command of the English language and produce excellent pieces of work. They need little or no guidance from the educator and can also complete additional tasks independently. The educator links aspects of the socio-cultural context of the learners in the activities that are being set for them. They allow the learners to write about life-world experiences and therefore writing tasks become more meaningful for them.

All three educators approach to literacy is reflected in the choice of genres that they choose for their learners to complete in the various aspects of literacy such as, letter or story writing, making an identity badge, completing a party invitation, completing a father's day card etc.

The learner's work shows a structured and guided approach that these educators use. There is the use of controlled vocabulary, correctness of sentences, work banks given, and therefore it is evident that they also make use of a skilled based approach to literacy teaching.

5. Table 6.6 Some approaches and practices that educators use as evaluated in the learner's written work

Approaches and practises in the learner's written work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The written tasks attest to the three educator's passion for literacy. ✓ There is fluidity of the English language, the extended development of vocabulary, and lots of visual representations. ✓ Learners are exposed to different genres of writing ranging from simple tasks to more difficult activities such as writing a message, expressive personal writing, completing thinking bubbles, mind mapping and colourful visual representations. ✓ There is a step by step approach to the teaching of literacy. ✓ There is evidence of a series of discreet skills being taught for example, word, sentence, paragraph and story writing. ✓ Educators have an affirmative approach yet loving, motivating and encouraging. ✓ There is some evidence of a process writing approach because of the evidence of terminology such as for example, 'plan, draft, edit, write your own story.' ✓ The educators constantly provide revision, remedial work, assessments and positive feedback to their learners.

- ✓ Educators teach literacy in a very integrated way instead of it being taught in piece meal.
- ✓ The language is taught in a fun, imaginative way taking into consideration the
- ✓ likes and dislikes of the learners.
- ✓ Lessons are taught in a very structured, controlled and guided method.

6. Findings of the general approaches and practices that the educators use as seen in the learners' written activities

The three Foundation Phase educators are very competent, confident, enthusiastic, creative and firm educators. They display a great deal of sensitivity towards the different learning needs of their learners. They are conscientious about providing positive feedback to them. The written work of the learners reflect that their work is closely monitored, positive feedback is provided, there is an extension of vocabulary, spell checks done and good penmanship encouraged.

The learner's work also exhibits explicit teaching, extensive writing strategies, rules in language and grammar such as correct punctuation, use of capital letters and so on. There is evidence that the reading and writing tasks are integrated. Scaffolding is used by these educators as a tool for decoding and to provide assistance to the learners to become more confident and fluent in their use of the English language.

6.4 The implementation of government literacy policy at classroom level

In this section data was found to answer research question 4 (How are Government literacy policies implemented in practice in the classroom?) will be analysed. The sub-theme is 'The Language in Education Policy (LiEP), policy implementation and classroom practice.'

a: The Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

According to Czerniewicz, Murray & Probyn (2000) the LiEP is seen as dynamic and changing as it is interpreted and reinterpreted at different levels in the education system by different stakeholders in terms of particular contexts, existing ideas, values and practices.

It must be understood that South Africa encompasses a multi-lingual society that has some unique linguistic problems because of its policy of apartheid. Thus, it becomes necessary that each school has its own LiEP policy which promotes the school's vision and mission. The National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) empowers the Minister of Education to determine a national policy for language in education. The case study school did not have a literacy policy drawn up. However, they do follow the guidelines as offered by the Department of Education.

Educator one responded to this as follows:

“The Department has given us many policies and we discuss policies at our staff meetings. Our school does not have their own language or literacy policy. Some of the Department policies are too complicated and difficult to understand. There are far too many of them. We need a lot of time and expertise in order to unpack its meanings and implementation process.” ...“We do not have the time to read all the policies. I did not see a literacy policy at school. We use the guidelines as discussed by our Head of Department. In my opinion the Department of Education does not provide accurate details as to what must be achieved and how to achieve the outcomes.” (Educator two)

According to ELTIC (1997) the LiEP policy would provide the starting point for schools to develop, implement and improve their literacy policy. A number of reasons have been put forward to account for the school's failure to develop and implement the LiEP policy and some of them are listed below:

- schools do not have knowledge of the policy;
- schools do not clearly understand the extent of their powers and responsibility; schools lack the expertise and experience in developing and implementing their own school policies; and
- schools are not aware of the type of support that the Department of Education will provide to them.

b: Policy implementation and classroom reality

It is evident from the findings of the discussions held with the research participants that implementing LiEP would be a huge challenge because often very few guidelines are provided by the Department of Education. The following comments bear this out:

“I think that we copy policies that are implemented in countries abroad and that the Department of Education and other stakeholders do not really understand how they will work in our schools. It is always a process of trial and error. Thus, very few of the policies really do work. Often schools do not implement the policies as per requirements from the Department of Education.” (Educator one)

Educator two had this to say:

“We are always bombarded with unnecessary policies that do not work. We need to understand and be trained to implement the policies so that we can contribute to improving the performance in literacy in our school. “

In 1998 the Department of education proposed an ambitious plan to monitor and implement the Language / Literacy policies. However, it appears that little has happened since then. It is arguable whether the resources (both financial and in terms of capacity) will ever be available to put this plan into practice (Department of Education, 1998).

The researcher comments to this by adding that there is always frustration by educators and parents for they are at the receiving end of policy making and this causes frustration. This frustration indicates that policy implementation is never straightforward. The LiEP policy has been described as one of the most progressive in the world but sadly very few schools have implemented it (Probyn, Murray, Botha, Botya, Brooks and Westphal, 2002).

6.5 Social factors or challenges impacting negatively on the development of literacy

This theme deals with research question five (What underlying social factors or challenges, if any, can be seen to impact on the practice of literacy development at the case study school?) The sub-themes outlined are as follows: inadequate literacy personnel, workload of educators, over-crowded classrooms, lack of resources, lack of support from parents, the

school budget, the role of the School Governing Body and the researcher's general observations of the case study school.

Figure 6.2 Some of the challenges experienced by educators in literacy development



a: Inadequate literacy personnel

The three educators at the case study school expressed the view that there was a challenge when it came to literacy educators.

“Our workload is big and we have to teach large classes. We do not get any additional help from the community or from our parents because our school cannot afford to pay extra personnel. We only get assistance from some parents when an educator is on sick leave or away from school. Educators at private schools work with small classes and they have an assistant most of the time to do additional tasks. We need the help because besides teaching we also have to complete many other administrative tasks. Added to this, we also do not get the assistance of parents to coach our learners in the different codes of sport or to help us to train athletes for school events.” (Educator one)

Educator three explained that,

“it is an advantage when we have student teachers during their block teaching at our school during the course of the year. They assist us to supervise learners, mark completed activities, help with group reading, revision of work, monitor weak learners and so on. We can advance our lessons because they also assist us in completing some administrative work.”

b: Workload of educators

A heavy workload of an educator can have a negative impact on literacy development. The research participants did mention that their workload was extremely high and often it became difficult to concentrate on teaching effectively.

“I am expected to plan and prepare for all lessons, collect and bank school fees and any other funds, such as excursion money, fun run or monies for fundraising events, keep records for IQMS, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and so on. We have to draw up a management plan for each code of sport that we supervise and we have to train the learners during our lunch break or after school hours.

We have two clerks but we still have to complete a lot of administrative work. These tasks often make unnecessary demands on my curriculum time because sometimes I have to

complete administrative tasks during my actual teaching time, especially if it involves information from the learners, or their parents. All grade three educators teach for twenty four and half hours per week. We have visiting educators in our classes who teach IsiZulu and Physical education. “ (Educator two).

A similar sentiment was echoed by educator three:

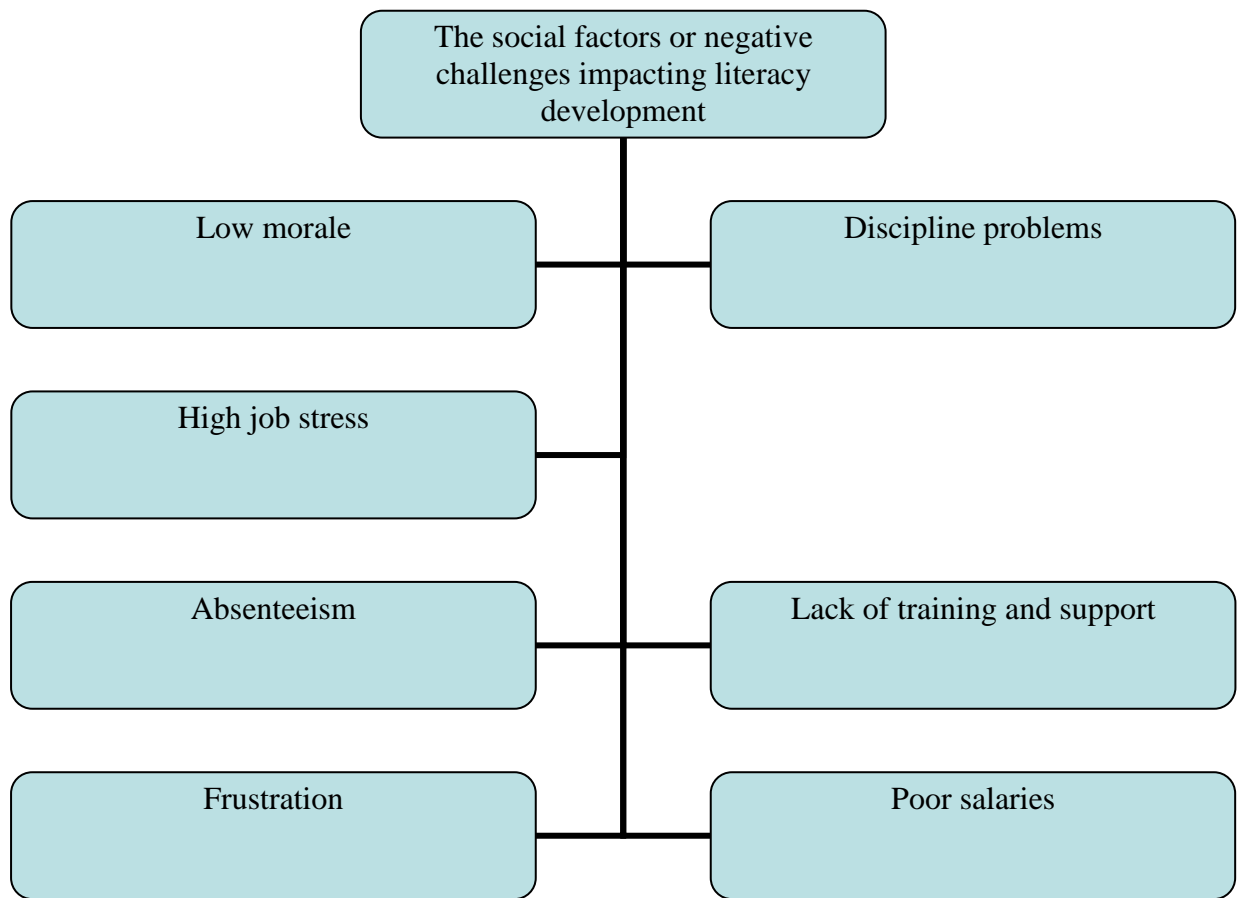
“We always have numerous complaints but nobody listens to us. This can be very frustrating and de-motivating. We are overworked, underpaid and over-stressed. Sometimes the stress of being in school is unbearable. There is little training to explain in detail how the new curriculum should be taught meaningfully to large classes of second language learners. The absentee rate at our school is high because educators get sick very often and they are forced to be away from work. I think this is because school is stressful and exasperating.”

An article by Nepaul (2014) titled, ‘From grade 1 it’s all downhill’ confirms these concerns for it mentions a School Monitoring Survey that found that the average national absentee rate of educators was 6.1 percent. This means that on an average day, 6.1 percent of them were absent across our country. This rate was higher for primary school educators than it was for high school educators.

From the findings it was observed that educators do indeed spend less time teaching and more time on other activities that are required by policy and by the school itself. Thus, vital instructional time is often eroded. Motshekga (2009, p.15) agrees that “the school curriculum places too heavy an administrative burden on educators. This undermines the educators primary task of teaching”. As seen in the case study school, educators have a lack of administrative support in the school. They are even expected to fundraise and to do clerical work at the same time as teaching the young learners.

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, the researcher outlines in detail in Figure 6.2 below other social factors as observed by the researcher and mentioned by the research participants, that impede literacy development in the case study school.

Figure 6.3 Other social factors or negative challenges impacting upon literacy development



According to a 2008 case study conducted in sixteen schools across four provinces namely: Gauteng, KZN, Free State and the North West Province, confirms that educators are dissatisfied with their workloads, working conditions, inadequate salaries and incentives, large classes, teaching conditions in terms of working hours, their workload, lack of learner discipline, lack of respect and high job stress (Diko & Akoojee, 2009).

In addition to this, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2008) asserts that education was in serious trouble for they identified further problems such as inadequate funding, imbalanced curricula, poor teacher education, poor teacher training, support and development and unsatisfactory provision of teaching materials. Furthermore, the Department of Education revealed that an average score for literacy of grade three pupils

was 36% but the roadmap indicates that 15% of learners passed the literacy and numeracy tests.

c: Overcrowded classes

At the case study school there are 12 Foundation phase educators in the Department. The average number of learners per educator is 44 per class. There are no spare classrooms available in the school and even the old library as well as the multi-purpose room are all being used up for the LSEN support groups. Upon observation, the classrooms have very little space left.

Desks are crowded to accommodate the large numbers of learners. It is not always possible to seat the learners in groups due to the confined space. The grade three classrooms do not have a reading corner. Educators call the learners in small groups to the educator's table during reading lessons.

“I know that we are very lucky because in some rural schools there are about 80 learners per educator in a class. This is ridiculous and I am glad that we have some space to walk around and to monitor the learners. However, these numbers are too large for our grade R classes and the problems they encounter in the year continue as the learners progress to the next grade because we too are saddled with large numbers and we are forced to make the best of the situation.” (Educator one)

The researcher is of the opinion that a shortage of classrooms and over-crowding can contribute to high stress levels of educators. It is no wonder that learners achievements drop, educators battle with learner discipline and they cannot cope to cater for the different ability levels of their learners.

d: A lack of resources at school

The three grade three educators echoed their concern about the lack of some resources at their school. In spite of the very low school fee recovery rate, the school buys and supplies the basic stationery to all learners. Certain resources such as chalk and chart paper are given at a minimum to educators as the need arises for it. Some educator resource books have also been purchased. Very little sporting equipment has been bought and they have not been upgraded. However, this school has not upgraded their readers for the past twelve years due

to low funds. The findings have shown that the grade three learners are still using the readers and this is not in keeping with the CAPS curriculum. It also does not cater for the different ability levels or the different cultures of the learners in the classroom.

Educator one mentioned that,

“We are still using the old readers and old stories to teach reading in a multi-cultural class and this is not acceptable. We raised this concern at our Department meetings but nothing has been done so far. We were promised that new readers will be purchased for the Foundation Phase learners as soon as possible. We also have a shortage of these books.

Sometimes two or three learners have to share one reader. This makes reading lessons very difficult. I have small reading groups but we still need more readers. We have copies of the readers but very often our learners do not bring back the copies. Some readers are also in a bad condition. Books cannot be bought in different languages due to the low budget.”

A lack of resources in the school was also mentioned by the learners and the parents during their interviews. However, they brought up the issue of the non-functional school library.

“We had a library at school and we relied on this to borrow books to read at home but now it is closed because they are using it as a classroom. I do not go to the local library because it is too far from my home. I do not have books at home to read. We only get the free newspaper and I see the pictures because it is very hard for me to read the sentences. We have some books in the classroom but there is no time to read it and our teacher does not allow us to take the books home.”

I am of the opinion that this shows the educator’s stance on the importance of reading. The educator should have considered sending the books home to consolidate reading practices taught in the classroom.

A parent mentioned,

“I do not know why the library was closed down. Every school should have a library. The reading time in the class is not enough for the learners. I try to borrow books from my friends for my child. It is not safe for my child to walk to the library when we are at work.”

The data from the learner interviews did indicate that 92 % of the learners were not members of the local library.

“We had a computer room but it is no longer in use and our learners do not go for computer study lessons. The laboratory in our school is also being used as a classroom due to lack of space for the learners.” (Educator two)

According to an article in *The Sunday Independent* (2014) titled ‘Poor facilities cripple teaching’, a report of the National Education Infrastructure Management System, looked at 24 793 public schools in the country’s resources and found amongst other concerns that:

- 22 938 schools have no stocked libraries;
- 19 541 schools do not have space for libraries;
- 21 021 schools have no laboratory facilities; and
- 19 037 schools have no computer centres.

To reiterate what we are saying international and local research confirms that resources play a vital role in primary education. How can the CAPS curriculum be implemented without libraries at our schools? It is here that learners develop the important skills of investigating, processing and analysing information. Furthermore, high achieving schools view the school’s library as pivotal to their success for it is considered to go hand in hand with academic excellence (Czerniewicz, Murray & Probyn, 2000).

e: Lack of support from the parents and the local social context

The educators mentioned that they receive very little support from the parents in the community in terms of assisting learners with homework, set additional tasks for them or getting involved in school activities. Many of the learners live with grandparents or aunts and uncles. Some of them are semi-literate or illiterate and therefore they are not always able to help the children. However, there are some parents who do make an effort to liaise frequently with the educator to assist the school and the learner in the best way possible.

The data from the questionnaires given to the parents revealed that only 5% of them visit the school weekly, with 52% monthly and 43% on a yearly basis. However, this home-school bond is not sufficient. An educator did state that,

“we need the support of our parents and the community. There is only so much that we can do at school. We need them to assist us so that learners can make some progress. When we have school functions, fundraising drives and weekend activities, only some parents support us in our ventures. We would like to see more parents during our budget meetings and parent-teacher interviews.”

The social context refers to the conditions and characteristics such as culture, language and economic levels of people in the community surrounding the school. It is important to discuss this aspect for it may improve or impede educators' work at school. The case study school is in a peri-urban area close to many amenities. The learners come from poor, average and wealthy backgrounds. Some learners are faced daily with overwhelming family problems and social difficulties. This is due to the fact that many homes are headed by single parents or grandparents. Many of whom are unemployed and rely on a social grant to support the families needs.

It has been observed and from the learner interviews, many of these learners have to become responsible from a very early age to take care of family responsibilities. This weighs heavily on them and often they seek attention from the educators at school. There are many child-headed families in this community. The area close to the school is owned by many drug dealers and peddlers and alcohol outlet owners.

“This is not a conducive environment for our little ones. Everyday they witness incidents of violence, verbal and substance abuse. We have a mixture of learners being black, coloured and Indians and we have to cater for the different language and cultural backgrounds of these learners.” (Educator one)

f: The role of the School Governing Body (SGB) in promoting literacy

Observations reveal that the SGB members show little interest and involvement in promoting a language literacy policy or in developing other language policies at the case study school. These may be some of the reasons: the members lack the experience and knowledge in this area and they do not have the time to attend to the school’s needs.

From the findings it is evident that they SGB does assist the school in certain tasks but not in drawing up policies. However, Harber (2000) argues that literacy development involves an accountable and democratically governed school system based on a partnership between Government, schools and the local communities. Structures such as the SGBs provide for public accountability and a way for parents and the community to influence schools. However, in this case study school, it was found that the SGB was not equipped to make decisions about the planning, formulating and the implementation of literacy or language policies.

A research participant mentioned the following:

“Our SGB members are not fully trained when it comes to their functioning at school level. Many of them cannot assist us fully. I think that they have to be fully capacitated not only for policy making and decision taking but overall on their roles and responsibilities at school level.”

The researcher is of the opinion that the above state of affairs is as a result of a mismatch between Government policy and implementation. Skinner (2003) states that certain SGBs also appear unwilling to go along with Government policies because they do not understand them. However, according to the South African Schools Act (1996) it requires the SGB to announce the school’s policy and to state how it will promote multilingualism through a variety of measures, but sadly in practice this is not being implemented in many schools.

g: The school budget

According to the observations in the case study school, the principal oversees the school budget having discussed it thoroughly with all management members, educators and the parents. The principal becomes accountable to the SGB. However, one respondent did state the following,

“The SGB is not very knowledgeable about policies, budget, costs of resources and so on. I think that sometimes a principal can take advantage of this and therefore we hear of mismanagement of funds. Quiet recently at our school we as educators had to question where the funds were coming from to purchase what we thought of as ‘unnecessary items’.”

“Our school has a literacy committee in place but we do not have a budget for resources allocated to us for the year. Each learning area should have a committee and all members should be involved in drawing up requirements and a budget. This is the only way that resources will be bought. Very often we have to fundraise to purchase what is required for the year. But sometimes we again question where the money was spent because often after a fundraising event the breaks down of expenditures are not done by management members.” (Educator three)

h: Researcher’s general observations of practices at the school

The data presented below represents observations of the researcher, some feedback from the parent’s questionnaires, educators and the learner interviews.

A: Learner Characteristics

In this sub-section the following themes are considered: the language background and literacy skills, the impact of preschool attendance on learners’ literacy proficiency, the influence of mixing ability grouping in classes and learners’ with learning problems on teaching.

