

**EXPLORING THE PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES OF GRADE 10  
ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE EDUCATORS WHEN  
TEACHING AND PROMOTING READING IN RURAL CONTEXTS**

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents, Mr Andreas Mbango Magutshwa and Mrs Adelaide Thenjiwe Magutshwa, whose unconditional love, dedication and support made it possible for me. In spite of their limited education they knew and understood the importance of education. The fruits of their everyday toiling ensured that their children were not denied the opportunity to go to school. This work is also dedicated to my late siblings, Nhlanhla Magutshwa and Thembisile Magutshwa.

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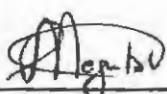
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### DECLARATION

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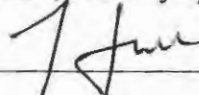
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As Supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission to be examined.

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the practices and strategies of secondary school educators when teaching and promoting reading. It specifically looks at the practices and strategies of Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators who work in disadvantaged, rural contexts. South Africa is said to be dysfunctional in terms of literacy. This becomes a challenge for the country as a whole, because many studies have shown that there is a link between the learners' ability to read and academic performance. This study is an attempt to understand how educators teach and promote reading in disadvantaged schools, also focusing on secondary schools, as most of the studies that have been conducted have tended to focus on primary schools where there is a specific period for reading.

This is a qualitative study located within the interpretive paradigm. Participants were purposely selected from the five schools. Five Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators were involved in the study. This study is a case study of five high schools located in a rural area called Umbumbulu in KwaZulu-Natal. Class observations, individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used as data collection methods.

Findings reveal that educators have a limited understanding of what the teaching and promotion of reading entails. Two strategies appeared to be dominant in the educators' teaching practices, which revealed the educators' lack of understanding into the complexities inherent in the teaching of reading. This study also found that educators have not been exposed to continuous professional development for a number of years. It was also discovered that context plays a crucial role in the teaching and promotion of reading in these schools as most of the schools lacked reading material for the learners.

The study recommends a review of post provisioning norms for educators as this currently impacts negatively on rural schools when educators have to be redeployed to other schools, thus leaving their schools with no qualified educator to teach a particular subject. This is very important, especially in high schools where educators require specialisation in the subjects they teach. The Department of Education also needs to prioritize rural schools when it comes to resource provisioning, particularly when it comes to libraries and reading material.

The implications of the findings of this research should be useful to educators, principals, non-governmental organizations involved in educator training, curriculum developments specialists, writers and all those who have an interest in education, to have a better

understanding of the challenges that are faced by schools in rural areas when teaching and promoting reading.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Introduction

In terms of the diagnostic report by the National Planning Commission (2011), the poor quality of school education for black people was identified as one of the challenges facing South Africa. In response to this problem, one of the priorities for the National Development Plan (NDP) is that of improving the quality of education, skills development and innovation. By 2030, South Africa needs to have quality school education, with globally competitive literacy and numeracy standards. While one is aware that there has been criticism levelled against the National Development Plan, especially with regard to its ideological or perceived ideological stance, which is seen as neoliberal by various sectors, the pursuit for quality public education is a worthy cause, irrespective of ideological orientation. It is estimated that approximately 80% of schools in South Africa are underperforming. This translates into about 20 000 schools. In KwaZulu-Natal alone, only three districts out of twelve performed at 50% and above in both the Annual National Assessments and the National Senior Certificate. These statistics highlight the fact that many learners are not performing as well as they should. A number of studies that have been conducted show a close correlation between the ability to read and performance (Lukhele, 2013; Pretorius, 2002). This implies that the ability of learners to read is an important variable that must be taken seriously if the need to improve learner performance is to be prioritized.

This study is an attempt to explore the practices and strategies of secondary school educators when teaching and promoting reading. It specifically looks at practices and strategies employed by Grade 10 English First Additional Language (FAL) educators when teaching and promoting reading in schools that are located in disadvantaged, rural, contexts. Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) argue that there is a close relationship between one's ability to read and socio-economic factors, including context. This view is supported by Nkambule, Balfour, Pillay, and Moletsane (2011) when they argue that rural social issues play a unique role in shaping teaching and learning. This highlights the importance of considering the practices and strategies of educators who work in rural areas.

As Subject Advisor for English FAL, I have also observed that educators are often placed under pressure by the syllabus content at the expense of teaching reading skills. Often the assumption is that learners at this level (Grades 10-12) are able to read. . However, this is not

necessarily true, as research by Bertram (2006) has shown that learners come to tertiary institutions struggling to read, and therefore struggle to learn. What is even more concerning is that educators themselves also often have poor reading skills. For instance, Bertram (2006) discovered that a third of the educators that were interviewed who were enrolled in a distance education programme, read ordinary academic texts at the level of frustration. This means that they are not able to make sense of the academic reading without support. While it is important to understand the practices and strategies of all educators, irrespective of context, it is even more important to explore the practices of those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, given the history of this country and the need to redress the injustices of the past.

### **1.1 Focus and purpose of the study**

This study focuses on the practices and strategies employed by Grade 10 English FAL educators when teaching and promoting reading in disadvantaged contexts. Some of these schools are located in a rural area known as Umbumbulu, which falls under the Umlazi District. Schools in this area are disadvantaged as they lack basic resources such as laboratories, libraries and other facilities. They are all categorized by the Department of Education as falling under quintile three, which are no-fee schools. Given that I work in a largely rural district and the majority of the schools I am responsible for are in rural locations, I thought it is appropriate for my study to focus on the practices of educators in the teaching of reading in this context., particularly because there is a proven link between performance and context (Pretorius & Currin, 2010; Spaul, 2012; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012).

As Subject Advisor I have observed that educators often do not have a clear understanding of what the teaching of reading entails and the requisite skills to teach and promote reading. In this context it is crucial to gain insight into what educators in secondary schools consider as the teaching of reading, their strategies, reasons behind those strategies as well as whether or not context is considered in the preparation of reading lessons. This is an area that has received much engagement internationally, but not so in South Africa. In this country focus in relation to reading has been on primary schools, as this is the level where dedicated reading lessons are often time tabled (Pretorius, 2002; Pretorius & Machet, 2004a, 2004b). It is therefore important to engage in a study that seeks to understand what secondary educators consider as the teaching of reading, how they teach reading in high schools, and how they

encourage it, particularly in disadvantaged contexts. This is important, given the diversity that exists in South African schools, as often a “one-size fits all” model is adopted.

## **1.2 Rationale for the study**

As noted above, I am an English First Additional Language Advisor in a district that is largely rural. I have been involved in the National Senior Certificate marking process. I have observed that learners struggle with comprehension questions or any question that requires them to read. If learners struggle with reading, there is likelihood that their academic performance will also be affected. The teaching of reading is heavily dependent on the educators. Kelly (2009) argues that the quality of the individual educator determines the quality of the learners’ educational experience. This means that if learners, especially those coming from disadvantaged rural backgrounds, have access to a good teacher, this would improve their reading skills significantly. Educators are central in the implementation of every educational activity; this also applies to the teaching and promotion of reading. If educators lack skills to teach and promote reading, this could lead to the failure of the reading programme. Concannon-Gibney and Murphy (2012) argue that the lack in and lack of exposure to current research-based practice by educators may be confounding efforts to impart change and progress in the pedagogy of reading. While challenges around reading can be accounted for through the immense shortage of resources and facilities, such as libraries, resultant from the apartheid past, educators continue to be among the most important actors in the process of both teaching learners how to read, and also in promoting reading. This study is therefore an attempt to scrutinize the educator teaching and promoting of reading.

A number of studies have been conducted that show a link between reading and performance (Lukhele, 2013; Pretorius, 2002). This means that the ability of learners to read is one important variable that must be taken seriously in order to improve learner performance. A number of studies suggest that South Africa is doing poorly when it comes to reading. For instance the systemic evaluation report by South Africa Department of Basic Education (2005) showed that 63% of learners in the intermediate phase performed below the required competence for their age level. A cursory look at the diagnostic report by the South African Department of Basic Education (2013) on the performance of Grade 12 learners in their NSC examinations reveals poor comprehension levels as one variable that continues to contribute to poor performance. Lukhele (2013) notes that the inability to read impacts negatively on the students’ academic success. It is therefore of great significance to consider ways in which

educators teach and promote reading. There has been an extensive account in the literature in terms of how educators teach and promote reading (Biakolo, 2007; Carroll, 2000; Carter, 2012; Commeyras & Inyega, 2007; Edmonds et al., 2009; Grabe, 2004). However, little has been done in trying to understand how educators teach and promote reading in disadvantaged contexts, especially in secondary schools where the focus tends to be on the completion of the curriculum.