1: Language background and literacy skills

Educators had stated in their interviews that,

“a large number of their learners still point to the word and read, sound out words aloud as they read or need to refer to their phonic chart when they read. Very few learners can read independently.”

They also stated that due to a lack of interest in reading, many have a poor vocabulary. Many learners at this school are non-English learners with an African language mother tongue and their literacy difficulties can be attributed to this reason. Some of these learners have poor spoken or written English skills and battle especially with basic comprehension.

Suggesting a lack of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1981) in English, some of the learners in the school still needed to think in their vernacular. Currently at this school, all learners from Grade 1 to Grade 7 are taught the language of Afrikaans as an additional language. Isi-Zulu is also taught. So the dilemma for some learners is that at school, they have to learn English and Afrikaans as two new languages to them and still be able to be competent in their home language, that being Isi-Zulu. This can be a real challenge for many young learners.

2: The impact of pre-school attendance

This school has three Grade R classes, a total number of 100 learners, with competent educators and many of the learners have attended the pre-school class in the school. The researcher is of the opinion that for those who do attend Grade R, this will make a difference to their basic communication skills.

3: Mixed ability grouping and learners with learning abilities

This school has learners with mixed abilities per class, including some learners with learning difficulties or special Education Needs (LSEN). This may pose a problem for educators due to the large numbers. The researcher is of the opinion that in comparison to having a group of learners with similar abilities, the mixed ability composition of the class can be very challenging due to the need to extend faster learners and assist those who were battling.

However, there are two remedial education teachers available and from Grades one to seven, once learners are identified as learners with special education needs, these learners are called out from the mainstream class during the course of the day and they are assisted in English and Mathematics skills.

B: Parental involvement

According to the questionnaire for the parents of grade three learners (Appendix O, question number 10) 5 % percent of the parents stated that they visit the school weekly, 52% visit monthly and 43 % of the parents visit yearly, to discuss the progress of their children.

However, according to educators it was difficult to get the co-operation of parents of learners who were struggling. Some of these parents do not attend the parent meetings to discuss their children's difficulties. Some reasons for this could be: lack of an optimal home literate environment, busy lifestyles of parents, sickness and poor health, learners with grandparents and caregivers who may be illiterate, and a lack of interest and so on.

However, the school makes an attempt to elicit parent involvement by means of letters explaining the school's curriculum development and outlining simple strategies for parents to assist their children with reading and writing tasks. Meetings are also held to explore the expectations of the parents and the learners as well as to consider the assessments per term.

C: School library availability and use

This school has a library but it has not been functional for the past two years. Due to a lack of funds, renovations to the library have stopped. Initially this room was used as a classroom but now it is left vacant. The non-functional library at this school could be the chief contributor to the lack of interest amongst learners to read independently.

Learners are told to become members of the local library but many find it too far from their homes to travel to the library and therefore rely on what reading materials are supplied to them by their educators. Each classroom has a small collection of story books and magazines for the learners to use as they need them. However, some of these books are outdated and need to be renewed as soon as possible to maintain the interest of the readers.

D: Classroom reading resource availability and management

This school is not a well resourced school and although it has a budget allocation to purchase resources as required per year, the funding for such resources has to be staggered with a grade receiving the money each year. A lot of funding comes from fund raising activities that are organised by the educators and with the co-operation of some parents. At times, the school does receive some resources from sponsors but this is not too much due to the rising costs of books and stationery.

There are plenty of readers, charts, posters, newspaper supplements and educator resource books sent to the school from the Department of Education and they are supplied to the educators. All worksheets are run out by the administrative clerks when they are required by the educators. However, the researcher did notice that in the Foundation Phase there were shortages of readers because learners shared the readers in the classroom. The same readers have been used in the phase for the past three years.

Photocopy handouts of stories that the teachers had typed out were also being used for reading instruction. Another strategy was to use stories available in the workbooks supplied from the Department, for other learning areas. The readers were not sent home with the learners due to a possibility that they could get lost. Whilst in the Intermediate Phase, there were a shortage of text books for the senior learners and they had to share the books. This makes it difficult for educators when they do not have the full compliment of books needed for a lesson.

E: Policy on creation of literate classroom environments for learning

The researcher had observed vibrant literate grade three classrooms. There were many relevant handwritten posters and charts for all the learning areas, pinned or pasted onto the walls. The educators made their own collection of resources such as tin caps, beads, ice-cream sticks as counters, books in a reading corner, newspapers and magazines. Learners were kept busy during their spare time, when they finished their work in class or if the educator was out of the class. Learners worked with the books at their own pace. In spite of the classrooms being so small, the educators still managed to have all the necessary resources and requirements.

Phonic charts, alphabet friezes, handwriting charts and number charts and labels in the two languages being currently taught, were pinned up in the classroom for easy reference and incidental reading. It is the policy at this school for every classroom to have a reading corner, nature corner, first aid kit and a language-rich environment for the learners. The idea behind this is to encourage the learners to read and write competently and independently in spite of any challenges.

F: Learning support resources

The school has Learners with Special educational Needs (LSEN) support group that does assist learners with learning difficulties. An educational psychologist is called in once or twice a term to conduct a full scholastic assessment on particular learners who were referred to by the educators, to be placed in this programme. This educational psychologist would inform the principal and the Head of the Department whether or not the child had a learning disability, whether the child could cope in mainstream education, what the teacher needed to do, and if the child needed to see other educational support professionals.

Parents were reportedly given recommendations on ways how to assist the learner whilst educators were made aware by the remedial education teachers, of the learners' areas of difficulty so that they could work on them in class. This strategy suggests that learners were treated as partners in their own education at the school. However, the two periods per day for remedial education may not be enough to see noticeable improvements in the learners work. Educators were also encouraged to do their own remedial work in the class.

Another common strategy used at this school was peer tutoring, wherein children in the class voluntarily would help a child who is battling with an aspect. This strategy was supervised by the educator and they found that peers of the same age could sometimes explain better than other persons could. Also as a specific language learning support strategy, each learner especially the weak learners and the Foundation Phase learners, were given a photo copied phonemic chart for easy reference at their desk. This chart was used to help learners to decode words and sounds.

A learning support for reading and writing for Grade 4 learners was seemingly for the educators to sometimes obtain materials such as sight words lists and reading sheets, from the Foundation Phase educators to use for remedial assistance. Educators also consulted with

their colleagues to ascertain the levels at which certain learners were functioning at and what to expect from the child in terms of performance in class. When learners experienced difficulties, educators also sent extra work home for these learners to complete. It was observed that educators could not keep many of these learners behind for extra work due to their transportation problems.

G: Planning and monitoring

All three grade three educators teach their learners for all the learning areas except for Physical Education. Another educator does this lesson. It was observed that there are formal scheduled planning meetings in place at this school. All Foundation Phase educators attend this meeting. There are at least three formal meetings per term. Learning Area meetings as well as grade meetings take place often during the term. At these meetings ideas are shared, goals are set for teaching, and the reflection on the success of approaches takes place. Teaching methods, specifically new methodologies, are discussed and flexible problem-solving is employed to explore options.

Over and above this, grade educators meet once or twice a week to do planning for tests, assessments, lessons compiling of homework and worksheets, planning using the work schedule and the learning programmes. They do theme based planning with a goal of cross-curricular integration across the subject areas. Another feature of planning at this school was the team-building exercises in which the staff met to plan for the following year, discussing strategies that worked those that had not and goals for the future.

All members of the staff were involved in this planning and the Principal of the school was involved in strategising teaching. It was observed that there was plenty of planning and organisation at this school, thus one can summarise by saying that there was enough support for the Head of Department for teaching and learning. The Head of Department often monitored educators to ensure that they did teach meaningfully in class and their forecasts, assessment file and the programme file were checked.

Often learner's books were called for. They would be randomly selected from the pile of books. A thorough report would follow to allow for the educator to read the observations and suggestions so that meaningful learning could take place. This constant support and supervision also assisted the new educators in the Department to cope easily.

H: Phase and grade curriculum implementation co-ordination

This school has an active strategy to deal with the co-ordination of teaching and learning across the phases at the school. Their planning of reading literacy teaching took place within a larger school-wide framework for the teaching of reading literacy and promotion of reading literacy development in the school. Reading literacy teaching programmes at each phase in this primary school were co-ordinated to meet the reading literacy requirements for the next grades and phase of schooling.

One of the tasks of the Intermediate educators were to meet with the Foundation Phase educators to ensure that learners entering the new phase of schooling would be able to meet the standards of reading literacy development expected of them at the first grade in their next phase of schooling.

Many of the Intermediate educators would have to go back to the basics of teaching literacy due to the fact that there were many learners entering the new phase, having experienced difficulty in learning literacy in the Foundation Phase. Although the management members of this school did monitor progression in curriculum implementation across the board, educators did realise that there was a gap between Grade 3 and Grade 4 education.

As a result of this dilemma, educators in the Intermediate Phase had started to interact with the Grade 3 educators to “find out exactly where they are with their literacy and numeracy development to try to bridge the gap between them.” It was observed by the researcher that plans were also put in place to amend the work schedules for the Grade 4 Mathematics and English to work on the gaps between these two phases.

It was noticed that often the grade 4 educators did meet with the grade 3 educators to exchange information on the development of each learner. If there were problems experienced with particular learners, the grade 4 educators would interact closely with the grade 3 educators to seek further information and to assist the learner. Another strong feature of this school was the Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) which was acknowledged as vital for the upliftment of all members of this staff.

This entailed short meetings or workshops on a specific aspect, short courses as a need arose, inviting guest speakers, research about improvements at the school, cluster meeting and so on. This was initiated by the Principal and the management members of the school. Also,

when there was an issue that needed to be addressed at the school, workshops with people from the school or from outside the school were organised. The researcher is of the opinion that this kind of practice would assist educators with some of their learning and teaching challenges.

I: Team work

Collegial support for teaching was strongly evident at this school. There was team work emphasized, there was an open door policy in each classroom and colleagues would be able to observe each other's lessons and often support and advice. Educators would often meet in groups to discuss aspects of concern and to find amicable solutions to assist the learners. For example, when the examination time table was handed out informing educators of examiners and moderators for the various learning areas, educators would meet to discuss their concerns so that all would be happy. Educators did engage in activities where they explored teaching options together, which was beneficial to them. I am of the opinion that this kind of support has many advantages in assisting all educators.

J: Strategies for learners' literacy development

There was some evidence of formalised initiatives or strategies to encourage learners to engage in reading and writing activities in a fun and meaningful way. This school had a number of strategies to encourage learners to read and to write across the primary school phases. Learners participated in a 'readathon' every year for the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase, they participated in spelling and speech competitions, often learners would prepare a short talk, show and tell, present a poetry recital or a book review, plays or sketches for assembly projections. All learners were rewarded accordingly to motivate others to encourage maximum participation.

It is a policy at the school for learners to speak in English all the time to improve their proficiency in the language. Also, according to the school policy any learner seeking admission from grade one onwards, has to undergo a literacy test to ascertain their level before placing them into a classroom. The English time table was structured according to the CAPS guidelines. It was broken down as follows for English in Grade three (See Appendix Z:2).

However, all three grade three educators did mention in their interviews that

“the time allocation to teach the various aspects of literacy was too limited and not sufficient to do so. Often lessons had to be continued and the time constraints could impede implementation of the syllabus. The content for English was too vast for the grade three level.”

Educator two did also mention that:

“the time allocation was not enough to fulfil the school’s goal of making learners fully competent in English, which is why parents have to come on board and to assist. Learners are far too slow, with some having very poor skills and therefore curriculum implementation had also slowed down. Discipline and home problems of the learners also impinged on teaching time at school.”

The researcher did observe that educators were quite pressurised especially as the school had to fit in a second additional language, this being Afrikaans, into the time table.

Educator one added to this by stating that,

“we must [have] less administration work so that we will have more teaching time with our learners. As a result of the time constraints and other activities happening at the school ...I do not always get through the planned content for the week so I have to continue with it in the following week but the work adds on. Sometimes we have to revert to work from grade one and two to help learners to cope with their English, with the result that we battle to keep up with our current work schedule.”

K: Curriculum implementation

At this school there seems to be a lot of focus placed on the coverage of the LOs and ASs for the Language curriculum and they had a comprehensive strategy for curriculum implantation. What was amazing to note was that there was also a combination of traditional approaches to teaching together with new curricula approaches. This school curriculum was strongly aligned to the LOs and ASs for English Home Language learning as outlined in the CAPS document.

The importance of curriculum alignment at the school was noticeable by: the allocation of an LO and AS to every task given, parent meetings at the beginning of the year and every term to discuss curriculum requirements and the provision of an assessment rubric with LOs and ASs stated for each assessment task.

Educators at the school also continuously reflected on and adapted these operational curricular goals as a result of the outcomes that they experienced with their learners. It was observed that educators were resorting to the traditional strategies of ‘talk and chalk’ and building on the basics of drill and repetition. Educators were flexible and they adapted their methods to the needs of the learners. It was noted that educators had an understanding of the curriculum and implemented it effectively. It was also noticed that educators had to sometimes go back to teaching basics, which was dictated by the needs of the learners and therefore the theme-based teaching was not practical in these instances.

The Foundation Phase Head of Department constantly checked educator’s lesson preparation to ensure that: all aspects of the curriculum were covered sufficiently, the work set for the learners were age –appropriate, there was progression in the level of difficulty of the work covered from grade to grade and that the work was also appropriate for the English second language learners in term of their ability to understand. The Head of Department also moderated examinations and tests to ensure a high standard of work was maintained, that there were developmental appropriateness of questions and an increase in assessment difficulty from one grade to the next. In this manner the Head of Department was checking quality of curricular implementation at this school.

A balanced approach to the implementation of the Language curriculum was followed by the educators. No learning outcome was considered more important than the others and therefore an equal focus on all the LOs for Languages was promoted.

L: Critique of the curriculum policy document

The educators did mention that the CAPS policy document was very detailed and they did attend grade meetings to unpack this document when it was first introduced. They have attended some meetings during the course of the year when educators from a variety of neighbouring schools met to discuss the teething problems that were experienced by their

schools. Educators at this school did state that with experience and expertise they were able to work with the document.

One educator commented,

“We are fortunate that we got the resources and the expertise to unpack this document thoroughly. We use it wisely to suit our school and classroom needs. But we still use some traditional methods of teaching to teach literacy. However, at one meeting it was revealed that resources play a vital role in curriculum implementation, meaning that there could not be one strategy for implementation at all schools. There have been some discrepancies on how one school is implementing the literacy curriculum to that of another school in the same vicinity.”

M: Critique of support from the Department of Education

Educators at this school were critical of the Department of Education in terms of the constant changes with regard to the curriculum and a lack of support from the Department of Education for its implementation process. The comments of the educators were related to issues about instability due to the frequent changes and educator two stated that

“...first we had Outcomes Based Education, then the Revised National Curriculum Statement, then the National curriculum Statement and now CAPS. All these changes can be confusing at times. We are copying what other countries have started.”

The educators also mentioned at the CAPS meetings, that often the District facilitator was not vibrant and enthusiastic enough. She gathered information from educators. Often she read from her notes that were supplied to the educators. They indicated that in the past two years, they have attended only six training sessions in English for CAPS, which is insufficient.

N: The impact of administration on teaching and learning

These were some of the concerns of the educators with regard to this: preparation for curriculum planning for teaching and learning was time-consuming involving much after-hours work by educators. They complained of the many administrative tasks that they had to complete which was the duty of the school secretary but because she could not manage, educators had to assist to do certain things and keep strict records of them for example,

money collection, filling documents returned by learners, completing admission forms and so on.

Educators had to ensure that certain files were maintained thoroughly such as the reading, forecast, programme and assessment files. They had to tick schemes of work on a weekly basis and work taught for the day had to be recorded. These were some concerns raised by educator one:

“as an educator there are a million things to sort out for the day. You have to record work and marks of the learner, observe and record the learners work, complete revision and remedial tasks, work out rubrics for assessment tasks, set the tasks for assessments and so on.”

Another educator commented that

“sometimes we don’t have the time to do extra reading on our own or find out new ways of reading and writing. We have to do what is necessary and what is needed. Often the photocopier is broken and we have to go to the library to make our own copies of homework for our class. We have to pay for the copies. We do a lot of filling and ticking.

We spend too little contact time with our learners. Sometimes completing all of the administrative tasks can have a negative impact on our teaching practices. We begin to focus too much attention on completing paper work and less time on actual teaching of the lessons.”

O: Slow implementation of the CAPS curriculum

The educators mentioned that their school circumstances were somewhat peculiar as compared to the neighbouring schools, in that they had a large number of English second language learners and therefore there was a slow implementation of the English curriculum to cater for the learning needs of these learners. These learners needed more time to adjust to learning a new language and the educators cannot rush in teaching the rules correctly.

One educator stated that,

“we have a policy document in school which we look at carefully to see at which level a certain grade should be at, at the end of the year. But usually this doesn’t work because there are many things that we have to attend to at school and may have to incorporate it into our daily teaching. As a result, there are some assessment standards that are not covered or that we miss out on. We have to admit that there may be a curriculum implementation lag. It becomes important for educators to consult each other to find out where they left off.”

Educator two agreed and added on that,

“although we have specific guidelines as to how and how often to assess learners for a specific LO, it may not be always possible to assess a learner because often we find that a learner is not yet where you would expect them to be and thus there maybe nothing to assess. This is a huge problem that we often experience. I work with the learner at his or her own pace, and not according to curricular expectations, ensuring that learners adequately grasp the work before we move on to the next aspect”.

6.6 Teacher training and support

This theme answers research question 6 which is, “What recommendations can be made from this research project for future literacy development and support?” the sub-themes are as follows: educators’ lack of literacy skills, inadequate teacher training and support and the impact of teacher unions.

a: Educators’ lack of literacy skills

According to Mbanjwa (2009) there is an urgent need to train educators for many of them are inappropriately qualified, under-qualified and unqualified. Training will help to address the gap in literacy teaching in the classroom and literacy acquisition skills.

“I have found that in our school we have some teachers that cannot speak the language correctly, or they have been badly trained. The problem is that English is their second language and they are not proficient and cannot apply the linguistic skills to teach

English correctly. Some of them battle to read simple words and sentences. Therefore our learners will suffer the consequences of their poor training skills.”

Taylor and Vinejevold (1999) express a similar view by commenting that many educators lack the knowledge, the types and levels of literacy that would enable them to develop their students’ literacy skills effectively. South Africa has currently large numbers of educators who have not yet mastered basic academic skills nor the content of subjects and learning areas that they are required to teach. Some also lack skills in planning, assessment, mediation of learning and classroom discipline management.

b: Inadequate teacher training and support

All educators expressed the view that there has been many changes with regard to education since 1994. However, their training and skills have not changed to suit the change in curriculum. The researcher maintains that educators are the key components of our education system and therefore it becomes necessary for them to be continuously capacitated with the best training available using updated methods and resources.

One respondent mentioned that,

‘...there are always changes to our curriculum. We are asked to adjust and adapt but yet we receive training from old fashioned tutors who still use old methods and bore us completely at the workshops. We need urgent training in teaching methodology, assessment techniques, learner environment, the cognitive capabilities of primary school children and new subject content.’

The grade three educators also mentioned that they have been to one workshop for each learning area for the year. This is certainly not sufficient.

Often educators rely heavily on the ‘chalk and talk’ method whilst completing whole class teaching, with low levels of learner participation and few tasks requiring reading and writing. Therefore, the researcher argues that to avoid this, most educators need urgent appropriate support and development to acquire the competences needed for developing literacy as well as other competencies required for effective classroom practice.

“...the norms and Standards for educators spell out seven roles of an educator and we are not being prepared adequately for these roles but the Department of Education expects us to perform our duties effectively.” (Educator one)

The seven roles of an educator, as outlined by the Department of Education (2000), is important because these roles emphasize the importance of specialist subjects or content knowledge, teaching skills and the ability to think and reflect about how to use professional autonomy to improve teaching practices. If educators are not fully trained and supported, this will have a negative impact on literacy development.

c: The impact of teacher unions

An educator stated that,

“our union do things for their own benefit such as for political gain. The unions are not always transparent in their decisions. Many posts at our school can become an issue of contention because many questions were raised as to how the union brought back educators that had left the school on a transfer or had resigned. It is the principal that liaises very closely with union members to agree to decisions even if the decisions are not in the best interest of all educators at the school.”

“Unions such as the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) can be very demanding and controlling. We have all SADTU members at our school. This can be overwhelming especially when decisions have to be taken about important issues.”

Jonathan Jansen stated in an article that SADTU repudiates accountability and uses teacher development as a facade for its teachers’ lack of commitment and competence in the classroom (Govender, 2011).