It is important to point out that this study has been motivated by both personal and research imperatives. Most studies that have been done have had primary schools as their focus (Hugo, 2010; Van Staden, 2011). For instance, in a study that was conducted by Pretorius and Machet (2004b), it was noted that educators tend to focus on teaching learners to decode words at the expense of meaning. This study will focus on gaining an understanding into what educators in secondary schools consider as teaching of reading, their teaching strategies, reasons behind those strategies as well as whether or not context is considered in preparation of reading lessons.

### **1.3 Critical questions**

It is evident that there is a need for a study that tries to understand the strategies and practices of secondary school educators when they teach and promote reading in disadvantaged contexts. In the collecting data, this study responds to the four critical questions that follow:

#### **What do Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators in disadvantaged, rural schools consider as the teaching and promotion of reading?**

In this question the objective is to understand what Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators working in disadvantaged, rural schools consider as the teaching and promotion of reading. It is important to understand this as it often relates to the strategies employed. Any practice must be informed by theory. The second question is linked to the first one in that it asks:

#### **How do Grade 10 English First Additional educators teach and promote reading in disadvantaged learning contexts?**

This question is intended to identify the practices and strategies that are employed by Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators when teaching and promoting reading in

disadvantaged schools and whether or not these strategies are adequate in assisting students, especially those in disadvantaged contexts, to learn how to read. The third question asks:

**Why do Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators teach and promote reading in the ways they do?**

This question aims to understand what informs the practices and strategies employed by Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators when teaching and promoting reading, and whether there is any relationship between the educators' understanding of what it means to teach reading and the strategies that they employ. Finally, the fourth question asks:

**What role, if any, does context play in the ways in which Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators teach and promote reading?**

This question attempts to explore the role that context plays when Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators teach and promote reading. Reading is a socio-cultural activity that also requires the availability of resources. This means that it happens in a particular context. It is therefore important to determine whether this context does play any role when educators teach, especially also given that these educators teach in a context of disadvantage.

#### **1.4 The significance of the study**

Given the fact that there is a paucity of studies focusing on practices and strategies used by secondary school educators working in disadvantaged contexts in South Africa, this study seeks to fill that gap. This is important for a country like South Africa where the majority of learners are taught in schools that do not have basic resources, including qualified educators and reading material. The recent set of data from the Department of Education indicates that in KwaZulu-Natal, only 24% of schools have libraries. It is therefore important to understand how educators in these secondary schools teach and promote reading, since the focus in South Africa has been on primary schools. This study will contribute to the discussions on the improvement of quality teaching and learning as envisaged by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) and the National Development Plan. This is particularly necessary in a country as diverse as South Africa with its high levels of inequality. This study will contribute to the existing body of literature by responding to the dearth of literature on this subject.

## **1.5 Structure of the study**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters.

*Chapter One* provides an introduction and background to the study. It also includes the purpose of the study, rationale for the study, critical questions, as well as the significance of the study.

*Chapter Two* contains a theoretical framework and the review of relevant literature which serve as a guideline for this study. .

*Chapter Three* contains a discussion on the research design and the methodology for this study. This includes the philosophical underpinnings of the study and the research paradigm. The methodology and data collection methods are discussed, including the data analysis and ethical issues.

*Chapter Four* turns to the analysis of the data collected by means of class observations, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

*Chapter Five* concludes the dissertation with a summary of the findings analysed from collected data as well as suggestions and recommendations for future interventions.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter served as a brief introduction and background to the study as the purpose of the study was presented. This was followed by a discussion on the rationale of the study and the critical questions that this study seeks to answer. The four critical questions posed in this study are as follows: 1) What do Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators teaching in disadvantaged, rural schools consider as crucial to the teaching and promotion of reading? 2) How do these Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators teach and promote reading in disadvantaged learning contexts? 3) Why do these Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators teach and promote reading in the way they do? 4) What role, if any, does context play in the manner in which these educators teach and promote reading? This was followed by the discussion of the significance of the study. The theoretical framework and a review of relevant literature are presented in Chapter 2.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 Introduction

In an attempt to address the research questions on the strategies and practices of Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators when teaching and promoting reading in rural contexts, this chapter has been divided into two main sections. The first will contain the theoretical framework employed to understand the phenomenon under study. The second section will be an exploration of the existing international and local literature on the teaching and promotion of reading. In this section it will be argued that not enough has been done in terms of the teaching and promotion of reading in secondary schools in rural contexts.

#### 2.1 Theoretical framework

The teaching and promotion of reading is a complex matter. This is because there are many variables to consider when teaching and promoting reading. This study refers to Tatum's *More Anatomically Complete Model of Literacy Instruction* (2008) as a theoretical framework to understand how secondary school educators teach and promote reading in disadvantaged contexts. This chapter has been divided into two parts. The first part will explain the model, its limitations and also why this framework was selected despite its cited limitations. Secondly a review of literature will be presented which will expose the gap that this study is attempting to fill in the existing body of knowledge, and further highlight key debates in the field. Given the complexity of the phenomenon of the teaching and promotion of reading, it is appropriate to use a framework that seeks to present a more holistic approach towards the teaching and promotion of reading, by relating the teaching and promotion of reading to a human body. Tatum (2008) argues that there are essentially three components which constitute the effective teaching and promotion of reading, i.e. the head (which is the theoretical aspect), the body (which is the instructional aspect) and the legs (which represent the professional aspect).

In the theoretical component (head), Tatum (2008) suggests that educators need to focus on clearly spelling out reading instruction for adolescents in their present-day contexts, creating curriculum perspectives that will empower them, , and using an approach to teach reading that responds to their culture. A large body of research has addressed the importance of the



'cultural' context in the teaching and promotion of reading (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007; Eskey, 2002); Wilson and Lianrui (2003). By culture here, the model shifts significantly away from presenting a singular, essentialised understanding, which is shared among certain individuals within a particular group. Rather, culture is used to highlight the various ways in which contextual and social factors such as race, class, sexuality, gender etc. shape the experiences of individuals. The theoretical component has serious implications for educators in terms of their practices. One of the implications is that educators need to start thinking about the role of teaching and promoting reading, particularly to learners from underprivileged backgrounds. Considerations of the social context and educators' understanding, at a philosophical level, of what constitutes reading and what it means to teach and promote this have to be taken into account. Tatum (2008) points out that this model pays attention to four categories of reading vital signs (essential elements for improving students' reading achievement), which are vital signs of reading, vital signs of readers, vital signs of reading instruction, and vital signs of educators. This in turn responds to four parallel gaps affecting students' literacy outcomes: a reading achievement gap, a relationship gap, a rigour gap and a responsiveness gap. Given that the theoretical component focuses on determining the role played by reading instruction for adolescents in their present-day contexts, it is therefore paying attention to the vital signs of readers. Vital signs of readers focus on home life, culture, economics, language and environment of learners. In essence, it is about paying attention to the learners' lived experiences, both in and outside of school. In his argument for the modification of curriculum so as to create a responsive environment, Tatum (2006) suggests the selection of enabling texts. These are texts that move beyond the cognitive focus. They include a social, cultural, political, spiritual, or economic focus. This helps to address the relationship gap which is very important for any teaching and learning to take place.

Tatum (2008) proceeds to note that in the body (the instructional component) three approaches need to be focused on, i.e. the development of a comprehensive framework for literacy teaching, mediating texts and assessment profiles. The instructional component focuses on research-based reading practices. This entails a focus on strategies such as vocabulary development, decoding, comprehension and fluency. It also focuses on the strategies employed by educators when mediating texts and assessments. This means that the instructional component pays attention to the vital signs of reading and also the vital signs of reading instruction. Tatum (2008) furthermore points out that vital signs of reading provide the necessary elements that learners need to manage texts independently. That will include

strategies such as decoding, self-questioning and comprehension-monitoring techniques, language proficiency and fluency' For Tatum (2008), all attempts aimed at the teaching of reading require these minimum tools. This will help address the reading achievement gap. The instructional component also pays attention to the vital signs of reading instruction. Tatum (2008) argues that the vital signs of reading instruction are useful for conceptualizing the rationale for literacy teaching and enhancing academic rigour in the classroom. In other words, they speak to issues of quality instructional support, texts, assessment and technology. By reflecting on these issues, educators will be able to shape rigorous learning experiences for learners which will address the rigour gap.