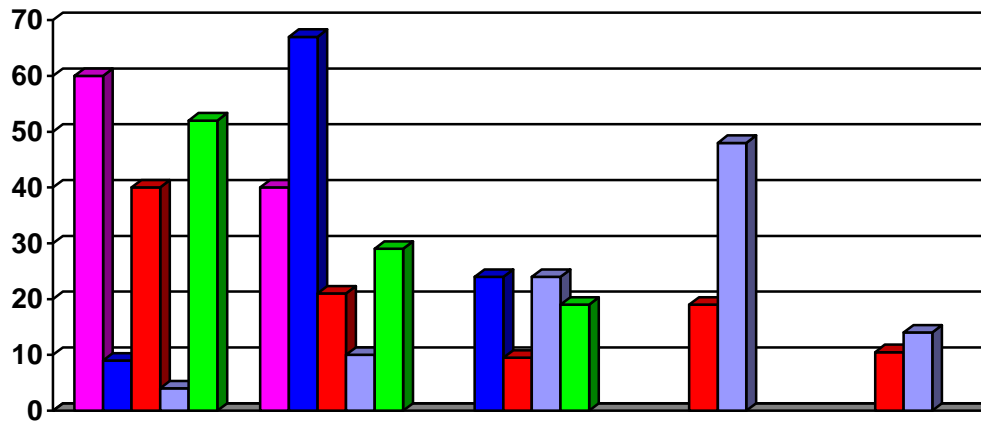
The big picture is that South African schools are pumping out hundreds of learners each year who are not functionally literate as shown in our matric results year after year. Educators need to be trained and to engage in programmes that address pedagogical updating, up-skilling and they must be educationally uplifted and motivated to stay on in their profession.

Analysis of quantitative data

6.7 Questionnaires

The following numerical data was collected via questionnaires that were administered to parents of the grade three learners. The copies of the questions appear in Appendix (3) of this thesis. Section A of the questionnaire presents the biographical data of the interviewees.

Graph One: Biographical Data of the interviewees

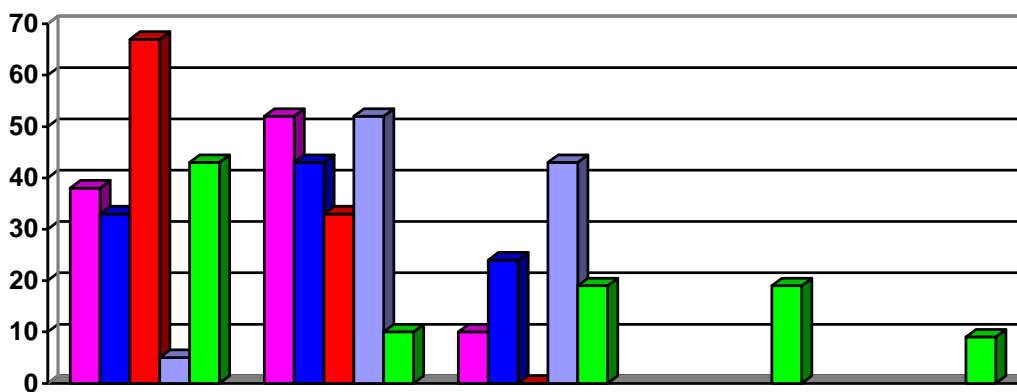


1. Gender	Female 60%	Male 40%			
2. Parents age group	26 – 35 9%	36 – 45 67%	45 – 55 24%		
3. Parents occupation	Unemployed 40%	Informal employment 21%	Professional person 9.5%	Bussiness person 19%	House keeper 10.5%
4. Parents highest level of education	None 4%	Grade 1-7 10%	Grade 8-10 24%	Grade 11-12 48%	Tertiary education 14%
5. Area of residence	Suburb 52%	Township 29%	Rural area 19%		

Graph one illustrates the following: the genders of the interviewees were 60% females and 40% were males. Their ages range from 26-35 years (9%), 36-45 years (67%) and 45-55 years (24%). These parent occupations and field of employment were: 40% unemployed, 21% employed in the informal sector, 9.5 % were professionals, 19% owned

their own businesses and 10.5 % were domestic workers. Their education level varies with 4% without any form of education, 10 % within the range of Grade 1-7, 24 % within Grade 8-10, 48 % within Grade 11-12 and 14 % of the interviewees having a tertiary education.

Graph Two: Interaction between parent and learner, their commitment and the available resources for their children

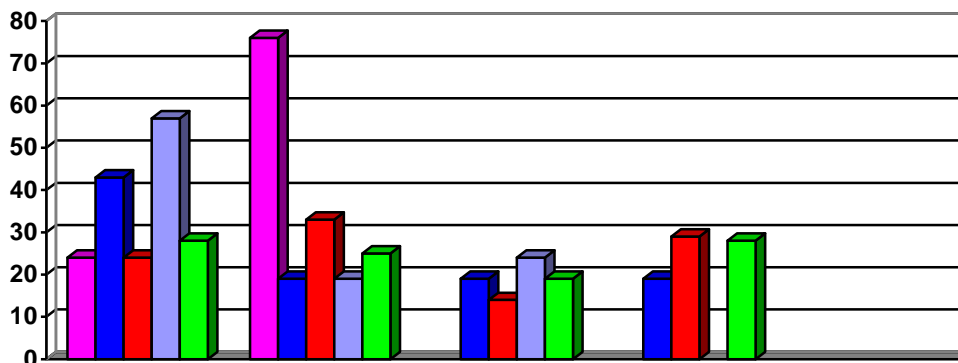


1. How often do you read to your child	Once a day 38%	Weekly 52%	Monthly 10%		
2. How often do you assist your child with literacy homework	Daily 33%	Weekly 43%	Monthly 24%		
3. What language do you and your family speak at home	English 67%	IsiZulu 33%	Other 0%		
4. How often do you visit the school	Weekly 5%	Monthly 52%	Yearly 43%		
5. What literacy resources are there at home for your child to use	Books 43%	Television 10%	Radio 19%	Computer 19%	None 9%

The second bar graph above reflects the interaction between parent and learner, their commitment and the available resources for their children. Parents read to their children once a day (38 %), weekly (52 %) and monthly (10 %). They assist their children with literacy homework as follows: daily (33 %), weekly (43 %) and monthly (24 %). The majority of parents communicate in English to the learners (67 %) followed by 33% of the parents communicating to their children in IsiZulu. The school visits vary with (5%) of them for weekly visits, (52 %) for monthly visits and (43 %) on a yearly basis. Books are the main resources available at the home for pupils (43 %), with computers and the radio the second most common resource (19 %), the television (10 %) and (9 %) with no resources in the home at all.

SECTION B:

Graph three: Input of the parent interest into literacy development of their children



Data Table: showing input of the parent interest in literacy development of their children

<p>1. Are you happy with your child's performance in literacy</p>	<p>Yes 24% due to very good performance</p>	<p>No 76% due to poor reading and writing skills(41%) cannot understand literacy concepts (35%)</p>		
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2. What reading activities take place with your child	Reading story books 43%	Reading of the newspaper 19%	Reading of magazines 19%	None 19%
3. What activities take place with your child	Spelling words 24%	Homework 33%	Story writing 14%	None 29%
4. Do you understand your child's literacy homework	Yes 57%	No 19%	Sometimes 24%	
5. Difficulties experienced by learner in completing literacy tasks	Reading instructions 28%	Sentence construction 25%	Comprehension skills 19%	Difficulty in speaking English 28%

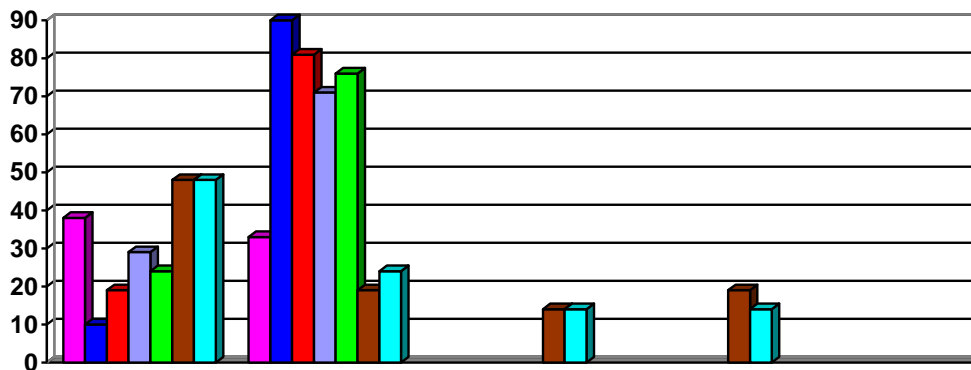
Graph three of section B and the data table of the questionnaire depicts the input of the parent interest into the literacy development of their children. Due to the good performance in literacy, (24 %) of the interviewees were happy with their children's progress thus far. The majority of the parents (76 %), were very unhappy with their learners literacy performance. This has contributed to the poor reading and writing skills of the learners (41 %), and (35 %) of learners cannot understand literacy concepts being taught to them.

The different forms of reading activities with the learners vary per family. The reading of story books forms the bulk of the activities (43 %), followed by the reading of the newspaper and magazines (19 %) and shockingly (19 %) of the interviewees do not engage in any reading activities with their children. The details of the writing activities completed at home by the parents with the children are as follows: spelling activities (24 %), completing

homework together (33 %), story writing (14 %) and (29 %) do not attempt to do any writing activities with their children.

It was revealed through this data that the majority of the parents (57 %), do understand the child’s literacy homework given to them, whilst (24 %) of them indicated that they sometimes understand the work and (19 %) confirmed that they do not understand the homework at all that is given on a daily basis to the learner. There were four different aspects of difficulties experienced by learners in completing literacy tasks at home and they were: reading instructions (28 %), speaking skills (28 %), sentence construction (25 %) and poor comprehension skills (19 %).

Graph Four: Overview of all role players in literacy development of the learners



1. How will you assist your child to improve their literacy performance	Give additional activities in reading and writing 38%	thorough supervision of all homework tasks 33%	Question not answered 29%	
2. Is your child enrolled at the school library	Yes 10%	No 90% library not functional (63%) Disinterest in membership (37%)		

3. Is your child enrolled at the local library	Yes 19%	No 81% library too far (76%) not interested in membership (5%)		
4. Is there ample support and assistance being offered at school	Yes 29%	No 71% child cannot read fluently poor writing skills lack of support from educator		
5. Were you satisfied with child's performance in ANA in literacy	Yes 24%	No 76% very poor performance		
6. Ways in which you assisted your child for ANA preparation	Revise concepts 48%	Additional activities done at home 19%	oral testing 14%	additional spelling tasks 19%
7. What changes would you like to be made at school with regard to literacy teaching	Fully functional library 48%	Extra lessons after school hours 24%	Educational activities such as debates, speech contests 14%	More homework to be given 14%

Graph four above presents an overview of all role players that are: the involvement of the parents, active participation of the learners and the school's commitment in improving the overall literacy of the learners. It was revealed that (38 %) of the parents were committed to assist and improve their child's literacy development by means of providing additional activities in reading and writing, (33 %) of them through supervision of all homework tasks, whilst (29 %) did not attempt to answer the question at all.

Learners enrolled at the school library equates to (10 %) only whilst the vast majority (90 %) stated that their children are not enrolled at the school library due to a non-functional library (63 %) and disinterest amongst pupils to enrol at a library (37 %). The number of learners enrolled at the local library equates to (19 %) and (81 %) not enrolled at the local library due to the library being too far (76 %) and (5 %) not interested in membership of a library.

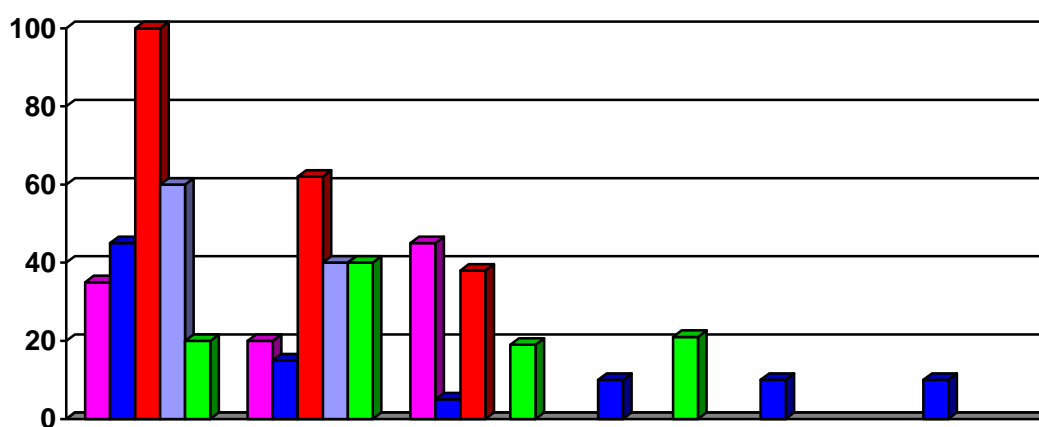
Only 29 %) of the parents did indicate that ample support and assistance was being offered at school for literacy development. Whilst the majority of interviewees (71 %) attribute a lack of support from the educators, poor reading and writing skills as causes for their children to experience difficulty in reading fluently. A vast majority of the parents (76 %) were not satisfied with their children's performance in the Annual National Assessments (ANA) for literacy. Only (24 %) of the parents interviewed had indicated that they were satisfied with their child's performance in the ANA test.

The different ways that the parents had stated in which they will prepare their learners for the next ANA test were as follows: (48 %) will revise all concepts, (19 %) of the parents stated that they would do additional activities at home with the learner before the test, (14 %) of them would do oral testing of concepts already taught at school for literacy and (19 %) would do additional spelling tasks as a preparation tool for the test.

And finally, parents would like to see the following changes made at the school to promote effective literacy development: (48 %) stated that they would like to see a fully functional library at school, (24%) suggested extra lessons after school in literacy teaching, (14 %) would like the school to promote educational activities such as debates, speech contests and reading festivals and (14 %) suggested that more literacy homework should be given to the learners as a form of revision.

6.8 Learner interviews

The numerical data below in the form of graphs and data tables, represent the findings of the interviews of the grade three learners. Although a total number of 90 learners were interviewed, a small sample of 20 interviews was chosen for the analysis, due to the large amount of data that was collected through this interview process. 14 Questions appeared on the interview schedule (See Appendix 2) at the end of this chapter for a copy of the questions.



Graph 1

1.Total number per each reading group	Group A 35 %.	Group B 20%.	Group C 45 %			
2. The different problems experienced in reading	Word recognition 45%	Lack of fluency 15 %	Can not decode words 5%	Afraid to read 5%	reader too difficult to read 10%	I read well, pleased with my reading 10%
3. The amount of help gained from my teacher and friends	Help from my teacher 100%	Help from my friends 62%	Unhelpful friends 38%			Cannot understand the sentences 10%

4. Do you have any problems in sentence construction, story writing or writing a letter?	Yes 60%	No 40%			
5. Besides your English reader, do you read any other reading materials in class?	No other reading materials in class 20%	Library corner has some books for us to read 40%	We read our reading sheets from the flip file 19%	Have some books in class but not allowed to read them 21%	

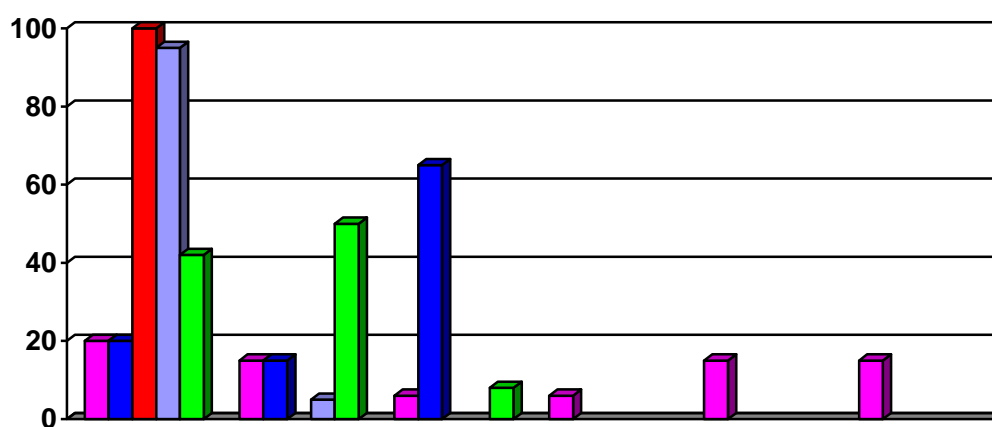
The following findings were captured:

It is evident in question one that a large percentage of the interviewees (45 %) are in the last group, that being, Group C. One learner responded to this as follows: “I am not happy to be in this group. Many of the children in my class laugh at me. I am in this group because I cannot read on my own.” Another learner added that, ‘I don’t know why I am in this group. I need help all the time to read the sentences from the reader. Our teacher is not very happy with our reading. We make a lot of mistakes.’”

In question two the skills that many learners experienced difficulty with, were as follows: 45 % of the learners named word recognition skills, 15 % a lack of fluency and 11 % stated that their reader was too difficult for them to read.

From this graph it has been noted that all the interviewees did mention that they received ample help from their educators with their reading skills. 62 % of them did state that their friends help them at sometime or another. In question four 60 % of the learners indicated that they experienced problems in formal writing lessons and they needed assistance in writing simple sentences. These were some of the problems mentioned: poor spelling skills, don’t know meanings of words, writes ‘nonsense sentences’, and incorrect word order.

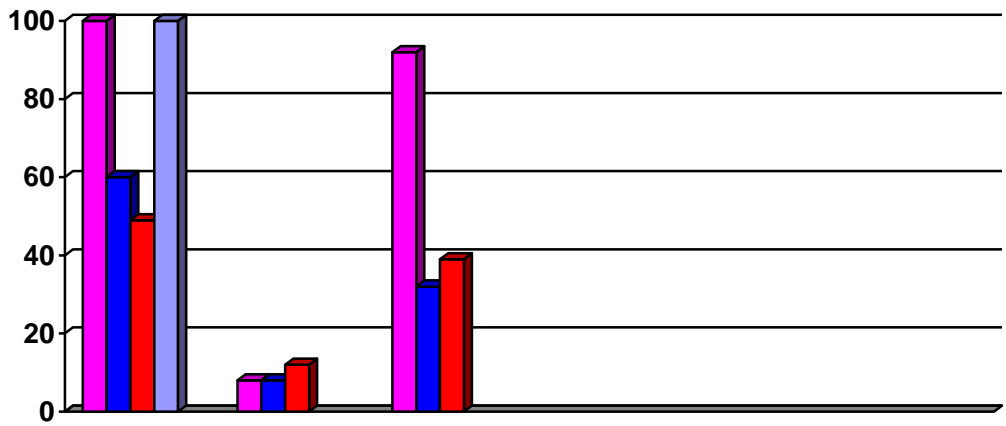
From question four we gather that 40 % of the learners explained that there are some books in the classroom for the learners to read. However, 21 % did state that although the books were in the classroom, they were not allowed to read them, whilst some read the stories from their reading sheets (19 %) and 20 % of the learners stated that there were no other reading materials in class at all.



Graph 2

6. How does the teacher assist you in formal writing skills such as in sentence construction	Spelling skills 20%	explain tasks thoroughly 20%	word recognition 15%	explanation of meanings of new words 6%	teach us dictionary skills 6%	correction of sentences 15 %	pronunciation of difficult words 15%
7. Performance in comprehension tasks	Performs well 20%		Performs poorly 15%	Some times good some times bad 65%			
8. Are you given home work in literacy? How often?	Yes 100% Monday to Thursday						

9. Do you receive assistance at home in completing your literacy home work?	Yes. I do receive assistance 95%	No. Nobody assists me in completing my homework 5%			
10. Do you have any reading materials at home to read?	Yes 42%	No 50 %	Reads the free newspapers we receive only and do not have any other books 8 %		



Graph 3

11. Does your school have a library? Are you a member of a local or school library?	Yes we have a library at school but not in use at all 100 %	We are members of the local library 8 %	No we are not members of the local library 92 %		
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12. Do you always understand the literacy home work that is given to you?	Yes 60%	No 8%	Sometimes we understand the easy tasks 32%		
13. Do you manage to complete the literacy work in the class?	Yes 49%	No 12%	Sometimes 39%		
14. Do you enjoy literacy lessons?	Yes all the time 100 %				

Question six in graph two outlines the various skills that are taught by the educators to the learners in the formal writing lessons. The majority of the learners (20 %) did indicate that tasks were thoroughly explained and that they were assisted mostly with their spelling skills. In question seven the researcher enquired about the learner’s performance in comprehension tasks.

It was noted that 20 % of them perform well in these tasks with 65 % of the learners stating that they sometimes perform well and sometimes perform poorly. These were some of the reasons for their poor performance: “We sometimes don’t understand the questions because they are too difficult for us. The stories are too difficult and I cannot read the sentences on my own.” Another learner explained, “We make a lot of silly mistakes. Some stories are not good. They are boring.”

In question eight 100 % of the learners indicated that they are given homework in literacy from Monday to Thursday every week. The educators use a variety of resources use worksheets or sometimes write the homework on the chalkboard. The breakdown for the literacy homework consists of the following aspects that are tested daily: spelling skills, phonic and language usage, reading, handwriting and formal writing tasks.

It was good to note that 95 % of the interviewees stated that they do receive assistance at home to complete the literacy homework. Family members assist by reading out the

instructions, spell difficult words, listen to the learner reading fluently and correctly and revises all work that the learner does not understand well. An alarming percentage of learners (50 %) revealed that they do not have any reading materials at home to read whilst (42 %) of them stated that they have some reading materials at home. (8 %) indicated that they collect the free newspapers and handbills to read.

In question eleven it was stated by all the learners that the school does have a library however, it is non-functional due to many reasons such as: insufficient books, building needs renovation and no library resource educator to attend to library book loans for the learners. (92 %) revealed that they are not members of the local library due to the fact that it is too far for them to travel to and their parents are not keen to enrol them at the library.

In question twelve (60 %) of the interviewees indicated that they always understand the literacy homework that is given to them. However, (32 %) stated that they sometimes understood the homework when the tasks were easy. Leaving (8 %) of the learners not understanding the homework at all. These were some of the reasons offered: “Sometimes the tasks are too difficult. By the time I get home, I have forgotten what was to be done.” An English language learner had this to say, “I don’t speak the language well and therefore I do not understand much of the work. There is nobody to help me when I get home after school to explain me the work.”

Forty nine (49 %) of the learners stated that they do complete their literacy work in the classroom. Thirty nine (39 %) of them complete the work sometimes and (12 %) of the interviewees did not complete the work at all. They explained: they are too slow in handwriting tasks, and the work load is too much therefore they cannot understand the work. All the learners were happy to report that they thoroughly enjoy the literacy lessons at school because the lessons are enjoyable, they want to learn this new language, interesting things are being taught by their educators and it is easier to learn than Afrikaans.

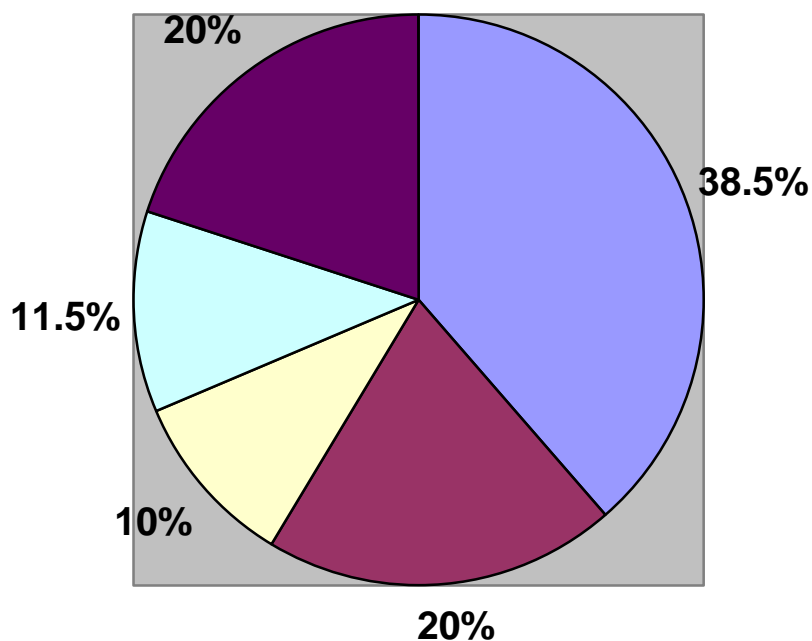
6.9 Standardised test

Two formal writing tests were administered to one hundred learners from the three grade three classes. A single question appeared on the test (see Appendix T) and it was extracted from the Annual National Assessment (ANA) 2012 paper. This task was also

given to the learners to work with as a homework task as revision for the 2013 ANA paper therefore the learners were familiar with the question.

Below are the results and the findings of these two tests.

**Graph One:
Results of the Formal Writing Test one**



A formal writing test was administered to the three grade three learners. A total number of 100 learners wrote this test. Only one question appeared on the test paper (See Appendix T) and learners were asked to complete a story. The pie graph above illustrates the percentage pass rate of the learners from which the researcher obtained her data. It must be noted that the aspects below were used as the base criteria for assessing this formal writing task. The five key aspects were as follows:

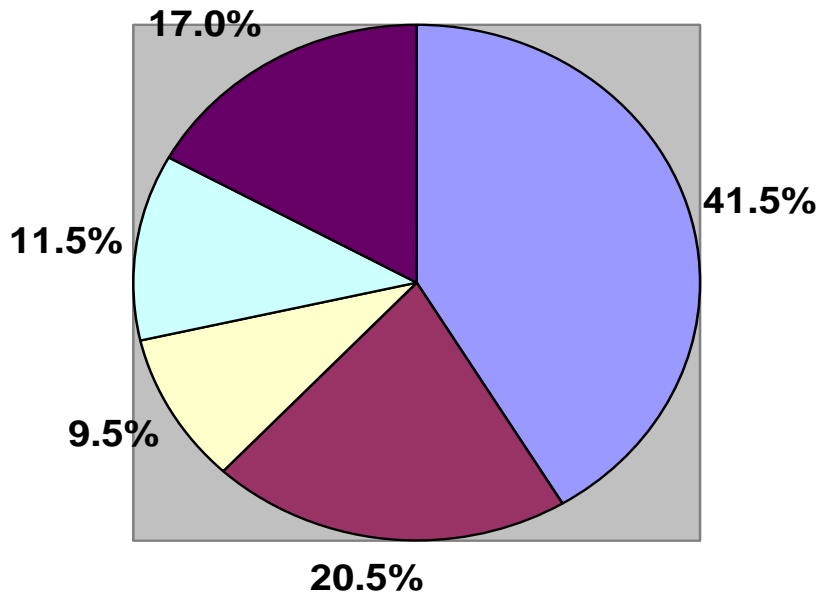
1. spelling skills equates to 38.5 %;
2. incorrect word order amounts to 20 %;
3. incorrect sequencing of events in a story is 10 %;

4. language usage amounts to 11.5 %; and
5. sentence construction skills equates to 20

It must be noted that a large number of learners had failed this test due to the above mentioned key factors. These results indicate that the learners lack the basic formal writing skills and therefore they were unable to complete this test independently and correctly.

Graph Two:

Results of the Formal Writing Test Two



A re-run of this test was administered (See Appendix U). The pie graph above illustrates the pass percentage of the learners in the second test. In test one, the findings had indicated that learners had performed poorly mainly due to poor spelling skills, incorrect word order and poor sentence construction skills. Hence, the researcher provided a word bank in the second test to assist learners with key words. The educators who had administered this test, were also asked to offer some assistance should it be needed.

The outcome of the second test illustrates an overall improvement in the pass rate. This was due to the word bank being provided and some assistance offered by the educators. The key factors below are an indicator as to where the improvement was noted.

1. spelling skills equates to 41 %;
2. incorrect word order amounts to 20.5 %;
3. incorrect sequencing of events in a story is 9.5 %;
4. language usage amounts to 11.5 %; and
5. sentence construction skills equates to 17 %

From my observation it has been noted that learners rely on the assistance of the educator in completing a simple task in spite of the fact that this test was given to them as homework for it appeared in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) paper in 2012.

6.10 Summary

This chapter has provided the data presentation, and discussion of the findings in response to the research question: **How is literacy being taught in the Foundation Phase in a primary school?** The data were presented in tabular form and generally to the classroom observations of the three grade educators, semi-structured interviews of these educators and the grade three learners, questionnaires of the grade three parents, document analysis and the written work of the learners. Findings for each of these were outlined in detail.

The **final chapter** will focus on the researcher's interpretation of these findings, the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything one learnt in school”
(Albert Einstein)

7.1 Introduction

This study highlighted concerns about support for and the quality of literacy teaching in a South African primary school. In South Africa there is a dearth of research outlining schooling conditions for literacy development and primary school teachers’ reading literacy teaching practices. The aim of this study was to explore the literacy practices of three grade three educators in a peri-urban school who teach literacy to grade three learners.

In order to further supplement the data from the educators, this study also investigated learners’ performance in literacy as well as various other variables of the literacy environment which influenced the performance of the learners in literacy development.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the findings of the research as well as the researcher’s conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions are based on the literature study and the empirical research and a combination of these two factors. The chapter will also provide the researcher’s interpretation of the research findings.

7.2 Conclusions from the literature study

From the literature study in Chapter four I found that the traditional meaning of literacy is far too limiting in its focus on skills which are often taught in a de-contextualised way, consequently there is very little relevance to the real life-world and experiences of the learners, with not sufficient attention being paid to the socio-cultural context of the learners. For this reason reference was made to: The New Literacy Studies, the New London Group, Vygotsky and Bourdieu who acknowledge the socio- cultural practices of the learner in literacy development.

According to Lawrence (2011) these sources overlap in that a re-conceptualisation of literacy does not supplant the skills-based approach, but rather it augments it through a more balanced approach. A socio-cultural approach embraces other forms of representation, such

as visual images and gestures, as well as new forms of multimodal literacy, rather than just print form. I have used these sources to inform my view of the Grade three teachers in their teaching of literacy in the Foundation Phase Grade 3 classroom. This study made use of the above mentioned theories with the hope that it would offer productive ways of thinking about the roles of teachers in promoting children's literacy practices.

Vygotsky (1962, 1978) argued that children are social beings who develop and learn through their interactions with teachers and parents. The social milieu in which learners acquire literacy, the classroom and the home, will strongly influence how children learn. Gibson (in Rodger 2004, p.108) speaks about scaffolding as one of the strategies used by effective teachers and this would include, for example, offering explanations, inviting students to participate in lessons, verifying and clarifying learner understanding, modelling desired behaviour and inviting learners to contribute clues.

In Makin and Diaz (2002, pp. 306-307) Bourdieu's social practice theory is explored and they discuss the ways in which social structures influence actors and practices, such as learners and the school system, and in this study how the Grade three teachers influence and promote the Grade three learners literacy levels and literacy identities, particularly with regard to popular culture that most of them are confronted with in their homes, in their community and even in school.

Learners should be given opportunities to become more discerning and more critical about the messages regarding the use or abuse of power that is being conveyed via for example, watching their super heroes such as Power Puff girls, The Avengers, Wonder Woman, Z squad, Spiderman and so on and the way in which these characters portray gender, race and class.

According to the CAPS document (Department of Education, 2013) the ideal literate learner is seen as a critical and analytic reader and writer who will be productive and a responsible citizen. However, findings show that this is not currently happening in the sample school. I make this point because from my observations of the reading and the writing lessons, I have found that educators place a lot of emphasis on the teaching of the different aspects of literacy. This has to be done quickly for the focus is on the completion of the literacy syllabus as per the CAPS policy document and the Department workbooks for the term.

Rather, the perceptions of the educators during the semi-structured interviews revealed that in the case study school they consider the ideal literate learner as a learner who has developed a good vocabulary, writes neatly, spells correctly and reads fluently with expression and understanding. Often each aspect of literacy that has been taught, has no correlation with or does not continue into the next aspect of literacy for the day's lesson. The large groups or whole class method of teaching does not allow for much collaboration and team work.

At the sample school, the difference that I am alluding to is that there is the emphasis on skills, like encoding and decoding texts, rather than meaning and content. This creates a limited literate subject. Whereas a view of literacy from a socio-cultural theory of learning encourages who they are in relation to others, and how they have learned how to process, interpret and encode their world.

In summary, the conclusions drawn from the literature research are as follows:

- Literacy has been redefined and there is a need to engage with new literacies.
- Literacy teaching is a combination of the skill of the teacher, a complex mixture of philosophy, method, teacher development, school culture and the home background of the learner.
- Literacy identity and the disposition of the learners need to be purposefully developed.

7.3 Conclusions from the empirical investigation

The data from the empirical investigation of this study indicates that the teachers are compliant in terms of the current departmental directives that they have been confronted with, as the country has made changes in the educational system in line with its democratic dispensation. In their attempts to implement the curriculum changes, their teachings have also been influenced by the requirements of OBE, NCS, RNCS and CAPS, with its focus on improving the literacy levels in the country.

However, all of these have viewed literacy instruction from a de-contextualised skills perspective, with references to 'a whole language approach nested in social constructivism.' The main focus of this study was to investigate the literacy practices of three grade three

educators. In other words the main intention of the researcher was to describe and to gain an in-depth insight into how the teachers promote literacy teaching in their Grade three classes through what was observed or communicated in the semi-structured interview or evaluated in the written work of the learners.

Key conclusions

Four key conclusions stand out in this research project as indicated in figure 7.1.

They are as follows: educator's teaching practices of reading and writing competences, learners' attitudes and experiences of literacy in the classroom, implementation of literacy policies and social factors or challenges to literacy development.

Figure 7.1 The four key conclusions

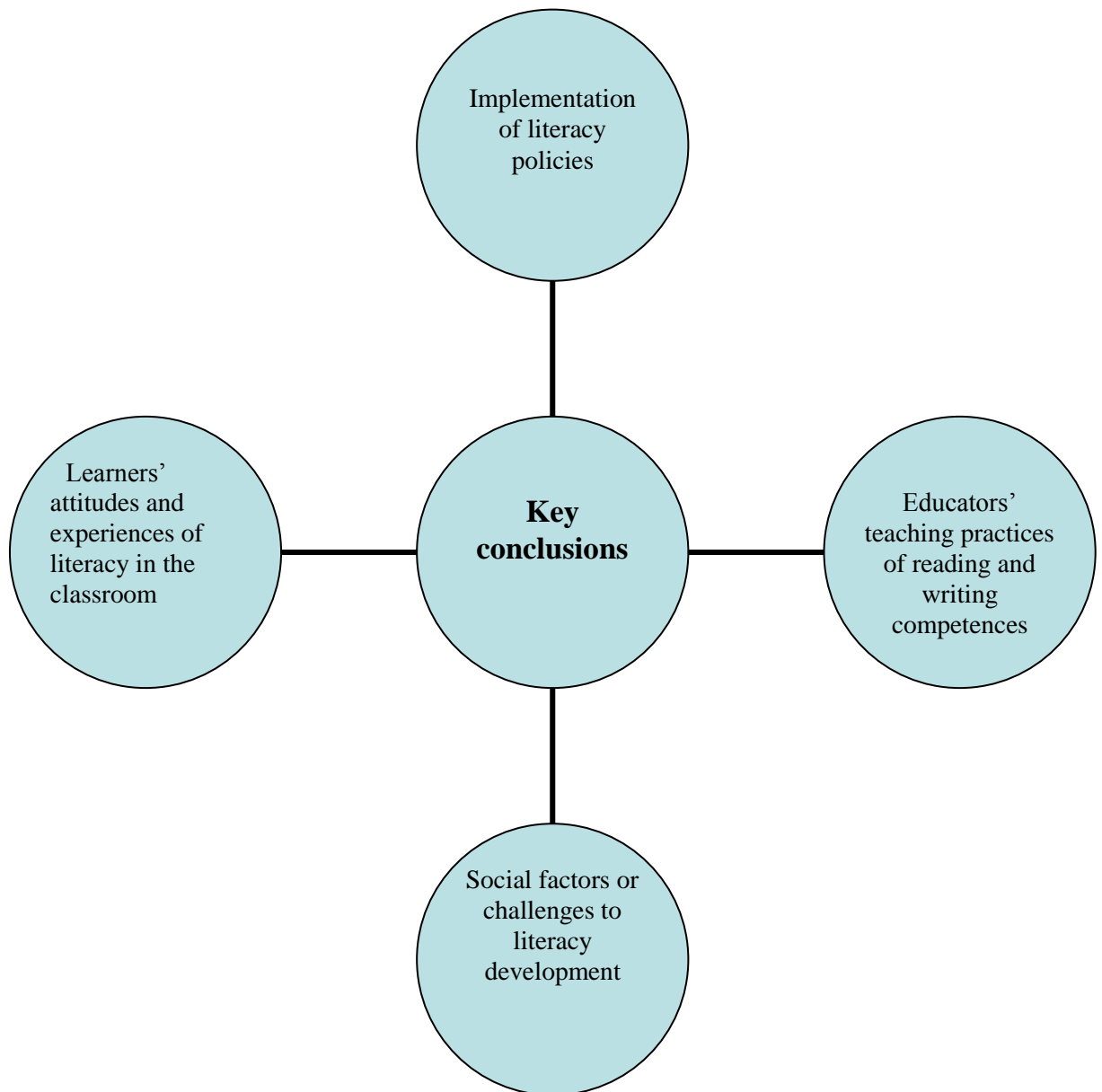


Table 7.1 Overview of findings

THEMES	FINDINGS IN QUANTITATIVE DATA	CONFIRMATION IN QUALITATIVE DATA
<p>Educator's teaching practices of reading and writing competences.</p>	<p>Educators based their teaching practices on a skills-based approach and there was emphasis on the content and skills in literacy. They explained that due to time constraints and a large volume of work to be covered for the year for grade three, there was insufficient time to teach other aspects. From the observations and the findings it was noted that learners rely very heavily on the educator for assistance to complete revised or simple tasks. It was found that 32 % of learners had indicated that they understood the literacy homework when easy tasks were given. 39 % of learners also had mentioned that they do not complete their literacy work in the classroom.</p>	<p>Educators are competent with many years of teaching experience. All classrooms were conducive to learning. However, they followed a skills-based approach in their teaching. Emphasis was on content and the acquisition of literacy skills. They followed group teaching as well as individual teaching methods. There was a lack of confidence in implementing Departmental policies due to inadequate support and training from the Department of Education. Many parents are very uncooperative and little or no support is received from the parents due to the socio-economic problems in the community. The evidence gleaned from this study indicates that educators have excessive workloads, too many administrative tasks, inadequate literacy personnel and no assistance for extra-curricular or co-curricular activities, over-crowded classes and there is a lack of basic resources for proper literacy development to take place at the school. All of these factors impact negatively on curriculum time, learner and educator work performance. Other challenges mentioned were: the low morale of educators, little support from their teacher unions and inadequate salaries in terms of their heavy workloads.</p>

THEMES	FINDINGS IN QUANTITATIVE DATA	CONFIRMATION IN QUALITATIVE DATA
Learners' attitudes and experiences of literacy in the classroom	<p>Learners have difficulty because of inadequate or a lack of resources at the school. Due to a lack of funds and the current, slow school fee recovery rate, learners are using old readers in the CAPS curriculum. It has little meaning and no benefit to learners in a multi-cultural class. 45 % of the learners had mentioned that they were in the last group being, group C for reading due to many problems in reading such as poor word recognition skills, lack of fluency, poor de-coding skills and poor comprehension skills. 60 % of them indicated that they experienced problems in completing formal writing assignments. Thus, it can be seen that the school should focus more on developing learners' reading and writing skills. Although all the research participants indicated that they enjoyed the literacy lessons, 50 % of the research participants mentioned that they did not have any reading materials at home to supplement their reading and writing tasks. Thus there is little consolidation of work at home, of what is being taught in the classroom.</p>	<p>The findings indicate that a positive attitude on the part of the learners plays a major role in literacy development and in their overall performance. However, educators mentioned that some learners displayed a negative attitude towards learning. Due to the large number of learners per class there are discipline problems. Educators also battle to meet the different ability levels of their learners. The lack of reading resources stifles literacy development at the school. Some learners receive little or no support and assistance from members at home therefore most of the time homework is left incomplete. Many learners demand attention and they rely on the educators for assistance and moral support in their learning. Learners are tasked with the responsibility of learning to read and write in three languages. This is a huge challenge for them.</p>

<p>Implementation of literacy policies</p>	<p>Findings suggest that minimum involvement of the Department of Education in assisting educators to draw up and implement language policies is leading to educators not managing them. Educators mentioned the many problems experienced and they were: too many curriculum changes, a lack of SMT monitoring at school and policies drawn up by the Department of Education does not cater for learner diversity. Policies act as a guide for educators to follow in their teaching practices and without this, learners will bear the brunt of poor quality teaching and learning at the school.</p>	<p>Findings indicate that the case study school does not have a working literacy policy in place. Educators mentioned that they faced many challenges in implementing education policies because the Department of Education does not provide clear, working guidelines as to how educators and schools should implement the policies. The SGB members were not involved in drawing up or in implementing a literacy policy due to their inability and inexperience in doing so. Although South Africa is a multilingual society with multicultural learners in a class, educators lack the expertise, skills and experience in drawing up their own school literacy policies and in implementing them.</p>
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THEMES	FINDINGS IN QUANTITATIVE DATA	CONFIRMATION IN QUALITATIVE DATA
Social factors or challenges to literacy development	<p>The social context of a community can play a major role in promoting literacy practices. Findings from the parent questionnaire revealed that 40 % of the parents are unemployed in this community. Homes are headed by single parents or caregivers to the learners. The learners have many other responsibilities to fulfil and often their school work suffers. 33 % of the respondents indicate that they speak IsiZulu at home and many of them cannot assist the learner in completing work in English, which is the medium of instruction at the school. 43 % of the parents mentioned that they visit the school on a yearly basis to check on the progress of their children, with 52 % on a monthly basis and 5 % of the parents on a weekly basis. Educators stated that they needed more support and assistance from the parents so that there is a consolidation of work from school to home. Educators are of the opinion that this bond would contribute positively to improving the performance of literacy at the school. 76 % of the respondents indicated that they were not happy with their child's performance in literacy due to their poor reading and writing skills and poor understanding of literacy concepts taught. Yet findings revealed that 19 % of the parents responded that they do not do any reading activities with their children and 29 % of them stated that they do not do any writing activities with their learners at home.</p>	<p>This study shows that the social factors and challenges contribute negatively to literacy development in the case study school. There is over-crowding and large classes but educators do not receive any form of assistance in their teaching or with any other school activity. The school cannot afford to recruit extra personnel. Educators battle with many administrative tasks, a heavy teaching load, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. A lack of resources stifles educators' enthusiasm to teach reading and writing effectively. Old stories and reading material do not cater for the different learning abilities of the learners. A non-functional library compounds the problem even further. Due to this problem reading and writing skills are not being promoted at the school. There is little or no support from the parents due to the social context of this community. The SGB members do not understand their role functions and ways of assisting educators meaningfully to promote effective teaching practices. Poor home conditions and a lack of resources in the home, contributes to learners not completing their school work or showing a disinterest in learning. Educators are not thoroughly trained or are not receiving constant supervision and training to teach learners from different cultural backgrounds. A lack of funds hinders educators from meeting the basic needs of their learners for example, by providing books for them in different languages.</p>

7.4 The original contribution of this study

The original contribution of this study emanates from the context of this study and is particular to the school under study and its research participants, consequently they are not generalizable. However findings from this study give insight into improving literacy in the school researched.