The last component is the professional development aspect (legs), which focusses on educator professional development and professional preparation. According to Tatum, the effective teaching and promotion of reading cannot occur when educators are not adequately prepared and trained for their expected roles and duties. He argues that "Efforts must be made to improve educator and principal quality preparation through educator and principal preparation programme. 'The difference between a good educator and a bad educator can be a full grade level of achievement in a school year'" (Tatum & Muhammad, 2012, p. 457). This professional development, Tatum argues needs to occur in school. Professional development provides the educators with 'legs' so that they are able to assist their learners. This pays attention to the vital signs of educators because it addresses issues of competence, commitment and culpability. The issue of competence at both the level of theoretical and instructional level is closely related to professional preparation and development. This means that educator development is very important when it comes to educator competence. By paying attention to the vital signs of educators, the responsiveness gap is addressed.

It must be pointed out that this model was developed in order to address the literacy needs of African American male adolescents. This may lead to a few limitations in that the model does not directly address the South African experience, particularly where resources can become scarce, especially in rural contexts. Although there may be this kind of limitation, it is believed that this framework is the most appropriate framework as it particularly prioritises the issue of diversity and disadvantage. The model proposes that the literacy needs of students who come from impoverished communities, with *inter alia*, no access to resources, a high unemployment rate and a poor quality of teaching, be prioritized. There is a large body of research that shows a link between context and schooling achievement (Ceballo, McLoyd, & Toyokawa, 2004; Eamon, 2005), arguing that issues of social class, race and gender cannot

be separated from all literacy efforts (Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012). Rural communities in South Africa, such as the community this study is focusing on, experience all the problems as mentioned *supra* which are similar to other impoverished contexts all over the world. It is against this background that the researcher believes that this model is still useful in order to understand the teaching and promotion of reading in South African communities that are disadvantaged. The framework is particularly relevant for this study as it gives a more holistic lens through which the practices of educators in the teaching and promotion of reading can be viewed.

Another limitation that could stem from Tatum's proposal is that of in-school educator professional development and educator preparation. This proposal is underpinned by the assumption that there is enough capacity 'in-school' to actually implement these programmes. Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) make the point that educators are helpless as they struggle to deal with reading difficulties of their learners because of their lack of training and experience in reading. This indicates that there is a serious problem of capacity amongst educators. What needs to be pointed out though, and is one of the reasons Tatum's model is relevant to the understanding of this phenomenon, is that the priority the model affords educator development and preparation is key to literacy development in South Africa. Mutuku (2000) argues that the key to educational quality is the quality of the workforce, which implies that quality teaching and the promotion of reading relies on the quality of the educators.

The literature review is divided into three main sections. The first section is a discussion on the definitions and various perspectives regarding the teaching and promotion of reading. The second section contains an exploration of international literature and its views on the teaching of reading. Local literature will also be considered in this regard. Finally it will be shown that even though the existing body of knowledge is making a significant contribution regarding teaching and promotion of reading, it does not address the issue of how secondary school educators teach and promote reading in schools located in rural communities in South Africa. This is the gap that this study is attempting to fill.

## **2.2 Review of Literature**

### **Theoretical perspectives and definitions of reading**

Serafini (2003) indicates that there are three perspectives that inform educators' strategies when teaching and promoting reading. The first strategy is referred to as a modernist perspective. This is a perspective that understands reading as being about acquiring skills that are applied to a neutral text. It views reading as a cognitive, psychological process and focuses on how best to teach learners to read, i.e. decode text, read aloud fluently and literal comprehension; limited time spent on reading and more time spent on exercises. The second perspective is referred to as a transactional perspective. This perspective views reading as a two-way process. Understanding the meaning of a text involves a cognitive process where an individual reader is interacting with a particular text. In other words, a reader plays a role in the creation of meaning, drawing upon prior knowledge and experience. Group and class discussions are central to this particular approach. In defining reading, Kelly, (2007) perceives reading as a process in which a reader actively interacts with the text to create meaning. Palinscar and Brown (1984) make a similar point when stating that reading comprehension is a product of three main factors: (1) considerate texts, (2) compatibility of readers' knowledge and text content, and (3) the active strategies the reader employs to enhance understanding and retention. Parra, Galvis and Restrepo (2013) also agree that reading is an active process, a dialogue between the text and the reader, where the main focus is to extract meaning from a text and to connect information with the readers' background knowledge. These definitions seem to be located within this transactional perspective of reading. The third perspective is referred to as a critical perspective. This is a perspective that sees reading as related to politics and the power relations of everyday life. Texts are interrogated by focusing on the issues of gender, social class, race and ethnicity. Instructions focus on helping readers see how different meanings are constructed and how readers themselves are positioned by various reading and interpretation. In other words, it should aim at developing the readers' ability to assume a critical stance towards any text. Luke (2000) argues that critical literacy has to include a systematic analysis of the relations and fields of social, cultural, and economic power where people actually use texts. This is in line with Eskey's (2002) three-dimensional definition of reading as a psycholinguistic, sociocultural and individual practice. This means that reading is not only about acquiring the skills of

reading; it is also a sociocultural practice. A similar point is made by Wilson and Lianrui (2003) who perceive reading to be a social practice. A conception that sees reading as being tied up on politics and power relations of everyday life is in line with Tatum's (2008) model which pays attention to multiple conceptualizations of literacies and identities situated within power structures such as class, gender and race. Given that this study is looking at the teaching and promotion of reading in rural schools, this understanding is critical.

### **International literature on the teaching of reading**

While much has been written internationally, particularly in the USA on how to teach reading (Behrman, 2004; Biakolo, 2007; Carroll, 2000; Carter, 2012; Concannon-Gibney & Murphy, 2012; de Morgado, 2009; Dyah Sunggingwati & Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen, 2013; Grabe, 2004; Lau, 2006; Macalister, 2011; Rasinski, Homan, & Biggs, 2009; Rose, 2006; Santoro, Jitendra, Starosta, & Sacks, 2006) and promote this activity (Bamford & Day, 2004; Krashen, 2004; Wu, 2012a), very little has been done in terms of the teaching of reading as a social practice that is linked to its political, social and economic context. Most of the studies that have been conducted can be located within the modernist and transactional perspective as they tend to focus on issues such as word attack, decoding a text, fluency and comprehension. Concannon-Gibney and Murphy (2012) in a study conducted in Ireland involving four hundred primary school educators, with an aim of examining reasons why current reading pedagogy remains unbalanced by relying heavily on decoding instruction at the expense of explicit comprehension instruction, it revealed that there is dominance of word attack skills over comprehension instruction and an emphasis on reading for pleasure over explicit comprehension teaching. Similar findings were discovered in Indonesia in a case study conducted by Dyah Sunggingwati and Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen (2013) with the purpose of investigating the strategy of educator questioning and educator comprehension in secondary schools. This study involved three Grade 11 English educators and their Grade 11 classes. Findings suggested that educators use traditional approaches and rely on textbooks. Comprehension was also not a primary target.

Whilst comprehension remained secondary in these studies, there is a large body of literature that focuses on comprehension (Grabe, 2004; Lawrence, Rabinowitz, & Perna, 2008; Macalister, 2011; Pressley, Yokoi, Rankin, Wharton-McDonald, & Mistretta, 1997; Smith, 2000). Grabe (1991) points out that reading lesson should be planned in three phases, namely the pre-reading stage, during-reading stage and a post-reading stage. This is to improve

building background knowledge, practice readings skills within the reading text and engage in comprehension instruction. This is influenced by the Schema theory of Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) which recognizes the role of background information in language comprehension. It looks at what the readers bring to the text in order to make meaning. Although influenced by the Construction-Integration model of Kintsch (1988), Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman (2011) make a similar point because they also emphasize the importance of the reader's prior knowledge in the comprehension process. This prior knowledge shapes the comprehension as readers gain new information which changes the knowledge. In his four-strand framework Macalister (2011) emphasizes the meaning of the text as a primary concern irrespective of the goal. In a study conducted by Rasinski et al. (2009), in the USA which involved 303 9th Grade students with the purpose of finding out if difficulties in reading are a result of a lack of reading fluency by using a Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM), it was concluded that improved fluency leads to comprehension. These scholars suggest strategies to improve fluency informed by their understanding that a lack of fluency impedes comprehension. A similar point is made by Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, and Jenkins (2001) when they point out oral reading fluency as the most salient characteristic of skilful reading. They propose a set of recommendations for educators and researchers to include measures of oral reading fluency as indicators of reading competence. Clearly this proves that they also agree that the oral reading of text is the primary goal of reading. Fluency is given priority as a prerequisite for reading comprehension. Salinger and Fleischman (2005) suggest that educators can support and improve reading comprehension if they introduce and model methods that encourage learners to interact with text. They suggest a strategy called Questioning the Author (QtA). In this approach, educators demonstrate ways to think and talk about text that can assist learners to have a better understanding of their own reading strategies and also increase their understanding of content. These studies focus on comprehension and unfortunately disregard context in teaching and promoting reading