In this study I set out to research a specific phenomenon. It was to investigate the literacy practices of three grade three educators in a peri-urban school. In addition to the recommendations made in the subsequent section in this chapter, evidence gleaned from this study assisted me in making explicit my contribution of the thesis for further development in promoting literacy teaching and learning in a primary school.

This thesis makes an original contribution to the scholarship in examining the literacy practices of three South African grade three educators, and its findings indicated in the three important themes.

This thesis was guided by several objectives that were formulated to assist me in finding answers to the research questions. Arising from this, four key conclusions became apparent in this research project as seen in Figure 7.1. Upon close examination of the overview of findings as presented in Table 7.1 three important themes emerged:

- ✓ Professional development of educators;
- ✓ The nature of literacy at the sample school; and
- ✓ The use of adapted literacy teaching strategies.

I am of the opinion that educator quality is the most important influence upon learner achievement and this is the reason for professional development to be highlighted. High quality professional development is essential for it helps to increase educators' knowledge, their skills, attitudes and beliefs in literacy teaching so they may enable all learners to learn at high levels starting from an early age at a primary school. The concept of teacher qualities were highlighted in the literature review of my research project as I consider this having a greater impact on learner achievement than the actual instructional programme.

From the responses of the semi-structured interviews and observations of the literacy practices of the three grade three educators, it was found that although the educators do have good content knowledge and teaching experience to teach literacy in the phase, a lack of continuous training, support and monitoring as illustrated in Figure 6.2 in chapter six were outlined as factors that impeded literacy development in the case study school.

A research participant echoed this concern:

“The last CAPS workshop that we had attended was a year ago and no new information was cascaded to us. The facilitator merely demonstrated how we should teach literacy using the Department workbook. The focus was on developing the basic skills in the various aspects of literacy to prepare learners in advance for the forthcoming ANA test.”

I am of the conviction that a lack of new subject content, new methodology, insufficient and inadequate training and support and a lack of continuous monitoring of literacy practices have resulted in the learners' poor performance in reading and writing competencies at the school. Since 1994 there have been many failed attempts by the Department of Education to improve the literacy levels in our country. Due to this I suggest that educators at the sample school become responsible for their own professional development.

They must take the initiative to enrol in courses to upgrade their skills and to acquire knowledge of new teaching strategies. For example, from my readings during the undertaking of my study, I have found that Vygotsky's work offers educators a powerful vehicle towards gaining knowledge of pedagogical approaches that can be used for an individual pupil, the whole class, the Department and the whole school level.

It is through professional development that educators will be able to engage critically in developing their own thinking, improving their own lesson planning skills in literacy and in encouraging discussions about classroom activities. Inevitably, this will raise their standards of teaching. Educators at this case study school require continual professional development to enable them to learn to adapt their teaching strategies effectively to suit individual learner needs and their learning styles.

I maintain that if children lack in literacy development at the early stages of their education, this will potentially limit their ability for future academic success and subsequent performance in their work place. It is for this reason that the nature of literacy at the sample school will now be highlighted. Figure 5.5 of chapter six of this thesis brings to the fore the factors that have impacted on learners' experiences of literacy that hindered them from acquiring and developing successfully the necessary skills in literacy.

However, in spite of the above findings it was revealed from the learner's written efforts as illustrated in Table 6.4 that there was evidence of literacy skills being taught, constant revision and remediation has taken place as an attempt by educators to assist the learners. But upon close examination of the findings it became clear that the CAPS programme demands literacy lesson to follow strictly according to a specific time-line that is allocated for an aspect to be taught. It is due to time constraints that lessons are often left incomplete and have to be carried over to the next day. Learners are also kept in during their break and after school hours to complete classroom and assessment tasks. However, in spite of these attempts many learners still do not manage to complete their work for the day. All these factors point to the reality of the situation that the learners at this school need additional support and assistance in literacy.

In addition to the above-mentioned findings, in the analysis of the quantitative data, graph three of section B in chapter six presented the finding of the questionnaire that was administered to the parents of the grade three learners. 76 % had indicated that they were not happy with their child's performance in literacy at the sample school. In graph four it was revealed that again 76 % of the parents had indicated that their children had performed very poorly in the last ANA test.

A large number of learners had also failed the first formal writing test that I had administered to them. However, the second formal writing test presented an overall improvement in the pass rate due to assistance and intervention offered to them by their educators. The findings of the learner interviews as seen in section 6.20 in chapter six also signalled to me that many of the grade three learners at this school were experiencing difficulty in understanding certain aspects of literacy. Therefore, in view of the findings it becomes necessary for this school to implement a literacy intervention programme. It is suggested that this be held on Saturday

mornings or during the school vacation period instead of asking learners to remain during their break or after school hours when their concentration level is at its minimal.

This intervention programme must target the specific learning needs and difficulties of individual or groups of learners. By assisting learners individually or getting peers to assist them is in keeping with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. I believe that this early intervention programme will not only help to eradicate initial problems in literacy learning but most importantly it will provide a boost to a child's academic and life performance.

All stakeholders at this sample school will have to make an input to find solutions to improve education standards at their school instead of just allowing another generation of learners to pass through their hands knowing full well that extra support is required.

My third suggestion emanates from a discussion of Section 6.8 of chapter six which illuminates some common challenges that the three grade three educators face in teaching literacy and one of them was poor communication with learners at the school due to a language barrier. The reason for this is that English is a second language for many learners whose primary language is IsiZulu. Currently at the sample school the grade three learners are expected to read, write and be assessed in three languages: English, Afrikaans and IsiZulu. This compounds the problem even further.

This view was presented by a research participant:

“a lot of our teaching time is taken up in explaining an instruction to an ESL learner. There has to be constant revision of instruction words, vocabulary and plenty of assistance has to be offered to them to complete the simplest of tasks. They are finding it difficult to cope but their parents remain adamant that English is the dominant language and therefore their children have to be taught in this medium of instruction for their future success. “

However, in spite of their many challenges, the findings presented in Table 6.5 revealed that educators at this school have used a combination of teaching methods and approaches in their teaching of literacy such as the Skills-Based Approach, the Language-Experience Approach and the Process-Writing Approach. But during the semi-structured interviews the educators

did mention that very rarely do they change their teaching methods. It was also noted that they are currently still using the traditional methods to teach literacy where there is a constant focus on the teaching of skills in reading and writing tasks.

Since a large population at this school comprises ESL learners my fourth suggestion is that educators engage in adapting their teaching methods and strategies. The main problem may stem from the fact that these learners have not yet developed the necessary skills to become competent and independent readers and writers. The language that these children speak at home and in their community is not the same as at school so these learners are required to negotiate difficult transitions between home and school. It may be a perplexing experience for these young children whose home language differs from that which is spoken in the classroom.

From my reading on the different theories that underpin literacy teaching I suggest that educators use the Whole Language Approach. English Second Language Learners (ESL) will benefit when they are taught literacy in this approach. The reason being, this approach sees language as a whole entity. It stresses that children should learn to read and write naturally, focusing on real communication and not to follow a piecemeal approach where grammar, vocabulary and word recognition are separated. By using this approach educators will begin to teach language in a holistic manner rather than in an atomistic way.

I am of the opinion that this approach will be suitable for it uses all four modes of language and lessons will include four language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing and not only a single skill. Currently as part of the CAPS programme a single day's lesson does comprise these four language skills however, it was observed that these skills are taught in a de-contextualised way and amongst the educators at this school, there is an emphasis on the completion of the literacy syllabus and the Department workbooks instead of a focus on real-life world and experiences of the learners.

Presently, at the case study school the educators are following the CAPS programme. But I present the argument that the policy document encompassing the CAPS programme is now questionable at this stage. According to the CAPS policy document (Department of Education, 2013) the main skills in English are Listening and Speaking, Reading and

Phonics, Writing and Handwriting. The skills in Thinking and Reasoning and Language Structure are to be integrated into the teaching of the above-mentioned language skills.

However, during the semi-structured interviews with the educators, they made mention of the fact that there was not ample time in an English lesson to allow learners to engage fully in thinking and reasoning activities. These would have included examples such as allowing learners to brain-storm ideas about school matters, to participate in a simple debate or a conversation about a school event or even allow for the opportunity to be critical about their school dress code, all through team effort.

Although these are very young learners, these skills ought to be taught from the Foundation stage to develop future critical thinkers, readers, writers and social beings who will use their skills to find their place in society.

This thesis proposes the adoption of the views of the New Literacy Studies, the New London Group, and knowledge of theorists such as Vygotsky and Bourdieu who adopt the stance that language is learned through social interaction. They advocate the socio-cultural theory and their main tenet lies in social interactional relationships. Learners must work in pairs or in small groups and not just individually.

This collaboration or interaction that occurs between the educator and the learner and between learner and peers will aid learner's personal and academic development. Through this kind of support offered to an ESL learner, the weak or the slow learner, they will be able to achieve tasks that would otherwise be too difficult for them to attempt.

The above suggestions are to supplement the recommendations that follow in an attempt to improve learner's performance in literacy at the sample school.

7.5 Recommendations

In the following section recommendations will be made.

7.5.1 Recommendations for teachers to become more effective literacy teachers

A: I agree with Lawrence (2011) in recommending that Foundation Phase educators make the shift from viewing literacy purely as a psycholinguistic, de-contextualised skills perspective, as happening only in the ‘head’ to a socio-cultural view and understanding where reading and writing tasks are deeply embedded and inseparable from specific social contexts.

The above writer also suggests that while decoding is acknowledged as a vital part of literacy instruction, it has to be developed concurrently in combination with other strategies.

From the findings it was observed that educators were not encouraging learners to use texts functionally and to critically analyse and transform texts. Making visible this gap, the researcher was able to allow educators to think critically about their own practices and to see the shortfalls.

The educators did mention that

“teaching grade three learners to use texts functionally was a difficult task for this entails learners reading websites, silent reading practices, entries in a notebook, writing for a real audience and so on. They are not ready to complete these tasks and many of them do not have the resources at school or at home to do independent reading and writing tasks.”

They agreed that they would focus more on allowing learners to practice how to critically analyse and transform texts for they saw the benefits of this exercise. One educator stated that:

“It is good to encourage learners to interpret texts from a young age. They cannot accept language as it is but they must learn to read and ask questions. There is a need for this practice because we do not want our learners to regurgitate things that we are giving to them. We want them to make sense of what they are learning. All the strategies mentioned by the researcher have a place in literacy acquisition and development and in spite of the challenges, we will try to implement them in our teachings.”

B: It is recommended that learners receive more explicit language and literacy instruction and that there is a move away from a reliance only on series of readers with their controlled vocabularies.

I recommend that teachers develop greater flexibility and judgement in choosing the best resource materials and approaches to meet the learner's needs as well as their socio-cultural contexts for learning, and not be bound to a reading series. However, the findings from the semi-structured interviews of learners and educators and the classroom observations have revealed that reading is done with the use of a set of prescribed readers for each reading group. There is a reliance on these readers for the group and shared reading lessons.

I observed that educators were using old, uninteresting readers for the grade three learners. It was of little interest to them for it was not in keeping with their own experiences, interests and needs. There is also a shortage of readers and educators have often to share copies. However, in spite of this photocopies are also made of the stories for learners to practice and sharpen their reading skills.

Lawrence (2011) states that it is important for the Foundation Phase educators to reflect on questions such as, are the books, readers and stories that are being selected culturally sensitive? Do they contain texts that are relevant to the learners' own cultural contexts and to contexts with which they need to become familiar? Are there texts that may heighten their appreciation of diversity and alternative ways of viewing the world? Are there references to inclusivity in relation to matters such as class, race and gender?

It is important to display and use different languages to raise children's awareness of linguistic diversity. Educators need to choose teaching materials and methods that are in keeping with children's learning differences as well as to differences in culture and language.

The CAPS workbooks are available for learners. They are of interest to the learners for they appeal to different cultures and social backgrounds. One educator responded as follows:

“Learners do enjoy working with the CAPS workbooks. The colourful pictures and the bold print attracts the learners to want to work with the books. However, I do not use the books all the time because some of the exercises are far to simple for some learners. They tend to complete the tasks very quickly. I prefer using the books once a week.”

Perez (2004, p.46) argues that within a socio-cultural theoretical frame, literacy is viewed as multiple literacies which acknowledges the native and home literacy practices that learners bring to the school literacy tasks. It also allows for investigating and validating learners’ multiple literacies and cultural resources affirming their cultural identity, in order to inform school literacy practices and build a community of learners.

As literacy teachers we need to understand that our particular language and literacy socialization contributes to how we create classroom literacy contexts, and influences how we set standards or expectations for school literacy. The more we learn about the diverse cultural and linguistic experiences of our learners, the better prepared we will be to create appropriate literacy environments.

C: It is recommended that teachers focus on more conscious, purposeful development of literacy identities of the learners.

Learners socio-cultural backgrounds must be considered and there must be the deliberate integration and acknowledgement of the learners contributions in the construction of knowledge. Makin and Diaz (2002) argue that children’s home languages, dialects and experiences must be built upon in the development of their literacy identities. Similarly, Banda (2003) supports the practice of accessing local literacies and building upon them. I mentioned these practices for they incorporate a socio-cultural view of literacy and it would also augment and not supplant in any way the decoding skills which are also absolutely necessary for literacy development.

I did observe that in each single grade three class, there were learners of different languages, dialects and experiences affording the educator the opportunity to source information from this pool of knowledge. However, it was only during the discussion lessons that learners had the opportunity to discuss their news or share an idea with the educator. Much of the lesson entailed drill work, revision, teaching of a concept, demonstrations, group work and

independent work. The learners' own experiences and knowledge of their social backgrounds have been omitted in the literacy lessons.

D: It is recommended that teachers develop an awareness of the increasing impact of technology and popular culture on children's early literacy development.

While we understand that not all learners will have access to technology such as computers, DVD players, CD ROMs, cell phones etc. many learners are aware of the pop culture characters due to marketing and advertising strategies in the areas in which they live. Learners need new skills in order to use this technology, for they no longer read sequentially in multimodal contexts, but also laterally, as they follow hyperlinks or navigate using icons. This cannot be ignored by the Foundation Phase educators.

However, this may be a huge challenge in the case study school for presently learners have no access to computers, a school library or additional resources and readers. Due to a large number of learners coming from impoverished home backgrounds, there is a lack of resources in the home as well. The learners rely heavily on the educators for learning. These se-backs have stifled literacy development at the school.

The New London Group advocates a multiliteracies approach that educators must consider, for it works to promote a teaching and learning situation that acknowledges all of the interests that learners bring to the classroom and curriculum. For example, allowing learners to draw and allowing them to make use of their knowledge of popular culture when creating their own narrative scripts and images when writing and dramatizing (Lawrence, 2011).

E: It is recommended that opportunities be created where there is an acknowledgement of the efforts, skills, strengths and expertise of the educators.

Opportunities need to be created for professional development to boost teachers' morale. In this way educators will learn to trust their judgement, they can share their strengths, their strategies, their best teaching methods and approaches. Schools need educators that feel wanted, happy and appreciated for all their hard work. Therefore, they must be encouraged and affirmed wherever literacy teaching levels are being increased.

The respondents echoed their thoughts in the semi-structured interviews in question number 23, in this regard. Two educators mentioned that:

“Although we receive support and assistance from the Head of Department and sometimes from the Principal and seldom from the Deputy Principal, we suggest that we have team building workshops or professional development workshops where we can socialise, participate in activities to boost our confidence, increase our motivation and strengthen our skills for development. We would also like to be complimented, acknowledged and rewarded by the Department of Education and the school for our efforts and hard work.”

7.5.2 Recommendations for teacher training

The researcher’s recommendations for Teacher Training in the Foundation Phase are that:

- Educators be trained thoroughly in the knowledge, expertise and skills with regard to the teaching of literacy, particularly with regard to the different methods, approaches and the different theories that underpin literacy teaching such as the alphabet method, the phonic method, the look-and-say method, the eclectic method, the language experience method, the whole language approach and the Psycholinguistic approach.
- Educators have to understand the practical application of each method and that they understand the didactic value of each and how it contributes to literacy development in meeting the literacy needs of different learners in the classroom. Educators must also be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each method.

The data in this research project have revealed that educators are using a variety of teaching methods in their literacy lessons as the need arises. Educators did raise the concern that:

“we are still using old methods in teaching our lessons. It has worked well in the past for us. When we do attend literacy workshops, the facilitators do not introduce us to new

and updated methods. Maybe they themselves have not been trained to do so. However, it is very important that educator's knowledge must be broadened with regard to the definition of literacy, or the re conceptualization of literacy instruction in the 21st century.”

Thus, I recommend that more effective literacy teachers' approaches be researched and incorporated into the Foundation Phase teacher training programme. More research should be conducted across different categories of schools in order to ascertain how best practices in literacy teaching are being implemented. Literacy specialists should be appointed to mentor and develop best practices with regard to the role of multiliteracies in order to implement and augment a more balanced approach together with the skills-based approach.

7.6 The exploration of story telling techniques

I have observed from the literacy lessons that although the educators are aware of the use of narrative competence, it is not fully developed. Therefore, I would like to consider some of the recommendations made by Sheik (2013) in his presentation on using stories to develop narrative competence in the Foundation Phase.

According to Sheik (2013, p.54) by narrative competence we mean the ability for learners to understand and construct stories. Narrative competence does not follow automatically from general linguistic competence. In the beginning stages of learning to read independently, children spend more time decoding and as decoding become fluent and automatic, educators should pay increasing attention to comprehension, which is the intrinsic logic of narrative.

As educators of literacy we must allow our learners to explore the language using story telling. We must begin to appreciate the intellectual effort that lies behind child talk and we must show sensitivity towards their level of development. Stories have a core narrative structure consisting of aspects such as character, plot, setting, problem and resolution.

Further points to note:

- It is suggested that educators use pictures as visual prompts to establish settings and characters, as well as a central problem or goal and use open-ended questions to build a narrative sequence. In the case study school there is a need for educators to

use more resources especially during story telling for they are working with very young children. Learners tend to remember what they have seen, touched, felt, or experienced themselves.

- Encourage learners to keep a journal where they record their ongoing responses to the books they read. For young children such as the grade three learners, they could write a few words and draw a picture to depict ideas from the story that they have read. Educators did indicate that this was a good idea to ascertain whether or not learners had understood the story and also it highlights their own thoughts about the story. Although grade three learners must be able to write a few sentences independently, for many learners this was a difficult task and the word bank made it possible for them to complete this task. This will also allow learners to become active participants in the formulation of meaning rather than them being passive recipients of knowledge.
- When educators choose stories and books for learners, they must be aware of learners cognitive development, their psychological needs and their interests. This may not be possible in the case study school because there is a lack of funds to purchase new resources or new readers. Educators are forced to use an old series of readers to teach reading. This may not be realistic recommendation for them right now however, the educators did mention that they are prepared to raise funds to purchase resources for the Foundation phase learners.
- Educators must keep in mind that reading is not simply an act of decoding the printed word or visual image, but rather of a reader interacting with a text and using prior knowledge of the world and to understand how texts work to construct meaning. The perception by educators in the sample school is that

“learners must interact with the text thoroughly but due to time constraints, this is not possible because each class is divided into four ability groups being high flyers, average, weak and very weak learners”

- Story telling creates opportunities in the literacy lessons for learners to learn new words, strategies, new concepts and more grammatical constructions and it further allows learners to practice using the English language to gather and communicate information through conversation. Upon her classroom observations, the researcher maintains that this strategy is a need that must be done frequently in the grade three classes. These learners have a limited vocabulary which must be extended thoroughly and this is a way of doing this. It will also allow for the many English second language learners to practice speaking the language to develop their skills.
- In the Foundation Phase the recycling of rhymes, repeated phrases, singing of songs and a return to the same character again and again, is critical to consolidation, scaffolding and enrichment. The educator could make use of simple fairy tale props such as hats, sun glasses, coats, puppets and so on for learners to dramatize the story to focalize perspectives into the imagined narrator. It was noted that educators did practice this for they agreed about the advantages using these strategies.