Another issue that has been identified as being useful in the teaching and promotion of reading pertains to extensive reading. According to Krashen (2004), extensive reading is 'free voluntary reading' which he describes as learners reading because they want to. This means that learners enjoy the act of reading. It includes fast reading of large amounts of longer, easy-to-understand material. Bamford and Day (2004) agree with Krashen as they too view extensive reading as a way of helping learners to learn the language by reading many easy and interesting texts in the new language. They chose their own material and read it

independently of the educator. A large body of research (de Morgado, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Lee, 2005; Lukhele, 2013; Mason, 2003; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006) seems to suggest that there are benefits to be derived from extensive reading in terms of second language acquisition. In a study conducted by Lukhele (2013) in Swaziland, which involved eighty-four students in a college with the purpose of finding out whether the educator trainees' attitude toward reading was positive or negative. This study would also check if these attitudes had any relationship with their ability to read, vocabulary levels and academic performance. Lukhele (2013) concluded that greater exposure to academic and leisure texts would undoubtedly increase students' reading skills. A similar point is made by de Morgado (2009) in a study conducted in Venezuela involving thirty of her students with the aim of examining the influence of extensive reading on the students' reading performance. She concluded that reading for pleasure does have a positive impact on reading comprehension.

Stoeckel, Reagan, and Hann (2012) also point out the development of second language reading fluency, writing style, grammatical competence and vocabulary growth as benefits derived from extensive reading. Vocabulary growth is identified as key to improved reading (Biemiller, 2003; Pikulski & Templeton, 2004). Biemiller (2003) maintains that success in reading depends to a large extent on vocabulary and therefore suggesting the need for direct instruction in vocabulary. As Pikulski and Templeton (2004) note that the best tool we can give students in order to succeed in their education and life in general, is a large, rich vocabulary and the skills for using those words. This point emphasizes the importance of vocabulary because learning happens through reading. Extensive reading is therefore suggested as one way of developing vocabulary growth (Krashen, 2004; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Wu, 2012b) as the key to reading comprehension.

### **Local literature on the teaching of reading**

In South Africa there remains a major challenge with regard to studies on the teaching and promotion of reading in secondary schools, particularly relating to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is concerning because studies that have been conducted show a relationship between reading and academic performance. In two studies conducted by Pretorius (2002) involving eighty-one students from the Medical University of South Africa (Medunsa), using a series of five tests completed over a four-week period and another study which comprised the University of South Africa (Unisa) students enrolled for the

Mathematics Access module, using test procedures, it was discovered that there are differences in the ability to read amongst the different academic groups, with reading skills improving the higher the academic group. Pretorius and Machet (2004b) make a similar point, stating that it is unlikely that learners who are not proficient in reading will do well at school or even after school. This indicates that serious attention needs to be given to reading, particularly how it is taught, in rural contexts. Most of what has been written tends to focus on the best ways to teach reading in primary schools or focus on learners instead of how educators teach and promote reading ( Hugo, 2010; Lemmer & Manyike, 2012; Nassimbeni & Desmond, 2011; Pretorius & Machet, 2004a, 2004b; Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007; Van Staden, 2011), irrespective of context. For instance, a study was conducted in Gauteng involving thirty Grade 1 to 3 educators, with the aim of gaining insight into possible reasons why learners in Grades 1 to 3 fail to become proficient readers. This mixed method research clearly showed that educators are struggling with the teaching of reading. In another study conducted by Pretorius and Machet (2004a) with the purpose of examining the effects of an out-of-school literacy enrichment programme on the literacy skills of Grades 1 and 4 learners at five disadvantaged schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal, it was indicated that greater exposure to reading activities such as reading story books in isiZulu had a positive impact on the learners' reading accomplishments. Pretorius and Machet (2004b) discovered that the acquisition of reading skills is the product of a set of socio-educational circumstances that translate themselves into specific reading environments for learners. This was done in a study that assessed Grade 1 learners' literacy accomplishments and examined the school literacy context as well as the literacy practices and perceptions of educators in primary school, using observations and interviews. They furthermore make two important points that are worth mentioning. Firstly, they note that educators tend to focus on getting readers to decode words without paying attention to meaning. This makes learners sound-centred readers. Secondly, primary school educators are professionals who are supposedly deeply involved in helping to develop learners' reading skills. Yet it is precisely in this area that they themselves are not skilled. Pretorius and Machet (2004b) make a significant contribution in terms of understanding educators' practices in disadvantaged context and how literacy levels are affected by socio-educational circumstances, but their study illustrates the point made about focusing on the teaching and promoting reading in primary schools and thus overlooking secondary school educators and their contexts.



Another issue that seems to come up strongly when looking at local literature is that of the lack of reading materials (Nassimbeni & Desmond, 2011; Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007; Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005). In a study conducted in Pretoria aimed at investigating the entry-level English reading skills of Grade 8 non-primary speakers of English, Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) discovered that differential access to reading materials and time for reading that different learners experienced, emerged as one of the factors which continue to be a challenge in South Africa. A similar point is made by Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) in a study conducted in one of the primary schools in Gauteng with 600 learners and sixteen educators to examine reading problems in the schools. The study found that many learners are expected to learn to read without having books. The researchers argued that “The quality of an education system depends vitally on access to books” (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007, p. 56). The non-availability of books is one of the major barriers to the improvement of reading skills for many learners in South Africa.

This study focuses on educators in rural schools. Halfacree (2006) understands rurality in terms of concrete geographical location, mapped in terms topographical attributes, social composition of people, forms of activities, nature of social relations, and relations with other spaces. This definition implies that rural contexts differ. Masinire, Maringe, and Nkambule (2014) also desist from homogenising rurality into a one-size-fits-all definition by accepting the diversity of rural schools and the myriad of challenges and potentialities of each rural school context. This definition points to the need to develop a deeper understanding of rural issues in context.

Nkambule et al. (2011) points out that education in rural areas continues to face challenges due to factors such as the diverse geographic location of the schools, the diverse backgrounds of the learners and diverse learning styles. Schools in these communities often have no access to basic resources and over and above these challenges, rural schools also have a problem with inadequate supply of qualified educators, a high level of drop-out rate, learner attendance and arriving late for school. Masinire et al. (2014) note that poor school attendance is influenced by home chores, since parents expect their children to participate in work such as cultivating the land and taking care of siblings. Another issue that contributes to arriving late for school is the long distance that these learners have to walk/travel when going to school.

These challenges tend to impact negatively on teaching and learning. Moletsane (2012) notes that the reasons for poor learner performance are complex and can be found in the home, the community, the school, the society and various institutions. This means that context plays a huge role in determining learner outcomes. It is therefore important to study and understand educators' practices and strategies when teaching and promoting reading in rural contexts. Moletsane (2012) argues that any disregard of the socio-political context of schooling is detrimental to social change, in general, and to widening educational access and success, in particular.

The above review clearly confirms Tatum's claims that most attempts aimed at improving reading focus on the instructional strands and thus constitute an anatomically incomplete model of literacy instruction. A plethora of work exists internationally on the teaching of reading, but most of these studies focus on word study, fluency, and comprehension. There is a limited body of scholarship at local level. In cases where work has been done at local level, this work has tended to focus on the teaching of reading at primary school, often not focusing on disadvantaged learning contexts, contexts where learning resources, such as books, are often absent. It is therefore this gap that this study seeks to fill by looking at the practices of English First Additional Language educators at secondary schools from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter contains a discussion on the process of data generation that was followed in this study. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part describes the qualitative research approach adopted in the study as well as the philosophical underpinnings of the study, i.e. the paradigm, ontological and epistemological assumptions of the study. This part will also provide the context where this study was undertaken. The second part will focus on the generation of data. The methodology used for this study was the case study; the methods used for collection data, i.e. observations, document analysis and individual face-face semi structured interviews will be discussed, as well as sampling and the analysis of data. The third part focusses on trustworthiness and rigour of the study. Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as notions of validity and reliability which do not cohere with the qualitative approach and interpretivist paradigm adopted in the study will be discussed. Issues concerning ethical concerns and the limitations of the study will be explained. A discussion of all these issues is important because these issues will address entire process of responding to the research questions of the study. Essentially, the research aims to respond to the question of what secondary English first Additional language educators teaching in disadvantaged context consider as the teaching and promotion of reading.; how these educators teach and promote reading in disadvantaged learning contexts; why they teach and promote reading in the ways they do and what role, if any, context plays in the ways in which these educators teach and promote reading. The next section turns to the qualitative research approach adopted for the study, the philosophical underpinnings, as well as the context of the study.