From the semi- structured interviews of the learners and the focus group sessions, the data revealed that the grade three learners enjoy listening to stories. Thus, I have suggested the above recommendations because it must be remembered that like Aladdin's cave of treasures, like Ali Baba's surprising discovery of jewels, stories are the riches that may imbue our learners with the powers of reflection, the growth of confidence and the experience of joy.

7.7 Qualities of excellent reading educators

The data has revealed that the educators did engage and motivate the learners in literacy teaching. However, they did not do so while connecting their prior background knowledge to the current instruction. Some scaffolding instruction did take place. It is for these reasons that I now discuss the following recommendation by Lacina and Silva (2011) who cite the qualities that excellent reading teachers possess based on research conducted. They possess the following qualities which we as literacy teachers can implement in our classrooms:

- Excellent reading teachers understand reading and writing development and its importance and believe that all children can learn to read and write.

- They continually assess learners individual progress and relate reading and writing instruction to learners previous experiences.
- They know a variety of ways to teach reading and writing, when to use each method and how to combine the methods into an effective instructional programme.
- Excellent reading teachers offer a variety of materials and texts for children to read.
- They use flexible grouping structures and differentiate instruction to meet each learner's needs.
- They are good reading 'coaches' meaning that they can help learners strategically.

7.8 The development of oral language and oral reading skills in the classroom

Cook-Gumperz (2006, p.45) states that “educators need to take cognisance of the ways in which oral language supports reading and writing for if learners can listen and speak well, their reading and writing skills are sure to improve. When learners develop oral language they also develop the semantic system of language. In this, learners learn the meaning relations among words, phrases or sentences.”

The findings show that educators do allow learners to engage in oral discussions during the start of the literacy lesson. Learners speak about their personal encounters, express their thoughts about a topic, participate in show and tell activities and so on. The learners enjoy speaking to each other and to the educator. However, some learners were very shy and reserved and barely said anything although they were given the opportunity to do so. Thus, it is these learners who must be encouraged and motivated to participate in the oral language lessons.

From my reading of the role of the educator in supporting oral language development (Vygotsky, 1978) it becomes imperative for the educator to provide children with the opportunities for social interaction and to become particularly aware of the way in which they can create zones of proximal development. By this we mean allowing them to participate in activities on their own as well as work under the guidance of the educator.

An example of structuring oral language development within a zone of proximal development would be, for example, an educator asks learners to predict an ending to a simple story being told and she or he would provide the language (a word bank) to complete

this task. As the learners engage in the activity and understand this concept of English, the educator would remove herself or himself from the activity and the children would continue to discuss and perform a similar task on their own.

7.9 Scaffolding Reading Instruction

At the case study school the learners relied heavily on the educator to assist them in their reading and writing tasks. Very few learners are independent workers. However, Vygotsky (1978) propagates scaffolding which is when learners move from most to least mediation and support in activities and Lacina and Silva (2011) recommend some of the following scaffolding strategies in teaching learners to read: read alouds, shared reading and guided reading.

I recommend these strategies to Foundation Phase learners to promote reading and writing skills for they encompass techniques that CAPS promote. According to the above writers 'reading aloud' is the most highly recommended activity for encouraging the development of language and literacy. It allows learners the opportunity to become actively involved in discussing books, to experiment with language through creative drama and re-enactments of favourite books, reading and writing together and individually.

Shared reading was practiced by the educators which entailed the educator and the learners reading books together. Learners must work with big books that allow them to see the print and the illustrations and easily follow the reading. As learners listen to the story they too will soon begin to chime in and read parts of the story, make predictions, become involved in discussions and critique a story. Thus, shared reading allows educators to demonstrate a number of reading strategies and various language skills while enjoying a simple reading activity.

Guided reading is different in that it provides learners with instructional scaffolds that allow them to read a text on their own. In this way they come across words that are unknown, to develop and use problem solving strategies while being supported by their educator, they begin to explore sound-letter patterns and language structure and they look for clues and link it to their own experiences and background. However, the findings show that guided reading was a mammoth task for the educators as one educator stated:

“we have four reading ability groups and we can only bring out two groups in a day because we have very large number of learners in our class. The learners do not practice their reading at home although copies of the reading sheet is given to them. This makes our task very difficult. Also the time is not sufficient for us to listen to every learner read.”

Due to the poor reading skills displayed by the grade three learners in standardised test one whereby a large percentage of the learners had failed the test and from the observations of the lessons, the researcher makes the following recommendations to promote reading in the classes. Partner or buddy reading is another way for learners to build fluency. In this a learner reads and re-reads a text of a passage with a peer.

In echo reading, a less fluent reader ‘echoes’ a more fluent reader while he or she reads. In shared reading the educator does most of the reading. Teaching learners sight words is an additional method to help them. The sight words are the words that are seen most in the text. By revising sight words often, learners will be able to recognize and recall the words quickly and accurately and their comprehension skills are strengthened when they stop at selected times to build during the reading process to discuss the text with one another or their educator.

Currently in the sample school, it was observed that educators engaged in whole-class or group instruction in a skills-based approach, in a literacy environment marked by the following: skills-based literacy instruction in decoding, explicit phonic lessons, comprehension skills, vocabulary development, spelling and grammar, educator directed learning goals, educator modelling of specific skills, followed by learner practice and assessment and educator directs the reading and writing activities. In a nutshell, during this skills-based approach adopted by the grade three educators in the sample school, the educator explicitly guided the learners through the delivery of the literacy lessons.

However, as we strive to meet the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds and settings, the words and experiences of our learners should guide our choices in literacy instruction. This research project makes mention of the socio-cultural theory for it explains how the social and cultural settings impact on learners’ learning. This is due to the fact that learners’ thoughts, feelings and their actions are heavily influenced by contextual factors within the

classroom and out of the classroom, including social and cultural norms imparted to them through instructional activities.

From the above-mentioned study we glean that teaching good reading skills to learners, will benefit the slow and the good readers for we as educators have a chance to reduce inter-individual differences in initial reading performance amongst our learners. And finally as the data in above-mentioned study revealed, educators are encouraged to teach cognitive skills such as letter knowledge, listening comprehension and number sense to speed up the growth of reading skills amongst young learners.

7.10 Working with English Second Language Learners

The researcher offers the following recommendation because it was found that in the sample school, a larger percentage of learners were English second language learners. Many of them did experience difficulty because they have to read, write and speak three different languages: English, Afrikaans and IsiZulu.

Lacina and Silva (2011) makes reference to the Language Experience Approach to support English second language learners in their reading development. Within this approach, the educator will generally begin the lesson by providing the learners with an experience that will generate material for a rich discussion. These experiences will be that which they are familiar with, such as a visit to the zoo, a day at the beach, a birthday party and so on. Following the discussion the educator will record what the learners have to say about the experience.

7.11 Comprehending texts

The findings show that many learners experience difficulty in comprehending texts. It must be remembered that readers do not simply string words together to comprehend a text. Words in isolation have a range of potential meanings; rather it is the context in which a word appears that supports the reader in actualizing its meaning. According to Kucer (2009, p.10) educators can support learners in comprehending a text in some of the following ways:

- “It is important for educators to learn how authors or writers of the different texts, use language to fulfil different functions when composing a text. For example,

allow learners to recognize that a shopping list is different from a menu. Educators must provide learners with many print-rich environments where they have the opportunity to come across texts that serve a variety of literacy functions.”

Examples of such are: fantasy, poetry, newspaper articles, cookbooks, brochures and so on. At the sample school it was noticed that educators often made use of the newspapers and books as resources. To promote a culture of reading amongst the grade three learners and to promote good reading and writing skills, there is a need for the educators to use a variety of resources in their literacy lessons.

- A good strategy to use would be to choose a simple passage that is unfamiliar to the learners, yet easy for them to handle. Leave blanks in the passage. The learners will peruse the entire text before being asked to read it aloud. When they encounter a blank, they will be asked to predict the word that might fit in. Later, learner will list the new words that were added in and discuss their meanings.

7.12 Writing Development

The results of the standardised tests did indicate that the grade three learners had experienced difficulty in formal writing skills such as, when they had to complete a story by writing two paragraphs (see appendix T). Many learners made some improvement only when a word bank was given to them. In addition to this, the data from the semi-structured interviews of the grade three learners (Appendix N) question number four, did reveal that many learners experienced difficulty in their formal writing lessons.

Thus, to promote formal writing skills amongst these learners, the researcher believes that there are numerous ways that educators can scaffold writing for learners. Modelled, shared, guided and interactive writing are all types of writing (see diagram below) in which the educator will serve as a guide and then gradually release responsibility as the learners become independent writers.

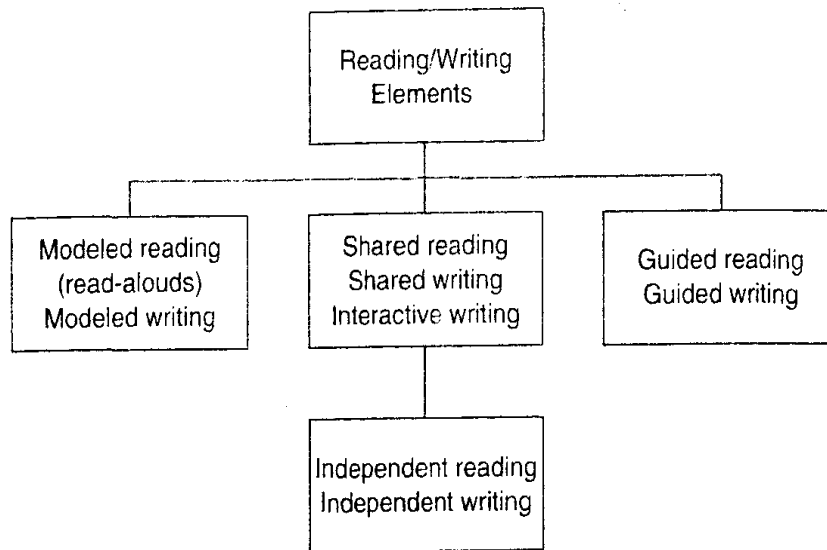


Figure 7.2 Types of Writing (Lacina & Silva, 2011, p.131).

Lacina and Silva (2011, p.54) explain the steps in teaching writing as follows:

- “First modelled writing is when an educator models topics and demonstrates how to organize information or how to proofread and edit one’s writing. The educator will say words and sentences slowly as she or he is writing and as they think aloud this process of determining how to write. These modelled lessons will introduce learners to new forms of writing and help them to develop a ‘voice’ in writing.
- Secondly, shared writing is when the learners and the educator plan a text together. The purpose of such writing is for the educator to model the thought process for writing. The learners will have more independence in this type of writing since they are more actively contributing to composing the text.
- In guiding writing the educator works with a small group of learners at a time to provide explicit instruction based on the individual learner’s needs. The educator will assist the learners in ‘crafting’ their writing which means incorporating ways to capture a reader’s attention and interest in the text and ways to develop other strategies and skills for formal writing tasks.
- This is followed by interactive writing. In this type of writing, the text is composed by a group of learners and the educator will assist the learners as they work to write individual words in their books. As the learners take turns writing words, writing punctuation and developing the writing, the educator scaffolds instruction by helping them solve problems that they encounter while completing the writing task.

Then the educator and the learners will chorally read the writing and re-read many times. “

It has been observed in the literacy lessons that educators do attempt to practice some of these strategies to promote meaningful and independent writing in their lessons. However, more improvement and practice in the above -mentioned strategies are recommended.

7.12.1 Stages in the Formal Writing Process

It was also noticed that educators did encourage formal writing on a daily basis but they did not follow the various steps or stages in formal writing. One educator mentioned that:

“we do not have sufficient time for formal writing. Some learners are very weak in their reading and writing skills. We have to set very simple tasks for them to be able to complete the task and in this way we encourage and motivate learners to show an interest in these aspects.”

Appendix Z outlines the time allocation for the various aspects in literacy. It will be seen that only thirty minutes for two days and one hour per week is allocated for this aspect. I share the concern that this time allocation needs to be revised for it is not sufficient for the average and weak learners to be taught different skills in formal writing.

Teaching learners how to write means showing them that writing is a recursive process. The writing process involves setting a purpose for writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. The diagram below illustrates the recursive nature of writing.

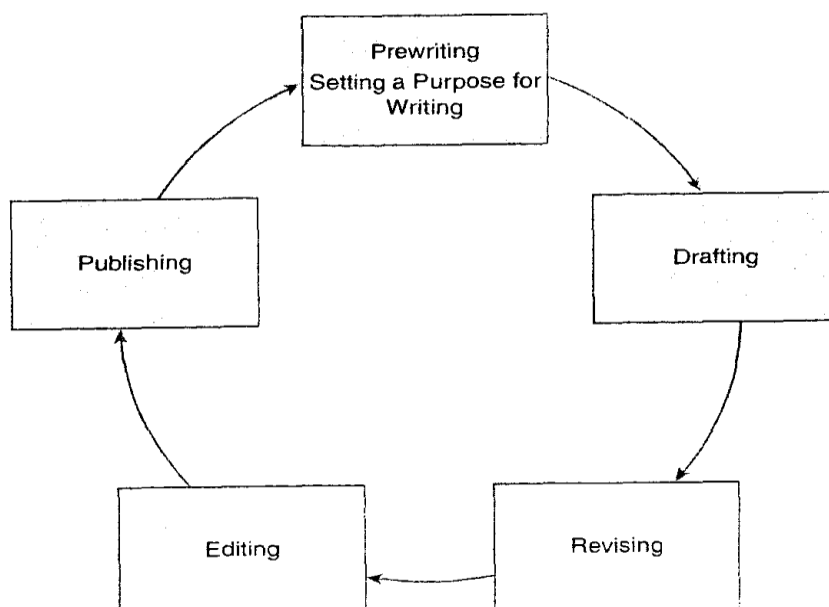


Figure 7.3 Steps in the Formal Writing Process (Lacina & Silva, 2011, p.133).

The first stage of the writing process is the setting of a purpose for writing and this takes place during the prewriting stage. In this stage the educator will assist the learners to choose a topic and to begin to organize their ideas for the writing task for example in the form of a spider diagram, flow chart and so on. The second stage is called the drafting stage. In this stage learners will draft at various times, revise and confer with the educator or a peer about their writing. In the third stage being the revising stage, learners will share their writing with a group, or a peer/peers and or the educator and receive feedback about the task and then make substantive changes or revisions to the draft.

It is important for educators to teach learners specific ways how to give positive feedback to their peers, to ask questions about what seems unclear or that which needs more explanation. During the fourth stage which is the editing stage, the learners will meet again with a peer to provide grammatical feedback on their peer's writing. Lastly, during the publishing stage of the writing stage, learners will need time to showcase their writing for example, reading their effort to the class or at an assembly and so on. The researcher has seen these stages in the writing process as significant and that these steps need to be taught to Foundation Phase learners so they may develop correct writing strategies which will gear them to cope adequately in the Senior Phase of their schooling career.

However, the main concern that arises is, if time is allocated for the writing tasks to be taught according to these stages, in the CAPS curriculum? The answer to this is no. The educators did mention during the interviews that there were far too many aspects to be taught for grade threes in the CAPS curriculum and the time that was allocated for each aspect per week, was not sufficient. Educators had too many slow learners and therefore many aspects were not thoroughly taught due to time constraints.

7.13 Phonic Development

As an educator with twenty years of teaching experience, I am aware that phonological knowledge is a strategy that is most frequently relied upon when sounding out unfamiliar words. However, this is a very difficult skill to teach to learners in the Foundation Phase and for these learners to acquire. It is also very difficult for learners to learn the sounds of letters, consonants and digraphs. It takes plenty of time and practice for some learners to acquire the necessary skills for them to become independent readers and writers.

Buckland and Fraser (2008, p.64) in their approach aim to “introduce educators to experiential concept-formation techniques to understand the role of phonemic awareness in literacy acquisition and to an appreciation of just how difficult it is for young children to acquire phonemic awareness. The salient features of their approach includes: literacy and spelling: spelling here is the process of encoding words, it involves phonics and the linking of phonemes to graphemes. A wide range of examples will be used to show learners that spelling/decoding is not merely a mechanical skill but that it involves the construction of meaning, to interpret the meaning of words and to use a combination of clues from individual letters. In stage two phonemic awareness: through problem solving activities, learner’s spelling mistakes are examined to show the main problems children face in learning to read.
“

“In phonics, this stage shows the kind of help learners will require in phonic awareness. Stage four, Phonics and beyond, uses actual examples of children’s drawings and their spelling to discuss the understanding of phonics. It emphasises that writing is not the same as phonemic transcription and phonics is not enough on its own to enable literacy acquisition. Learners must be taught to recognise meaningful units in context, which is to understand phonics as content knowledge (Buckland & Fraser, 2008, p.65).

From my understanding of the above-mentioned reading on phonic development, it is necessary for educators to receive training and practice in phonology and phonics before they teach it to their learners. To deny them this training would be like asking educators to teach literacy with only a rudimentary knowledge of the range of appropriate information available.

8. Suggestions for further research

- Educator's understanding, knowledge, expertise and skills with regard to the teaching of literacy should be thoroughly developed through further training, particularly with regard to new and different methods, approaches, different theories that underpin them and literacy practices. Educators must understand the practical application of each method, the didactic value of it and how it will contribute to effective literacy development. This will help to ensure that they cater for the needs of all learners in their classes. This will also help to alleviate the problem whereby educators continue to teach literacy using old and outdated methods.
- Educators' conceptual understanding should be developed with regard to the broadening definition of literacy which includes the socio-cultural approach to literacy teaching and the need for a multiliteracies approach to literacy.
- More effective approaches to literacy teaching should be researched and incorporated into the Foundation Phase programme.
- The use of 'buddy teaching' should be implemented whereby more research should be conducted across different categories of schools in order to ascertain how best practices in literacy teaching are implemented and to workshop those that work effectively. Literacy facilitators should be appointed to mentor and develop best practices with regard to the role of multiliteracies in order to implement and augment a more balanced approach which would include the skills-based approach as well.
- Respect, understanding and an awareness must be developed by all educators for the acknowledgement of the socio-cultural contexts of all learners and their different languages.

9. Summary

The aim of this case study research project was to investigate and discover the approaches and practices that three grade three educators used in promoting literacy development at their school. A mixed methods research design was used because data was collected through qualitative and quantitative methods in an interpretative paradigm.

Firstly I defined literacy and then examined the redefinition of literacy within a socio-cultural approach to literacy teaching. Then the case study focussed on discovering the particular approaches and practices of the grade three educators by means of classroom observation, semi-structured interviews with educators and grade three learners, followed by a questionnaire to parents and finally the evaluation of the written work of the learners.

From the literature review of this thesis and all the readings that were mentioned, it is evident that there are multifarious reasons for learners' low reading literacy outcomes, some of which this study did not directly investigate or mention. However, findings from this research project did accentuate and confirm that there are a large number of problematic schooling conditions and teaching practices in the sample school.

It must be noted that the South African education system will continue to make it extremely difficult to ensure that all learners have equitable opportunities to develop their levels of literacy that are required for their personal progress, if drastic changes are not implemented immediately with regard to an action plan to increase the levels of literacy in our country this will retard development that is so desperately needed for our country's future economic growth and competitiveness.

According to Levin (2010) as far as learner achievement is concerned, the most successful countries tend to be those with the lowest levels of inequality. Therefore, the onus is still on all role-players in the education system to work towards lessening the existing inequalities which perpetuate the achievement gap between the privileged and the non-privileged learners. In conclusion, Levin and Fullan (2008, p.291) echo the following thought with regard to the task that lies ahead for all the role-players towards literacy achievement and literacy development:

“Large-scale, sustained improvement in student outcomes requires a sustained effort to change school and classroom practices, not just structures such as governance and accountability. The heart of improvement lies in changing teaching and learning practices in thousands and thousands of classrooms, and this requires focussed and sustained effort by all parts of the education system and its partners.”

The lack of a culture of reading and writing in our South African homes and schools acts as a barrier to our development in education, reconstruction and international competitiveness. The researcher has attempted to illuminate the many obstacles to our growth towards literacy development, however, it must be remembered that there are far more barriers to consider.

I have discussed the findings of this research project with the educators and the parents of the grade three learners. They were willing to make necessary changes in the quest of improving literacy performance amongst the grade three children at this school. It is hoped that the suggestions and recommendations made by me will be attempted by the educators at the case study school who strive for excellence in education.

My research also underscores the fact that learners are valuable resources and they harbour valuable emic perspectives on existing educational processes. Therefore it is a plea that educators help in making a difference by acquainting themselves with the changing literacy practices in the homes and communities of the learners whom they teach.

The seminal scholars such as Vygotsky, Bourdieu, Gee, Street, amongst others, referenced in this study all point to research that highlights social practices and conceptions of reading and writing. What this simply means is that children do not learn in isolation but with them they bring their prior knowledge, their own life experiences and their socio-cultural knowledge to the literacy tasks.