#### **3.1 Research Approach: Qualitative Research**

This study was concerned with understanding the practices and strategies of English First Additional language educators when teaching and promoting reading in secondary schools. A qualitative approach to this particular research was therefore appropriate because, as Newby (2010) explains, qualitative research is concerned with understanding how people choose to

live their lives, the meanings they give to their experiences and their feelings about their conditions. Similar sentiments have been expressed by Johnson and Christensen (2008) who assert that qualitative research relies on qualitative data and tends to follow an exploratory mode of scientific method. This research has drawn meaning from what happened in the classroom, what educators said in their classroom and from the analysis of documents prepared for the lessons.

The applicability of this approach for this particular study is further supported by Nieuwenhuis (2007) who states that qualitative research tries to gather rich data in respect of a particular phenomenon with the aim to develop a better understanding of what is being observed or studied. The focus of this study was to understand teachers' practices when teaching reading. Richards and Morse (2012) note that the voice of people should be heard because it does not only provide data to be analysed; it contributes to the research questions and the way that data is analysed. The use of one-on-one interviews was therefore appropriate as it promoted interaction with the educators in their teaching environments. This is something that would not have been possible in a quantitative study. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argues that the qualitative approach examines complex questions that are not possible with quantitative methods. Using this particular approach made it possible to better understand how secondary school educators who work in disadvantaged contexts teach and promote reading.

Marshall and Rossman (2010) argue that a qualitative approach is fundamentally interpretive and draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of participants in the study and also focuses on the context. It was therefore clear that a quantitative approach, which relies heavily on numerical data, would not have been appropriate for this particular study, which is about knowing and understanding educators' practices when teaching and promoting reading. The use of class observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis assisted in the interpretation and the understanding of educators' practices in their contexts. This particular study maintained a much broader perspective by taking into consideration the local context of teaching and the complexities presented by this, instead of focusing purely on the teaching method.

### **3.2 Philosophical Underpinnings: Paradigm, Ontology and Epistemology**

It is important to point out from the outset that researchers are often severely influenced by a number of assumptions when conducting their research. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) point out that these assumptions are of an ontological nature. This refers to how researchers view the nature of reality. Cohen et al. (2000) contend that one important question researchers ask themselves is whether reality is of an objective nature or whether it is created in the mind. Those who view reality as objective or as a given, are located within the positivist paradigm. Cohen et al. (2000) argues that positivism claims that science provides us with the clearest possible ideal of reality. A paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which give rise to a particular world-view (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Researchers who operate within this positivist paradigm tend to rely on quantitative data, which they believe is objective. This is supported by Cohen et al. (2000) who argue that investigations conducted by people who subscribe to the view which treats the social world like a natural world will be predominantly quantitative and will be concerned with identifying and defining elements and discovering ways in which their relationships can be expressed. These ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions. This refers to researchers' assumptions about the nature of knowledge. Cohen et al. (2000) argue that a researcher who perceives reality as objective will also perceive knowledge as hard, objective and tangible. These ontological and epistemological assumptions ultimately give rise to methodological considerations for researchers.

This particular study was conducted within the interpretivist paradigm. Cohen et al. (2000) regard this paradigm as a way of understanding the subjective world of human experiences. Zimmer (2006) contends that those who espouse the interpretive approach hold an ontological view that acknowledges a concrete and real world, full of tangible entities. "The epistemological apprehension of that real world, and the meanings ascribed to it, are determined by a web of inevitable factors made up of language, symbol, culture, history and individual situatedness"(Zimmer, 2006). This means that our interpretation and understanding of reality is subjective and is influenced by our social contexts. This implies that even our understanding, experiences and what we know as individuals would differ. This paradigm views knowledge as socially constructed. This is supported by Kim (2003) who argues that knowledge is seen to be comprised of multiple sets of interpretations that are part

of the social and cultural context in which it occurs. Therefore the role of any researcher that operates within this paradigm would be to try and understand people's realities by exploring different interpretations and look at issues from the point of view of those participants. This would be underpinned by the assumption that reality is socially constructed. This paradigm is therefore appropriate because the purpose of this study is to understand the practices of educators when teaching and promoting reading, and that which informs these practices and strategies, thus viewing issues from the educators' point of view.

### **3.3 Context and Location**

This study was carried out in Umbumbulu, a rural area where the majority of people are unemployed. Therefore, learners from this area are considered as disadvantaged. Throngs of learners were observed walking a long distance to school, which is a far cry from what one would normally see in former Model C schools where learners are being dropped off by parents at school. The schools themselves are also disadvantaged as they lack basic resources such as libraries and books, science laboratories and other facilities.

This study focussed on five schools in the area. Lufefe High School (pseudonym) is more fortunate when compared to other schools. Although this school is in the rural area, it is situated along the main road and is easier to access. This is the only school in the area that has a library. It does not seem to be struggling when it comes to learner enrolment as classrooms are overcrowded. The school has a qualified English educator who also has a qualification in librarianship. Nokwanda High School (pseudonym), on the other hand, a kilometre away from this school, is struggling with learner enrolment. Some of the classrooms are vacant, there is no library and the school buildings are in disrepair with many of the windows broken.

These are the challenges that are faced by the other three schools that were part of the study. Mandlakhe Secondary is a school that also does not have a library. There is a serious shortage of textbooks, prescribed set works and material for extensive reading. Money that is allocated to these schools is never enough to meet the basics of teaching and learning, like providing a textbook for each learner that is enrolled. This situation is even worse in the lower grades (Grades 8-11). The English educator at this school is the head of department but is not a qualified English teacher.

It should also be noted that the availability of a library does not necessarily imply the availability of appropriate reading material. Four of these schools have a problem with learner enrolment. This is caused by families moving to urban areas in the hope of a better quality of life. This impacts negatively on the number of educators that can be employed at a school. Educators working in these schools find themselves having no free periods as they have to teach all the grades. Performance of matric learners from this area has for many years been less than satisfactory. Four of these five schools, considered as T 60 (poor performing) schools in the uMlazi district come from this circuit. These are schools that have been performing below 60% in terms of the overall matric results and are categorised as no-fee schools by the Department of Education. They are all categorized as quintile 3. This categorisation informed by the socio-economic conditions in the area where the school is located. Given the arguments presented above in relation to the connections between reading and academic performance, this context offered the data sought for the study.

### **3.4 Methodology: Case Study**

As a study that was relying on qualitative data, it was therefore important that data be drawn from educators in an attempt to understand not only their practices, but the reasons for these practices. Therefore the phenomenon was studied in its natural setting and a case study was deemed the appropriate data collection methodology for this study. Cohen et al. (2000) argues that a case study is a study of a case in context and it is important to set the case within its context. This is further supported by Johnson and Christensen (2008) who contend that a case study is holistic as it exists in its real-life context. Yin (1981) also defines it as a research strategy which attempts to examine a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This point is particularly important because this study looked at how educators teach and promote reading in specific contexts. This was the case of the educators who taught English in five schools in the Umbumbulu circuit which is a rural area. The context, Umbumbulu, therefore constituted the unit of analysis for this study. Cohen et al. (2000) argue that one of the strengths of a case study is that it is able to observe effects in real life contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects. This assisted in gaining an in-depth understanding of this particular phenomenon because actual lessons were observed in actual teaching which provided insight into the activities in the classrooms. The observations were followed by document analysis and interviews, which

contributed to the observations during lessons. Yin (2009a) identifies four main case study designs. The first one is a single-case design which focuses on a unique case, a representative or typical case. The second one is the embedded, single-case design which incorporates more than one 'unit of analysis,' for example, when doing a case study of the entire school; one might use sub-units of classes, educators and students. Each one of these might require different data collection methods. The third design is the multiple-case design, which requires two case studies for comparative purposes. This is worth more than what is gained from a single case study. Lastly the embedded multiple-case design which involves different sub-units in each of the different cases, and a range of instruments might be used for each sub-unit. This study was a single-case study because it focused on five schools, but situated in one context, the Umbumbulu circuit.

Cohen et al. (2000) point out that one of the advantages of case studies is that data, paradoxically, is strong in reality but difficult to organise. This is because case studies are down to earth and holds the attention in harmony with the readers' own experience, and thus provide a 'natural', basis for representativity. They provide insight into other, similar situations and cases, thereby assisting interpretation of other similar cases. Given that this is a case study of rural Umbumbulu, it could provide insight into other cases of similar context. Case studies also recognise entrenched and complex social truths and also may provide different viewpoints held by participants. One of the disadvantages of case studies, however, is that they are prone to problems of observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity. Findings may not be generalizable except where other researchers recognise their application. Yin (2009b) points out that case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. It is important to point out that the aim of this study was not to generalise. As such, the inability for case study to generalise beyond theoretical positions did not limit the study in any way and thus the case study methodology was the most appropriate methodology for this particular study as it created the opportunity to attend actual lessons, while at the same time being able to generate data from in-depth interviews. I was therefore able to use multiple methods, a requirement of case study research, in generating data.



### **3.5 Methods of Data Generation**

This research study espoused three methods in data generation, namely observations, document analysis and individual face to face semi-structured interviews in order to understand the practices of educators in secondary school when teaching and promoting reading in a real life setting. This was used together with the analysis of lesson plans and text that was used during the lesson, which extended understanding into what was occurring in the classroom. Interviews enabled the asking of relevant questions which the observations and document analysis could not answer.

#### **Observations**

Yin (2009b) argues that because a case study should take place in the natural setting of the "case," one is then creating the opportunity for direct observations. This informed the decision to include lesson observation as one of the methods for generating data in this study. Yin (2009b) further contends that observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the topic being studied. According to Cohen et al. (2000) observations offer the investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. This provides the researcher with the opportunity to find information directly from real life situations. Yin (2009b) contends that case studies have the advantage over historical studies in that these include direct observation and interviews with participants. He does point out though that those observations have weaknesses of reflexivity. This means that an event can proceed differently because it is being observed. In this case, educators had to be observed in the classroom environment. One reading lesson was observed for each educator. Each educator decided on the reading lesson to be observed. Whilst the educator was presenting, the researcher took down notes which were helpful when asking follow-up questions during the interview. Observing the educator in action enabled an in-depth understanding of their practices.

Cohen et al. (2000) state that many forms of data collection, including observation, requires the informed consent of the participants, the right not to be observed, and permission from the school. Written permission was sought from and given by the principal of the schools under study to carry out observation of the participants in their classrooms. The research methods to be used were explained to the participant as well as their rights; the reason for the observation and the process were also clearly explained. They understood that it was not

about judging or finding faults. This had to be explained as educators are often not comfortable with the idea of their lessons being observed by an outsider. This would have caused problems if it had not been properly addressed.

Cohen et al. (2000) point out that observations can either be highly structured, semi-structured or unstructured. In a highly structured observation, the researcher will plan the observation categories in advance. This differs from a semi-structured observation which will gather data in a far less predetermined or systematic way. An unstructured observation is less clear on what it is looking for and the researcher will therefore have to go into a situation and observe what is taking place before deciding on its significance. In this study, the researcher entered the classroom with a list of issues to observe e.g. physical setting, programme setting, number of learners, availability of texts and their appropriateness, lesson plans, teaching strategies and time. This does not mean that other issues that may have manifested were ignored. . It simply means that a semi- structured observation was selected because it would allow for follow- up questions in where necessary. In each case lessons were not disturbed as appointments were made with each educator for class observation that was convenient for both the educator and the school. The average time for lessons observed was fifty minutes for each lesson.

### **Document Analysis**

Document analysis is one of the instruments for data generation. Yin (2009a) states that documents are important for corroborating and augmenting evidence from other sources. This view is supported by Bowen (2009) when arguing that the rationale for document analysis lies in its role in methodological and data triangulation. Yin (2009b) points out that documents are helpful in providing other specific details to corroborate information from other sources. Therefore, documents play an explicit role in any data collection when doing case studies. They are also unobtrusive as the documents analysed are documents which were not created as a result of a case study. In this case, after class observation, lesson plans for the observed lesson and two more lesson plans from the lessons that were not observed were considered. This assisted in determining whether there were similarities or discrepancies in the lesson plan for the observed lesson when compared with the lesson plan for other lessons. It also assisted in understanding how educators have been teaching reading at the school, prior to this research. These lesson plans were compared with notes taken during class observation in order to corroborate and augment data from the observations. These were

analysed so as to expand insight into the practices of educators when teaching reading. The lesson plans were not always readily available as often educators did not have them in writing on the day the lesson was presented. The area in which I did not struggle was obtaining texts used during the lesson. I had to look at the text chosen bearing in mind Tatum's argument about the appropriateness of texts. This appropriacy involved looking at whether context was taken into account when it was selected.

### **Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews**

In trying to understand the educators' practices when teaching and promoting reading, an instrument that allows greater depth in terms of data generation must be selected. Interviews are one such instrument. This is supported by Yin (2009b) who asserts that one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview. Yin is supported by Johnson and Christensen (2008) who note that qualitative interviews are also called depth interviews because they can be used to obtain in-depth information about a participant's thoughts, beliefs, reasoning, motivations and feelings on a topic. The type of interview that was used in this study is what Yin (2009b) refers to as a focused interview. This is when a person is interviewed for a short period of time, for example, one hour. The interview approach must remain open-ended and assume a conversational manner. The major purpose for the interview is to corroborate earlier collected data. Given that certain data had been generated during the lesson observation, it was appropriate to follow up with interviews. Participants were requested to participate in a one on one interview lasting about an hour each, which were voice-recorded with notes taken by the researcher. Permission was sought from the participants to record the interviews. The interviews took place at the school after hours, because it was convenient for the participants. The interview assisted the researcher to understand the thinking behind the practices of educators and what exactly they understood about the teaching of reading. Some of the questions had to be rephrased because some educators found them difficult to understand. These interviews were also helpful in understanding the actions of the educators in terms of their lesson designs and classroom practices, as well their views on the promotion and teaching of reading.

**Table 1: Table of methods used**

	Number	Time spent
<b>Class observations</b>	5	50 minutes for each lesson
<b>Interviews</b>	10 ( 2 for each participant)	1 hr 30 min for each participant
<b>Document analysis</b>	10 (Lesson plan and text for each lesson).	30 min for each participant (15min for each doc)

### 3.6 Sampling

Johnson and Christensen (2008) define a sample as a set of elements taken from a larger population according to certain rules. Due to the fact that this study is located within an interpretive paradigm, participant selection was used instead of sampling. The participants were drawn from a larger population. Five schools were randomly selected in the Umbumbulu circuit, under the uMlazi District. Only Grade 10 educators who taught English First Additional Language were targeted as participants in this study. These particular participants were selected educators because this is the entry level for the FET phase. I initially intended to have two grade 10 educators from each school as participants; however, this was not possible as the schools are located in a rural area where a number of households move to urbanised areas in search of ‘greener pastures’. This has had a negative impact on the number of learners and educators in these schools.

In terms of the Department of Education’s post provisioning norms, schools are allocated a certain number of educators based on learner numbers, curriculum needs and the available budget. This has a negative impact on rural schools as they struggle to attract large numbers. This leads to many schools in rural areas finding themselves short-staffed. These schools have not escaped the effects of such policies. This is why all the schools where the participants were drawn from have one educator teaching English First Additional language in Grade 10. Not a single school in this area has two educators teaching the same grade. The fact that the study was reliant on one educator per school did not have much impact in terms

of the quality of data gathered. The five participants were still able to provide the data required for a small scale study such as this dissertation. It was not possible to select the Grade 12 educators as they were busy preparing for the NSC examinations. This is what Cohen et al. (2000) describe as purposive sampling: when researchers purposefully select the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of possessing particular characteristics. Educators were chosen by virtue of teaching English First Additional Language in Grade 10. These five participants were in a position to provide sufficient data for the phenomenon under study.