Using the knowledge of these theorists and my own practical experience, I present the argument that literacy is embedded in socially constructed principles and therefore, must not be considered as just technical skills to be taught and learnt. It can further be argued that implementing the recommendations as discussed in this research, will assist in the improvement of literacy practices at this primary school and conceivably at similar schools.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

REQUEST FOR OFFICIAL APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

7 Swanbridge Walk
Stonebridge
Phoenix
4068

21 July 2011

The Head of Department
Dr S.N.P. Sishi
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3200

Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently an Educator in the Foundation Phase at a Primary School. I am deeply concerned about issues relating to reading and writing practices amongst educators in the Foundation Phase as well as learners' attitudes towards reading and writing. As part of my doctoral studies (PhD), I am undertaking a study on:

Exploring Literacy Practices: A Case Study of a Peri-Urban Primary School
--

I intend conducting interviews with a selected group of educators, parents and learners. In order to obtain permission to conduct this academic research, I provide the following undertaking:

- All participation in the study would be on a voluntary basis.
- Normal activities of this institution would not be disrupted.

- All information gleaned by me will be strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes. The ethical code of conduct governing research will be rigidly observed.

In addition upon completion, a copy of my thesis will be forwarded to the Provincial Head Office.

Yours faithfully

SHAMITHA RAMDAN

(Researcher)

Telephone: (H) 031 - 8281650

(W) 031 - 5029570

(C) 0736001184

e- mail: shamitha.ramdan@gmail.com

Student Number: 204402087

Enclosed:

- Proof of my registration from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

**APPENDIX B:
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8/106

Mrs. Shamitha Ramdan
7 Swanbridge Walk
Stonebridge
Phoenix
4068

Dear Mrs. Ramdan

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **Exploring literacy practices : A case study of a Peri Urban Primary School**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The Period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 October 2011 to 31 October 2012.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following School and Institution:
10.1 Greenbury Primary School


Nkele S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education

Date

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL Office G 25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, Pietermaritzburg 3201

TEL Tel: +27 33 341 8610 | Fax: +27 33 3341 8612 | E-mail: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za |
Web: www.kzndoe.gov.za

**APPENDIX C:
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU- NATAL**



07 November 2011

Student Number: 204402087

Ms S Ramdan
7 Swanbridge Walk
Stonebrigde
Phoenix

Dear Ms S Ramdan

Doctor of Philosophy: Proposal

The Faculty Higher Degrees committee at its meeting held on 01 November 2011 gave full approval to your PhD proposal as follows:

Exploring literacy practices: A case study of a peri-urban primary school

Please note that you need to apply for ethical clearance. The process for ethical clearance takes approximately three months. Electronic application can be accessed at <http://research.ukzn.ac.za>

Once the ethical clearance has been reviewed by Faculty and sent to University Research Office, the Faculty of Education cannot be held responsible for any delays.

Yours sincerely,

Nomsa Ndlovu
Postgraduate Studies and Research

cc: Professor A Sheik, SLLME, Edgewood Campus

Faculty of Education
Deputy Dean (Postgraduate Studies and Research)
Postal Address: Private Bag X03, Ashwood 3605, South Africa
Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 7594 Email: bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 1169

 **1910 - 2010** 
100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Colleges: — Edgewood — Howard College — Medical School — Pietermaritzburg — Westville

**APPENDIX E:
LETTER OF REQUEST TO THE PRINCIPAL**

23 September 2011

The Principal

Dear Madam

ACADEMIC RESEARCH:

I request permission to conduct a research study on reading and writing practices amongst educators and learners of the grade three classes. It will also investigate learner's attitudes to reading and writing practices in the Foundation Phase at your school.

At present I am pursuing my Doctoral Studies (PhD) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in the current academic year. I would be grateful if you could grant me permission to undertake a research project in your school. My research topic is:

Exploring Literacy Practices: A Case Study of a Peri – Urban Primary School

The objective of this project is two-fold: firstly it is to develop a better understanding of the reading and writing practices of educators, as well as learners' attitudes to reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase and to determine the extent to which these factors could influence the Literacy performance of a learner. Secondly, it is to develop reading competences amongst learners, through their own writings.

I would like to conduct the research as from January 2012 to July 2012. My project will involve interviews with the Grade three educators, learners and parents. It is my intention that the information obtained, be made available to school managers as well as to the Department of Education.

A participant in this study is at liberty to withdraw from participating at any stage and for any reason. A decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage. Thus participation is voluntary. Participants and the name of your school will remain anonymous and the information gathered will be treated with confidentiality.

I will ensure that normal teaching and learning at your school will not be disrupted. All interviews with educators and learners will be conducted during the lunch breaks

and after school hours. Parents will be interviewed during the week-ends and upon their availability.

Should you have any concerns about this project, please contact my supervisor Professor Ayub Sheik, a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He can be contacted telephonically on 031 – 2603138 or 0745845221 or e-mail: sheika@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for giving attention to my request.

Yours faithfully

SHAMITHA RAMDAN

Telephone numbers: (H) 031- 8281650
(W) 031- 5029570
(C) 0736001184

Student number: 204402087

PRINCIPAL

DATE: _____

APPENDIX F:
CONSENT FROM THE PRINCIPAL

I _____ being the Principal of the sample school, do hereby agree to allow Mrs Shamitha Ramdan, student number: 2044020287 to conduct research at my school. The purpose and the nature of this study has been fully explained to me and I am willing to allow Shamitha Ramdan access to my staff and my learners on the school premises.

Mrs Ramdan undertakes to liaise directly with the identified staff members and grade three learners who will form the participants in her study. She will get their individual permission to conduct this research with them.

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL

DATE

APPENDIX G:
INFORMED CONSENT: EDUCATOR

Dear Colleague

RE: INFORMED CONSENT

At present I am pursuing my Doctoral Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. A prerequisite of this degree is a thesis involving research which I am currently initiating. The focus of my study is reading and writing practices of educators, as well as learners' attitudes to reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase.

Once this information is obtained, I intend to develop learners' reading competences through their own writings. My supervisor is Professor Ayub Sheik, a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He can be contacted telephonically on 031-2603138 or 0745845221. My research title is:

Exploring Literacy Practices: A Case Study of a Peri -Urban Primary School

The information obtained from this study, will be made available to school managers to enhance the literacy performance of learners in the Foundation Phase. The ultimate value of this research will depend on your contribution, as your perceptions and experiences at your school form a vital part of this study.

Grade three educators from the Foundation Phase will be selected to participate in an interview. In the interview process, the educator will be asked questions related to how reading is conducted in the classroom. There will be one interview session of 40 minutes in duration. To facilitate the flow of the interview, there will be an audio recording of the process.

I realize that by participating in this interview you will have to sacrifice your time on my behalf, but I believe that ultimately, this research will benefit all educators by establishing the positive and negative factors that influence reading competences in a Primary School.

In order to ensure anonymity the name of the school and the participants will not be required in the interview. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. Furthermore, a decision, not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage. The data gathered through the interview, will be discarded after submission of the thesis. The audio tapes will be incinerated.

Further information regarding this study can be obtained from: Shamitha Ramdan

Telephone numbers: (H) 031 - 8281650

(W) 031 – 5029570

(C) 0736001184

Student number: 204402087

Your honesty and sharing of your insight in this interview will be most appreciated.

Thanking You

**APPENDIX H:
CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANT**

I,..... (Full names of participant),
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the
research project, and I consent to participating in this research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so
desire and this decision will not affect me negatively. I agree to provide samples of
learner’s work to the researcher for analysis. I understand that every effort will be made
to keep my personal information confidential. I also understand that every effort will be
made to provide me with feedback of the results of the complete research project.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

Additional consent to audio recording:

In addition to the above, I hereby agree to the audio recording of the interview for the
purposes of data capture. I understand that no personally identifying information or
recordings concerning me will be released in any form. I also understand that these
recordings and transcriptions will be kept securely in a locked environment and will be
destroyed or erased once the data capturing and analysis are complete.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

APPENDIX I: FORMAT OF THE INTERVIEW

1. Introduction:

- Thank interviewee for participation
- Personal introduction: The interviewer (researcher) introduces herself and then gets to know the interviewee. Completes the biographical information of participant (for example age, post level, number of years of teaching experience, qualifications, etc)
- Explains the purpose of the interview
- Stresses confidentiality and anonymity of the school and interviewee.

2. Questions:

- The researcher will pose questions.

3. Closure:

- Researcher thanks the interviewee.
- Requests permission from the interviewee for further contact to clarify certain issues if necessary.

ANNEXURE J:

INFORMED CONSENT: PARENT AND LEARNER INTERVIEW

Dear Parent / Guardian

Please read the information below before deciding whether you are interested in participating in this research project or not and whether you will be granting permission to your child / ward to answer questions about their reading habits.

1. I understand that Mrs Shamitha Ramdan (Student number: 204402087), is conducting research on reading and writing practices in the Foundation Phase in a Primary School. She is trying to find out educators' practices and learners' attitudes towards literacy. She is also interested in family attitudes and practices towards reading and writing.
2. I have been asked to participate in this research study. I have also been asked to grant my child / ward permission to answer a few questions regarding their reading and writing habits at school and at home. I understand fully that we will be interviewed once only and the interviews will be tape recorded.
3. I accept that the results of this research study will be used towards a Doctoral Degree (PhD) through the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, the results may (at a later stage) be used for writing papers for presentation at conferences or publication in academic journals.
4. I understand that no real names will be used in any report emanating from this research study.
5. I agree to participate in the research project, but I understand that I can withdraw my agreement to participate at any time without any obligations, if I so desire.

Your honesty and your willingness to share your insight in this interview will be most appreciated.

Thanking you

MRS SHAMITHA RAMDAN

Full name of Parent / Guardian _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ANNEXURE K:

INFORMED CONSENT: PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Parent / Guardian

Please read the information below before deciding whether or not you are interested in participating in this research project by completing the given questionnaire.

I understand that Mrs Shamitha Ramdan (Student number: 204402087), is conducting research on reading and writing practices in the Foundation Phase in a Primary School. She is trying to find out educators' practices and learners' attitudes towards reading and writing skills. She is also interested in family attitudes and practices towards reading and writing.

1. I have been asked to participate in this research study by completing the questionnaire. I accept that the results of this research study will be used towards a Doctoral Degree (PhD) through the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, the results may (at a later stage) be used for writing papers for presentation at conferences or publication in academic journals.
2. I understand that no real names will be used in any report emanating from this research study.
3. I agree to participate in the research project, but I understand that I can withdraw my agreement to participate at any time without any obligations, if I so desire.

Your honesty and willingness to share your insight in this questionnaire will be most appreciated.

Thanking you

MRS SHAMITHA RAMDAN

Full name of Parent / Guardian _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

**APPENDIX L: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATORS
BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS: EDUCATORS**

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Please respond to the following information. It is required to gather data in determining the experience and expertise of the informant.

1. What is your present occupational status?

Educator	Master Teacher	Senior Teacher
-----------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

2. Sex

- 21. Female
- 22. Male

3. Age

21-30	31-39	40-49	50-59	60-69
--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------

4. Is your school library

fully functional	Non - functional	partly functional
-------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

5. Number of years at present school:

1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35
------------	-------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------

6. Post

Permanent	Temporary
------------------	------------------

7. Number of years teaching experience

8. Kindly state your highest teaching qualification?

9. When last did you attend a teacher training workshop? Please elaborate in detail?

10. Do you feel that you need re-training? If yes, in which Learning Area and Why?

11. Are there any other additional responsibilities that you have at your school? (for example Acting Head of Department, Learning Area Specialist, Mentor) How has this responsibility assisted you in your current teaching practices?

Yes
No

12. If yes. Please discuss them in detail.

APPENDIX M:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE QUESTIONS FOR THE GRADE 3 EDUCATORS

(These interviews will be recorded and transcribed, but the actual physical note pages will serve as field notes, to aid in remembering the responses of the interviewees when analyzing the data)

1. How many years have you been teaching in the Foundation Phase at this school?
2. Describe in detail the social background of the learners in your classroom?
3. How do you think their social background impacts on their literacy status?
4. What approach or method do you use to teach reading in your lessons?
5. What approach or method do you use to teach writing skills in the classroom?
6. What additional activities do you believe will help learners to become more competent readers and writers?
7. Besides the school readers and the educator resource books, what other resources do you use in your literacy lessons?
8. How do you group your learners for reading and other group work in literacy? How are the lessons planned for each group on a daily basis?
9. How do you go about assisting English second language learners in reading and writing tasks to allow them to become competent in literacy skills?
10. How do you assist the advanced learners in your class so as to keep them stimulated and motivated?
11. Do parents take an interest in their children's literacy development? If yes, in what ways? If not, explain in detail.
12. How do you motivate the parents / guardians of the learners in your class to encourage their children to read and write?
13. How often do you change your method of teaching literacy and why?
14. Do you believe the time that is allocated for literacy teaching in a day, is sufficient to complete all the necessary activities?
15. What do you always expect from your learners to assist them in the development of literacy skills?
16. What would you say are the greatest challenges facing educators today in the teaching of literacy?

17. Do you receive sufficient support in your teaching from the Principal, The Head of Department and the educators at this school?
18. How do you help learners relate to each other, particularly when they come from different home backgrounds, speak a different language or have a different culture or religion?
19. How do you deal with the different home languages that your learners use when communicating with you during a literacy lesson?
20. What are your views on the last ANA literacy test that was conducted at this school?
21. What difficulties did your learners experience with this test? Why do you think they experienced these difficulties?
22. How do you intend to overcome these challenges in the future?
23. Do you have anything to add with regard to literacy teaching?

APPENDIX N:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE QUESTIONS FOR GRADE 3 LEARNERS

1. What group have you been placed in for reading?
2. Do you have any reading problems? If yes, what kind of problems do you experience?
3. Do you get enough help from your teachers and your friends to cope with reading skills?
4. Do you have any problems in expressive writing lessons such as when you have to write a paragraph, a story or a letter? If yes, please explain in detail?
5. Besides your English reader, what other books or reading materials do you read in the classroom?
6. Explain how your teacher assists you in learning reading and writing skills?
7. Do you often do well or badly in your comprehension tests? Why?
8. Are you given homework in literacy? If yes, how often? In what form is the homework sent with you? (for example do you have to copy it from the chalkboard or you are given a worksheet and so on).
9. Do you receive assistance at home in completing your literacy homework?
10. Do you have books, magazines or the newspaper and other reading material at home? How often do you read at home?
11. Does the school have a library? Are you a member of the local or the school library? If not, please explain in detail?

APPENDIX O:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS OF GRADE 3 LEARNERS

Please complete and return this questionnaire to school

SECTION A

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Please tick (✓) the appropriate box for each question.

1. GENDER

1.1 your child's gender is:

male
female

1.2 your gender is:

male
female

2. AGE

2.1 your child's age is:

6 years
7 years
8 years
9 years
10 years

2.2 Your age is:

18 - 25 years
26 - 35 years
36 – 45 years
46 – 55 years
older than 55 years

3. **YOUR OCCUPATION OR SIMILAR OCCUPATION:**

- unemployed
- house keeper /gardener/cleaner/labourer
- vendor/informal trader/self employed
- secretary/clerk/receptionist/sales
- teacher/nurse/police services
- businessman / businesswoman
- other

4. **YOUR HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION:**

- none
- grade 1 – 7
- grade 8 – 10
- grade 11 – 12
- Tertiary education

5. **TYPE OF RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT:**

- shelter
- suburb
- township
- rural area
- other

6. **How often do you read to your child / ward:**

- once a day
- weekly
- monthly
- other

7. How often do you assist your child with literacy homework:

- daily
- weekly
- monthly
- other

8. What language do you and your family speak at home:

- English
- IsiZulu
- Other

9. What is the medium of instruction at the school that your child attends:

- English
- Isizulu
- other

10. How often do you visit the school to monitor your child's progress in literacy:

- Weekly
- Monthly
- yearly

11. What literacy resources are there at home for your child to use:

- books
- television
- radio
- computer
- none

SECTION B

Please answer by providing complete details to each question

1. Are you happy with your child's performance in literacy? Why? What are your expectations?

2. What are some of the reading activities that take place in your home with your child?

3. What writing activities take place in your home with your child?

4. Do you understand the literacy homework thoroughly in order to assist your child in completing the work correctly? Please explain in detail?

5. What are some of the difficulties that your child experiences in completing tasks in literacy at home?

6. How do you endeavour to assist your child in these tasks in order to enable him or her to perform well in literacy?

7. Is your child enrolled at the school library? If no, please explain why not?

8. Is your child enrolled at the local library? If no, why not? If yes, how often do you'll visit the library?

9. In your opinion, do you believe that an ample amount of support and assistance in literacy learning is being offered to your child at the school? Why would you say so?

10. Where you satisfied with your child's performance in the ANA test in literacy? Why would you say so?

11. In what ways did you assist your child in preparation for this test in literacy?

12. What changes would you like there to be made at school with regard to literacy teaching and learning to foster literacy development in your child?

END OF TASK

**I THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN COMPLETING THIS
QUESTIONNAIRE**

APPENDIX P:
DOCUMENT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Is the literacy teaching in keeping with the CAPS curriculum?
2. Do the educators teach according to the time that is allocated for the different learning areas, on the time table?
3. Do the educators teach the different aspects of reading to the learners?
4. Are the different aspects of writing taught?
5. Are the learners exposed to a variety of texts for reading and writing activities?

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

1. Does the school have a Language Policy document? Is this document being followed?
2. Are workbooks provided to learners for the different learning areas?
3. From time to time, are there meetings held to discuss issues in Literacy teaching and development?
4. Were all the ANA documents received and information distributed to all educators prior to the test?
5. Do educators have and are using lesson plans and schemes of work for literacy?
6. Are there a variety of assessment techniques used by educators to cater for the different abilities of learners in their classrooms?
7. Are educators in some way promoting and encouraging critical awareness and critical language thinking in their lessons?

**APPENDIX Q:
OBSERVATION SCHEDULE 1**

QUESTIONS:

1. Did the teacher vary her methods of teaching during the Literacy Lessons?
2. Did reading and writing words appear in the classroom to assist the learners with the given tasks?
3. Did the educator cater for all learners, in the different ability groups when concepts were taught and when tasks were set?
4. Were the learners supplied with adequate resource materials to complete given tasks in Literacy?
5. Was the classroom conducive for reading and writing lessons?

**APPENDIX R:
OBSERVATION SCHEDULE 2**

QUESTIONS:

1. Were the learners actively involved in the lessons?
2. Were the instructions simple and clear? Did the learners follow the instructions?
3. Were the learners able to complete tasks in reading and writing independently or with assistance?
4. Could the learners read from their books?
5. Were the learners given the opportunity to read their own writings to others in the class?

**APPENDIX S:
OBSERVATION SCHEDULE 3**

QUESTIONS:

1. Does the time allocated for reading and writing, on the timetable correspond with the Policy?
2. Do learners' workbooks show any homework given each day, for reading and writing tasks?
3. Does the school calendar highlight important Literacy dates?
4. Are learners' given the opportunity to participate in Literacy events? If yes, in what way?

APPENDIX V: GUIDELINES: ANNUAL NATIONAL ASSESSMENT 2013



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ANNUAL NATIONAL ASSESSMENT 2013 ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE GRADE 3

INTRODUCTION

The 2013 cycle of Annual National Assessment (ANA 2013) will be administered in all public and designated¹ independent schools from 10 to 13 September 2013. During this period all learners in Grades 1-3 will write nationally set tests in Language and Mathematics. The results will be used to report progress related to achieving the goals set in the *Action Plan 2014, Towards Schooling 2025*.

The ANA tests will be written during the third school term and, therefore, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has developed Assessment Guideline documents for each grade and subject (Language and Mathematics) outlining the minimum curriculum content that must be covered by all learners prior to the writing of the test. The Assessment Guidelines define the scope of work that will be covered in the test for each grade and subject.

FOUNDATION PHASE

In Grades 1-3, the tests will cover work that is prescribed for the first three-quarters of the school year. The Assessment Guidelines are arranged in three columns: Skills; Content Assessed; and Specific Skills to be assessed.

It is important to note that the ANA 2013 Assessment Guidelines do not imply that the delimited scope is all that must be taught and learnt during the school year. Instead, the Assessment Guidelines provide the basic minimum curriculum requirements that must have been covered by the end of the third school quarter.

Teachers are expected to use these Assessment Guidelines together with the other resources for their teaching and assessment programmes.

¹ "Designated" independent schools are those that will apply and register either their Grade 3 or Grade 6 learners to participate in ANA for purposes of securing State subsidy.

SKILLS	CONTENT ASSESSED To test whether the learner is able to ...	SPECIFIC SKILLS
READING AND PHONICS	discuss the:	
	main idea of the story	Giving the best title for the story
	main characters in the story	Choosing the correct answer to show understanding of the main characters of the story
	setting of the story	Choosing the correct answer to show understanding of the setting of the story
	sequence of events	Numbering sentences of the story in the correct sequence
	cause-effect relations	Recognising the cause-effect relations in a story
	answer higher order questions based on the text read, e.g. by giving an opinion	Responding to a direct question to give an opinion
	use visual cues to identify the purpose of advertisements and the intended audience	Choosing the correct answer to show understanding of an advertisement
	identify and use phonic knowledge and spelling rules to write unfamiliar words	Rewriting sentences using the correct spelling of words, such as silent letters, words that sound the same but are spelt differently and plurals
	interpret information from graphical texts such as a chart, e.g. describe similarities and differences, as well as analyse, compare and contrast information	Answering a direct question using information from a chart
WRITING	interpret information from graphical texts such as a graph, e.g. make comparisons	Choosing the correct answer (comparison) using information from a graph
	use more complex tenses such as present and past progressive or past and present continuous tense	Rewriting a sentence from the present tense into the past tense Rewriting a sentence from the past tense into the present tense
	identify and use pronouns, nouns and conjunctions correctly	Choosing the correct answer to show understanding of pronouns, nouns and conjunctions
	write words to form a sentence using capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas, exclamation marks and inverted commas	Rewriting sentences using correct punctuation
	identify and use verbs correctly	Writing a verb to agree with the subject
	write own story of at least two paragraphs of 10 or more sentences in total, with a given title, using appropriate grammar and punctuation	Writing two paragraphs using appropriate grammar and punctuation

QUESTION	EXPECTED ANSWERS	MARKS	TOTAL
9.2	his ✓ their ✓	per question are circled.	2
9.3	a. and ✓ b. but ✓		
10.1	knee ✓	Correct spelling required.	1
10.2	eight ✓		
10.3	mice ✓		
11.1	There are many animals on my uncle's farm. ✓	2	6
11.2	How many sheep, cows and horses are on the farm? ✓	2	
11.3	The farmer shouts, "Watch out for the snake!" 1 mark for the set of open and closed inverted commas and 1 mark for the exclamation mark. Exclamation mark should be inside inverted commas.	2	
12.1	plants ✓	1	2
12.2	grunt ✓	1	
13.1	Sam ✓	Ignore spelling errors.	1
13.2	He weeds the vegetable garden. ✓		
13.3	Monday and Wednesday ✓ 1 mark for both days.		
14.1	A/chickens ✓	1	2
14.2	B/5 ✓	1	
15.	See rubric below.		6
		TOTAL	40

RUBRIC FOR QUESTION 15

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	MARKS
Paragraphs (2 marks)	Copied instructions/one word/phrase/part of sentence	0
	One paragraph	1
	Two paragraphs	2
Content (2 marks)	Copied instructions/one word, phrase unrelated to the topic	0
	1–9 simple sentences or 1–5 complex sentences related to the topic	1
	10 simple or 6 or more complex sentences related to the topic	2
Grammar, punctuation & spelling (2 marks)	More than 10 grammatical, punctuation or spelling errors	0
	6–10 grammatical, punctuation or spelling errors	1
	0–5 grammatical, punctuation or spelling errors	2

Deduct one mark from the learner's total for question 15 if the sentences are numbered.

APPENDIX X:

ANNUAL NATIONAL ASSESSMENT 2013

GRADE ANALYSIS

GRADE 3			
	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3
ENGLISH –H/LANG	38%	64%	
MATHEMATICS	39%	38%	

FOUNDATION PHASE

SUBJECT: HOME LANGUAGES GRADE 3

IDENTIFIED WEAKNESSES

1. Low reading ability that is below the grade 3 level requirements.
- Poor word recognition skills, cannot identify high frequency and common sight words
- Inability to read and follow instructions
- Poor writing skills, unable to formulate a few sentences on a picture and topic using correct punctuation and grammar

MEASURES FOR CLASSROOM IMPROVEMENT

Plan and teach structured reading and writing lessons as per CAPS requirements

1. Plan structured reading lessons focusing on Whole class Shared Reading and small group guided reading lessons in Grades 1 to 3 as per CAPS requirements.
2. A typical, daily Reading lesson should be at least 1 hour long with:
 - Whole class Shared Reading : 15 minutes
 - Group Guided Reading : 30 minutes
 - Phonics, Word and Sentence level work: 15 minutes
3. Plan structured writing lessons focusing on sentence construction, punctuation and grammar



APPENDIX Z : 1
EXEMPLARS: LEARNERS WRITTEN WORK



Let's write

Fill in the correct punctuation marks at the end of these sentences. Use a question mark ? or an exclamation mark ! or a full stop .

Congratulations, Mandla, you are the new champion !

Does Mandla have a black belt in karate ?

We need to learn how to protect ourselves .

When did Mandla write the letter ?

Where does Mandla live ?

30/07



Let's write

Read each sentence, then circle the pronoun that you can use in the place of the underlined word.

Mandla has a <u>black belt</u> in karate.	you	he	she	we		it
Bongi and <u>I</u> went to visit Pam.	you	he	she	we		it
The <u>netball players</u> will be going to Durban.	you	he	she	we		it
The <u>dog</u> came into the class today.	you	he	she	we		it
Nomsa needed a <u>jersey</u> .	you	he	she	we		it



Fun

Find these sports in the box. Look down as well as across.

k	a	r	a	t	e	x	v	n	m	n
q	w	t	t	e	z	r	i	n	q	w
r	u	n	g	n	t	r	w	q	z	x
u	q	w	r	n	e	t	b	a	l	l
g	b	r	w	i	z	x	v	b	n	m
b	v	s	z	s	o	c	c	e	r	b
y	x	g	x	v	b	n	m	k	y	x
x	a	t	h	l	e	t	i	c	s	x



Teacher: _____

Sign: _____

Date: _____

Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz



Let's write

How many words can you make by joining the sounds together?
Write them in the spaces.

ir

f	st	first
sh	t	shirst
c	cus	cirt
sk	t	skirt
b	th	birth
g	l	glir
d	ty	dirty

ou

h	se	hseou
thr	gh	thruogh
r	gh	rough
m	se	house
f	nd	found
s	nd	spund
gr	nd	grou
m	ntain	mntain

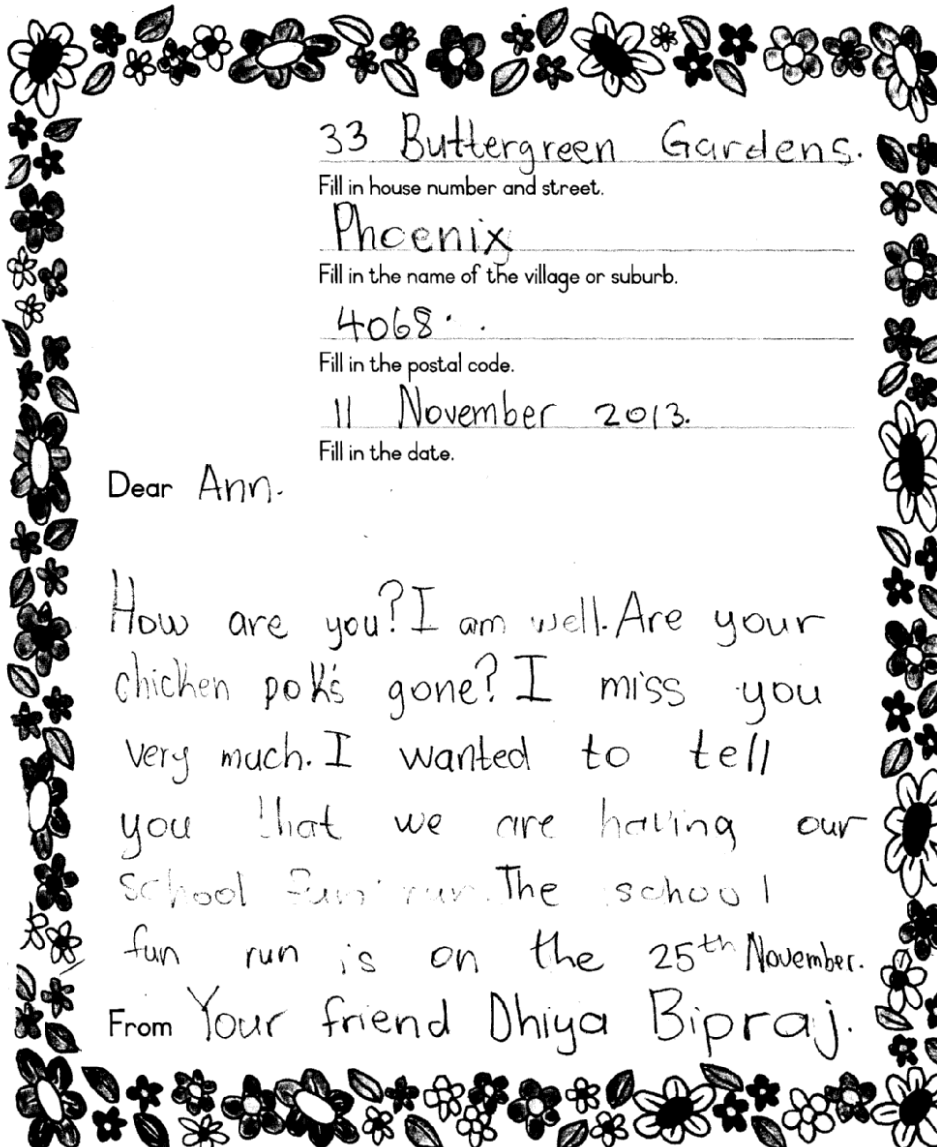
Teacher: _____
Sign: _____
Date: _____

Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz



Let's write

Pretend that you are Ann's friend. Write a letter to tell her that you hope she gets well soon. Give her some school news.



33 Buttergreen Gardens.

Fill in house number and street.

Phoenix

Fill in the name of the village or suburb.

4068

Fill in the postal code.

11 November 2013.

Fill in the date.

Dear Ann.

How are you? I am well. Are your chicken pok's gone? I miss you very much. I wanted to tell you that we are having our school fun run. The school fun run is on the 25th November.

From Your friend Dhiya Bipraj.



Teacher:
Sign:
Date:

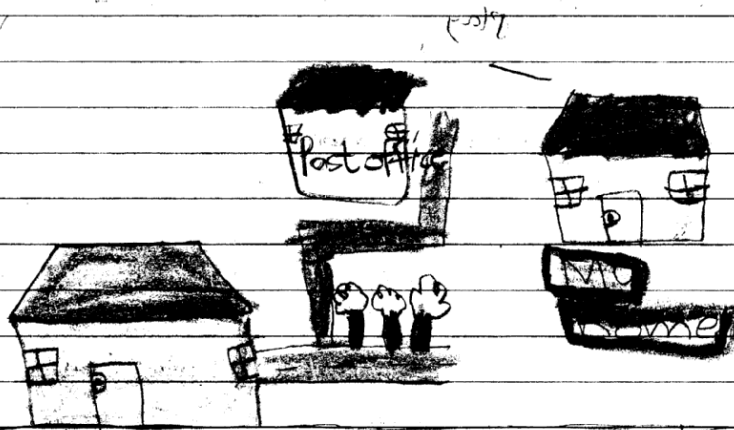
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

run, ray, race, ran, rug

Ray will run the race.

29 May 2013
Expressive Writing

It is your birthday you have invited few friends to your house Give them directions from school to your home.



From my School go right and turn see a Back and green house.

Go and see room number 5

You must go right and left.

go first up and go right and go left.

Handwriting

Handwritten practice lines showing the words 'Lilly said all is well.' written multiple times in cursive.

30 May 2013

Complete the table.

33 Buttergreen Gardens
Greenbury
Phoenix.
4068
27 August 2013.

Dear Naseeha:

How are you? I am very well. On Wednesday we had our school sports. I was in Daffodil house.

My house colour is yellow. I did not take part in any of the sports. My house came out third. I enjoyed my day. They gave us lots of goodies to eat. Bluebells came out second Daffodil came out third. Rose came out fourth. Protea came out first. Hope to see you soon.

Your friend.

Dhiya.

29 August 2013.

1. week - I know the days of the week very well.
2. hand - My hand is holding a red.

3. September 2013.

lo lo lo lo lo
la la la la la

29 April 2013
Monday

Weather

Today is a hot day. But it is a little cold. It is very cloudy. It is a slight breeze. The temperature is 21°C. Some of us are wearing jersey

Daily News

When school is finished we must not go home alone. Even when we go home with our transport. You have to go home with an adult. Yesterday I heard a girl went with her mother to the stop. Her mother said wait there. I am going to bring the butter. While the child was waiting there some men roled her and killed her.

My

1. play - After school I do my homework then I learn my spelling words then I play with my brother.

2. stay - My cousin brother came to stay.

3. - My mother bought a racket

handwriting

zZ zZ zZ zZ zZ zZ zZ zZ
Zorah the zebre lives at the zoo

12 March 2013

Today is Tuesday

handwriting

i i i i i i i i
it it it it it it it it
in in in in in in in in
it it it it it it it it

12 March 2013

Today is Wednesday

How I spend my playtime at school

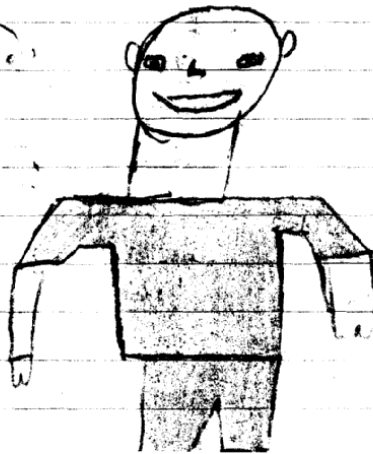
During my playtime:

I also visit lunch with toilet.

I play fun our door

I also visit the tuckshop cool drinks

our school enjoy story book



Appendix Z: 2**TIME ALLOCATION FOR LITERACY IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

GRADE THREE HOME LANGUAGE		TOTAL PER WEEK
LISTENING AND SPEAKING	15' PER DAY X 4 DAYS	1 HOUR
READING	45' X 5 DAYS	3 HOURS 45'
PHONICS	15' X 5 DAYS	1 HOUR 15'
HANDWRITING	15" X 4 DAYS	1 HOUR
FORMAL WRITING	20' X 3 DAYS	1 HOUR
	TOTAL	8 HOURS

OUR SCHOOL

GRADE THREE HOME LANGUAGE		TOTAL PER WEEK
LISTENING AND SPEAKING	15' PER DAY X 5 DAYS	1 HOUR 15'
READING	45' X 5 DAYS	3 HOURS 30'
PHONICS	15' X 5 DAYS	1 HOUR 15'
HANDWRITING	30" X 2 DAYS	1 HOUR
FORMAL WRITING	30' X 2 DAYS	1 HOUR
	TOTAL	8 HOURS

BRIAR ROSE

Beacon Readers





Briar Rose

A long time ago there lived a king and queen who longed to have a child.

One day, when the queen was resting near a spring, a frog crept out of the water and said to her, "You shall have your wish. Within a year you shall have a little girl."

What the frog said came true. The queen had a child who was so beautiful that the king gave a party in her honour. He wanted to invite all the wise women in the land, for these wise women could grant fairy gifts to his little child. There were thirteen of them, but only twelve were invited, as the king had only twelve golden plates.

After the dinner was over, the wise women in turn rose from the table and named their fairy gifts to the little princess. The first gave to her goodness; the second, beauty; the third, riches; and so on, up to the last.

Before the twelfth wise woman could speak, in walked the thirteenth. This woman was in a great rage because she had not been invited.



She cried in a loud voice, "When the princess is fifteen years old she shall prick her finger with a spindle and shall fall down dead."

At these words every one turned pale with fright. The twelfth wise woman, who had not yet spoken, now came up and said, "I could not stop this woman's evil words. I can only make them less harsh. The king's child shall not die, but a deep sleep shall fall upon her, in which she shall stay one hundred years."

The little princess was so beautiful, so kind, and so good that no one who knew her could help loving her. As she grew older the king and queen began to feel very unhappy, for they could not help thinking of what was to happen to their dear little daughter. They ordered all the spindles in the kingdom to be burned.

Now, as it happened, on the very day that the princess was fifteen years old, the king and queen were away from home. The princess was quite alone in the castle, and she ran all over the palace, looking in rooms and halls, just as her fancy led her.



At last she came to an old tower at the top of a winding stair. She saw a little door. In the lock was a rusty key. When she turned it, the door flew open. There, in a small room, sat an old woman with her spindle, spinning flax.

"Good morning," said the princess. "Do tell me what that funny thing is that jumps about so." And then she held out her hand to take the spindle. It came about just as the fairy had foretold.

The princess pricked her finger with the spindle. At once she fell upon a bed which was near, and lay in a deep sleep as if dead.

This sleep came not only upon the princess, but spread over the whole castle.



The king and queen, who had just come home, fell asleep, and all their lords and ladies with them. The horses went to sleep in the stable; the dogs in the yard; the doves on the roof; the flies on the wall; yes, even the fire that burned in the fireplace grew still and slept.

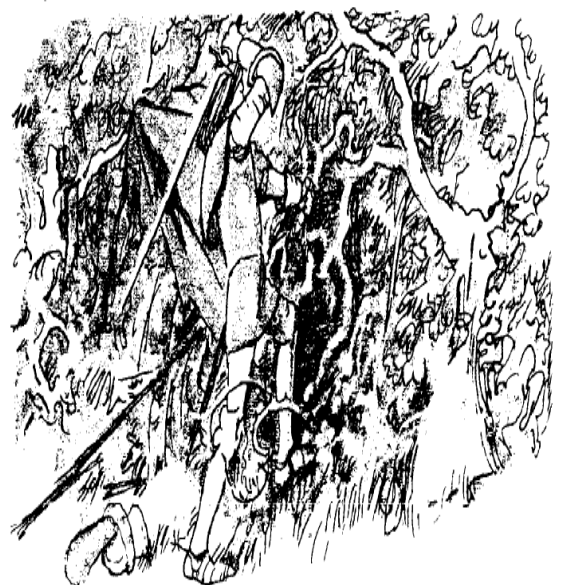
The meat stopped roasting before the fire.

The cook in the kitchen was just going to box the ears of the kitchen boy, but her hand dropped and she sank to sleep.

Outside the castle the wind was still, and upon the trees not a leaf stirred.

In a short time there sprang up round the castle a hedge of thorn bushes. Year by year the hedge grew higher and higher, until at last nothing of the castle could be seen above it, not even the roof, nor the chimneys, nor the flag on the tower.

As years went by the story of the sleeping beauty was told all over the kingdom. Many kings' sons came and tried to get through the hedge of thorns, but this they could not do. The sharp thorns seemed to have hands which held the young men fast.



After many, many years a prince came from a far-off kingdom. He heard the story of the castle and its sleeping beauty. He knew what danger lay in the great hedge of thorn bushes. But the young prince was brave, and he was not to be turned back.

"I am not afraid. I will go out and seek this beautiful Briar Rose," he said.

It happened that the hundred years of the magic spell had just ended. The day had come when the sleeping princess was to wake up again.

As the prince came to the hedge of thorn bushes, it was in full bloom and covered with beautiful red flowers. There, through the thorn bushes, lay a wide road.



Soon the prince came to the gates of the castle. He found the horses and dogs lying asleep on the ground. The doves sat on the roof with their heads under their wings.



He went into the castle. Even the flies on the wall still slept. Near the throne lay the king and queen, while all around were the sleeping lords and ladies. The whole castle was so still that he could hear his heart beat.

The prince went on from room to room until he came to the old tower. Going up the winding stair he saw the little door. A rusty key was in the lock, and the door was half open. There before him lay the sleeping princess.



The prince bent down and gave her a kiss. As he did so the sleeping beauty opened her eyes. With her the whole castle awoke.

The king awoke, and the queen, and all the lords and ladies.

The horses in the stable stood up and shook themselves. The dogs jumped about and wagged their tails. The doves on the roofs lifted their heads and flew into the fields.

The flies on the wall began to buzz.

The fire in the kitchen began to burn.



The meat began to roast.

The cook boxed the ears of the kitchen boy, so that he ran off crying.

The hedge of thorn bushes round the castle dried up and blew away.

Then the prince married the beautiful princess, and they lived happily ever after.

Appendix Z: 4
LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

25 Maple Crescent
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KLOOF
3610

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Fax 031 - 7110458
E-mail:
wvebanksec@telkomsa.net
sathsgovender4@gmail.com

Dr Saths Govender

16 JULY 2014

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

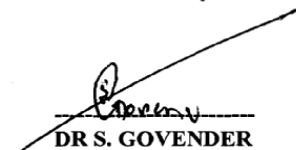
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to inform that I have read the final version of the thesis titled:

EXPLORING LITERACY PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY OF A PERI-URBAN SCHOOL, by Shamitha Ramdan, student no. 204402087.

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the standard of language meets the stringent requirements for senior degrees.

Yours faithfully


DR S. GOVENDER
B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers
MPA, D Admin.

Appendix Z: 5
LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

ASOKA ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING CC
2011/O65055/23

CELL NO.: 0836507817

21 PONSFORD CRESCENT, ESCOMBE, KWAZULU NATAL



DECLARATION

This is to certify that I have English Language edited the dissertation:

Exploring Literacy Practices: A Case Study of a peri-urban primary school.

Candidate: Ramdan S.

SATI member number: 1001872

DISCLAIMER

Whilst the English language editor has used electronic track changes to facilitate corrections and has inserted comments and queries in a right-hand column, the responsibility for effecting changes in the final, submitted document, remains the responsibility of the candidate in consultation with the supervisor/promoter.

Director: Prof. Dennis Schaffer, M.A. Leeds, PhD, KwaZulu Natal, TEFL, TITC Business English, Emeritus Professor UKZN, Cambridge University Accreditation for IGCSE (Drama).