**Table 2: Profiles of the Participants**

Participant	Gender	Age	Teaching Experience	School
Mrs Ndlovu	Female	Late fifties	29 yrs	Mandlakhe Secondary
Mrs Mazibuko	Female	Mid-forties	19 yrs	Sipho High School
Mrs Mkhize	Female	Late fifties	20 yrs	Lufefe High School
Mrs Zulu	Female	Mid-fifties	29 yrs	Nokwanda High School
Miss Cele	Female	Mid-twenties	1 yr	Nomazulu Secondary

**Note: Names of participants and their schools are pseudonyms.**

### 3.7 Trustworthiness and Rigour

It is important to reiterate the point that this is a qualitative study, because this has implications in terms of how issues of validity and reliability are understood and addressed. Shenton (2004) asserts that concepts of validity and reliability in qualitative research cannot be addressed the same way as in quantitative research. It is for this particular reason that this study used trustworthiness and rigour instead of validity or reliability. Golafshani (2003) asserts that reliability and validity are conceptualised as trustworthiness, rigour and quality in qualitative studies. Trustworthiness includes issues of credibility, transferability,

dependability and confirmability. These are briefly discussed below in relation to the study conducted.

### **Credibility**

Shenton (2004) describes credibility as how congruent the findings are with reality. This is one of the most important issues that had to be addressed to ensure trustworthiness in this study. One way of ensuring credibility according to Shenton (2004) is by using research methods that are well established in qualitative research. This study used observations, interviews and document analysis which are methods that are used consistently in qualitative research. Using these methods assisted in addressing the issue of credibility in this study. In addition, this also assisted with data saturation. Cohen et al. (2000) defines data saturation as the use of two or more different methods of data collection in the study of aspects of human behaviour. As previously mentioned, this study used three methods. Shenton (2004) maintains that the use of different methods in concert compensates for their individual limitations and exploits their respective benefits. Clearly the use of different methods in this dissertation contributed towards ensuring credibility of the study. Furthermore, data was collected from five different schools (five educators) which again assisted with credibility. Shenton (2004) holds that site triangulation may be achieved by the participation of informants within several organisations so as to reduce the effect of particular local factors peculiar to one institution, on the study. The use of different schools ensured that contextual factors of one particular school did not influence the direction and findings in a way that impacted negatively on the credibility of the study. The data that was generated during interviews was accurate; this was done by giving participants a chance to read the transcripts in order to ensure that they are a true reflection of what transpired. This is again supported by Shenton (2004) who insists that participants must be asked to read the transcripts of the dialogues in which they participated.

### **Transferability**

Cohen et al. (2000) explains transferability as the applicability of research to other situations. This is another important factor in ensuring the credibility of a study. This was achieved in this study by giving a full description of the context within which the study was conducted. This also included the number of schools that participated, information on participants, data collection methods, length of interview sessions and observations, the time period in which data was collected. Shenton (2004) argues that if practitioners believe their situations to be

similar to that described in the study, they may relate the findings to their situation. This is precisely the reason why a full description of the context of this study was provided.

### **Dependability**

Qualitative researchers use the term dependability instead of reliability which is used in quantitative research. This study ensured dependability by giving a full description of the methodology employed so as to help the readers to have a clear understanding of the methods that were used. Shenton (2004) argues that qualitative researchers need to devote a section describing the research design and its implementation, operational detail of data gathering and reflective appraisal of the project as this will assist the readers to understand clearly the methods and their effectiveness.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability has to do with steps taken to ensure as far as possible that the findings are the results of the experiences and ideas of participants. This means that the researcher's beliefs and prejudices may not influence the findings of the study. Shenton (2004) maintains that triangulation becomes important to reduce researcher bias. It has been pointed out that this study used different methods to ensure both credibility and confirmability, which ultimately contributed towards the trustworthiness of the study.

## **3.8 Ethical issues**

Ethics in research are explained by Cohen et al. (2000) as taking into account the effects of the research on participants, and act in such a way to preserve their dignity as human beings. Cohen et al. (2000) identify informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of the interviews as three main areas. This also applied to the observations of lessons in this study. Letters were written to the Department of Education and the principal of the school requesting permission to conduct research. Participants were also sent letters informing them about the research in terms of its purpose and the significance of their cooperation with the researcher. Their anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed and participants were made aware of their right to withdraw without sanction if they were no longer comfortable with their participation in the research. This was extremely important as Cohen et al. (2000) point out that qualitative research may involve personal and sensitive matters, which raises the question of identifiability, confidentiality and privacy of individuals. Ethical clearance from

the University's Research Office was obtained prior to this research. This was probably one of the most challenging aspects for the study as, although clearance to conduct research was given, it was given with a warning of no further violation as a result of confusion which emanated directly from the Ethics Office itself. Principals and educators of schools that were participating in this study received calls from the Research Office asking them as to whether I had visited the schools. At the time calls were made, I had visited the schools seeking permission to conduct research, but not yet started with data collection. This is where the whole confusion came from. This experience made me realise that the university ethical process may be problematic when researchers are treated with suspicion. Sikes (2013) does point out that the current ethics procedures seem to assume that researchers are going to be unethical. Some may view this inclusion as not necessary, but it is important to include all the processes involved in the research process as this shows reflexivity.

### **3.9 Limitations**

This study is about the practices of educators when teaching and promoting reading. This means that one had to observe the actual lessons presented. It is possible that during observations, participants may have wanted to impress and came well prepared for the observation, which would not be a true representation of what happens every day. This is supported by Yin (2009b) when he notes that both interviews and observations have a problem of reflexivity. For instance, an observed lesson can proceed differently because it is being observed. Similarly, the interviewee might respond according to what he/she perceives the interviewer wants to hear. This was avoided to some degree as the researcher explained beforehand the real reason for observations and the need to relax and teach as they would normally teach in their lessons. Some people dislike being observed as they perceive this as intrusive, hence the need gain trust by explaining an intervention in detail. The researcher also met with the participants before. This is one of the reasons I believe that explaining the reason why this is done was important. I had to do this in order to gain their trust. One of the educators saw me more as a departmental official instead of a researcher. This is because she knew that I was a Subject Advisor. The fact that I worked in another district did not really matter that much to her. This resulted in her trying to please the researcher or feel uncomfortable to participate. This required that as a researcher I had to find a way of making educators comfortable with the class observations and responded to their concerns. This ensured that rapport and trust was established prior to the research process.



### **3.10 Data Analysis**

In this study, data was analysed using a thematic analysis. According to Bowen (2009) thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes. Green et al. (2007) further argue that thematic analysis involves the following four steps: immersion in the data, coding, creation of categories and identification of themes. This means that in this study the researcher became deeply involved in the data when doing observations, document analysis and interviews. This entailed having to carefully examine what was said and what was observed because that became part of the qualitative data generated. Each recorded interview had to be transcribed. Many hours were spent listening to the two interviews conducted with each teacher. This often proved to be time-consuming as one had to carefully listen to the responses of educators in order to transcribe these. This was no easy task as some of the responses were in IsiZulu and had to be translated after the transcription process.

Furthermore, the notes from class observations and document analysis were also carefully examined. This led to the next step of coding which is about examining and organising information contained. This was done through applying descriptive labels to segments of transcripts. These codes were then linked to create categories. Ways in which research participants spoke about the issue under investigation were categorized. In practical terms, this meant that each transcript had to be read as well as the notes from the class observations and analysis of documents; careful thought was given to the responses that participants gave in relation to the message they were conveying. The coding process was informed by the responses of the educators. This was followed by comparing codes for duplication, which assisted in creating categories. The creation of categories promoted the analysis, interpretation and reflection on the data. This in turn assisted in identifying emerging themes which were influenced by the research questions. Five key themes were identified, which facilitated the formulation of the key findings in this study. These themes provided explanations or interpretation of the issues relating to how educators in secondary schools teach and promote reading. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the qualitative research approach which this study utilised was described as well as the philosophical assumptions that underpin this study. This chapter located the study

in the interpretivist paradigm, which considers reality as subjectively constituted and knowledge as constructed. This is because this study sought to understand grade 10 English First Additional Language educators' practices when teaching and promoting reading in disadvantaged contexts. Secondly, the process of data generation, starting from methodology and methods to participant selection and the analysis of data were discussed. This was done in line with the qualitative approach adopted for this study. Lastly issues of trustworthiness and rigour were discussed and followed by a discussion on the ethical issues and limitations of the study. In the next chapter the findings on how the educators from the five schools teach and promote reading. This will be done by seeking to respond to the following research questions:

1. What do secondary English First Additional Language educators teaching in disadvantaged schools consider as the teaching and promotion of reading?
2. How do these secondary English First Additional Language educators teach and promote reading in disadvantaged learning contexts?
3. Why do these secondary English First Additional Language educators teach and promote reading in the ways they do?
4. What role, if any, does context play in the ways in which educators teach and promote reading?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This study attempted to explore the practices and strategies used by Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators in secondary schools when teaching and promoting reading in disadvantaged learning contexts. The study also sought to explore the reasons behind those strategies as well as the role played by context in those types of practices and strategies employed. This was a case study of schools in the Umbumbulu area, in KwaZulu-Natal. This area was selected in order to avoid schools within the researcher's jurisdiction as an official from the Department of Basic Education. Permission to conduct research was granted by principals and educators from the five schools that were part of the case study. All the educators who were participants speak IsiZulu as their home language. This means that English is a First Additional Language to them.

This chapter presents and discusses data which was generated through lesson observations, document analysis and individual face-face semi structured interviews. A lesson presented by each participant was observed from each Grade 10 class. This was followed by two face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each of the five participants. An analysis of lesson plans and texts prepared for each lesson was carried out. The use of these different qualitative research techniques ensured data saturation and the credibility of the study. This discussion of findings makes use of verbatim quotations of the words of participants.

In the previous chapter, it was pointed out that data was analysed using a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes. This chapter is a reflection of the data collected from lesson observations, face-to-face semi - structured interviews and the analysis of relevant documents.

#### **4.1 Research Findings**

This study was to a certain extent prompted by the researcher's observations as a Subject Advisor, that educators often do not have a common understanding of what it means to teach and promote reading and what requisite skills are required to teach and promote reading. Five key themes emerged from the analysis of data. These themes were as follows: a limited understanding of reading; inadequate resourcing and limitations this presents when teaching

and promoting reading; uninformed selection of texts; the negative impact of examinations on classroom practices; a lack of professional development. A brief profile of the participants and their schools is offered as an introduction to this chapter.

#### **4.1.1 Description of participants and their classroom**

##### **❖ Mrs Ndlovu (all names are pseudonyms)**

Mrs Ndlovu is in her late fifties. She has been teaching for more than twenty-nine years. Although qualified as a teacher, she has no qualification in English. According to her, she is not someone with an interest in reading although she says she enjoys teaching English. The overall pass rate for the school in 2013 was 64%. It is a no-fee school (Quintile 3) with no library. Her classroom has approximately seventeen learners, seated in rows of two. There is one desk with three learners. The school appears to be struggling with learner enrolment. Some of the classrooms are empty.

##### **❖ Mrs Mazibuko**

Mrs Mazibuko is in her mid-forties. She is a qualified English educator and has been teaching English for the past nineteen years. She loves teaching English although she does not view reading as an aspect she enjoys teaching. She prefers teaching writing. Her matric class has obtained a 100% pass rate for the past three years. In spite of a good performance in English, the school obtained a 45% pass rate in matric last year. It is also a no-fee school with no basic resources such as a library. Her Grade 10 class has fifty-eight learners. This is way above the national teacher-pupil ratio which currently stands at 1:35 for secondary schools in terms of the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) Resolution 4 of 1995

##### **❖ Mrs Mkhize**

Mrs Mkhize is also in her late forties and has been teaching English for the past twenty years. She enjoys teaching English although she points out that there are challenges, such as, the ubiquitous language barrier that makes it difficult to teach. She is a qualified English teacher. She also recently completed a qualification with the University of KwaZulu-Natal on librarianship. She says she enjoys teaching literature, especially poetry. Her matric class obtained a 100% pass rate last year and the school achieved a 66% overall pass rate. Unlike other schools in the area, this school has a library. Books have recently been donated by the

Department of Education. This is also a no-fee school. The Grade 10 class is overcrowded. The educator does not have enough space to move around.

#### ❖ Mrs Zulu

She is in her mid-fifties and has been teaching English for the past twenty nine years. She is also a qualified English educator who enjoys teaching reading, especially literature. Her school is also a no-fee school with no library. The school does appear to be struggling with learner enrolment. Some classrooms are empty. Grade 10 class has about 19 learners. They are seated in two's.

#### ❖ Miss Cele

Miss Cele is a novice who began teaching in 2013. She studied communication and then did a post-graduate diploma in Education. She also enjoys teaching English, especially literature. She does not teach Grade 12. Her school is also a no-fee school with no library and also appears to be struggling with learner enrolment. Her Grade 10 class has forty-three learners arranged in rows of three's. Some learners have h no books in front of them.

### **4.1.2 Theme 1: Limited understanding on the teaching of reading.**

This study found that educators had a limited understanding of what reading entails, their understanding often driven by language concerns as opposed to the holistic development of the learners' reading skills. The participants' understanding seemed not to be balanced as they focused on certain aspects of reading at the expense of others. Almost all the educators displayed an understanding that focused on using reading as a way of facilitating the teaching of language when interviewed. While indeed language acquisition and fluency have been identified as important aspects of reading, this understanding is limited because it is at the expense of other aspects. For example, when questioned on what the teaching of reading entails, Mrs Mkhize responded:

*"Ahhh, I can say it...teaches the learners how to be fluent and also to be accurate when using the language and also instill love for the language and also how to learn about language structure, how they are used and knowing what is an adjective, what is a noun and ensure the use of the real life situation in the story rather than treating it as a different entity because they become bored when you are teaching language as a separate entity, whereas when it is used in a real life situation like the story that I*

*did yesterday about the teenage boy, they know that there is a challenge of teenage pregnancy since we've been doing that as part of orals".*

The issue of linguistic competence also came up when Mrs Mazibuko was asked the same question. She responded:

*"It is to assist learners to be good readers, integrating reading with the language structure that is grammar, vocabulary, of which those are the things that learners are supposed to master. It is not reading for the sake of reading. At the end of it all, learners are supposed to understand what it is they are reading".*

Mrs Zulu also responded to the same question as follows:

*"It is to be able use language which means they must be able to communicate as well as they must be able to read. When they read that will include even spelling, increasing their vocabulary and all the things".*

The above responses suggest that educators prioritized language development as an important element towards the teaching of reading. As their responses show, reading was about 'communication', 'spelling', 'grammar', 'fluency' and language structure, all of which were purely concerned with language development. While language development has been shown to constitute an important element of reading, this exclusive focus shows a somewhat limited understanding of what reading entails, and also what the teaching of reading entails. For instance, if one looks at Mrs Mkhize's response, it is clear that she sees fluency and linguistic competence as the main goals in the teaching of reading. Fluency is defined by Rasinski et al. (2005) as learning to recognize words in a text accurately and without any effort and interpret those words in a meaningful manner when reading aloud. In light of this definition, it is clear that an educator who prioritizes fluency when teaching reading would then focus on decoding words accurately. This approach is not balanced. It focuses on only one of the four components within the cognitive-linguistic aspect of reading. It also neglects the fact that reading is a socio-cultural practice. Concannon-Gibney and Murphy (2012) argue that current reading pedagogy needs to be balanced. This lack of balance is also evident in Mrs Mkhize's understanding because it focusses on certain aspects of reading at the expense of others. Mrs. Mkhize's understanding differs slightly from Mrs Mazibuko's understanding, who also thinks that reading is for facilitating linguistic competence, but she adds the element of understanding the text. Whilst there is a large body of research that places comprehension at

the centre of reading (Grabe, 2004; Macalister, 2011), it is still limited in a sense that it neglects other aspects of reading. For instance, Pretorius and Lephhalala (2011) distinguish decoding, comprehension, response, and metalinguistic/metacognitive knowledge as four main components irrespective of the language in which reading occurs within a cognitive-linguistic aspect of reading. This shows that focusing on language competence alone displays a limited understanding of what teaching of reading entails.

This limited understanding of what the teaching of reading means was also particularly evident when looking at strategies that educators used when teaching reading. In order to provide an overview of how reading is taught by these educators, a brief description of one reading lessons, drawn from the observations and lesson plans analysis, is presented. This lesson was selected as it is representative of what was discovered during lesson observations and the analysis of documents. This lesson illustrates a typical reading comprehension lesson in a Grade 10 English class in these rural schools. This will provide context for the more detailed analysis of the strategies used by educators in this case.

#### Lesson 1: Comprehension lesson presented by Mrs Ndlovu

*The educator gives learners a copy of a passage titled 'Sea Glass'. It is a story of a fantasy romance written by an American teenager. Learners are sitting in pairs and sharing a copy.*

*Once learners have copies in front of them, the educator starts reading the passage aloud. She then pauses and asks learners for the meaning of the word, 'shore' which is in the first line of paragraph one. Learners try to define the word but they fail to give the correct answer. The educator then explains the meaning of this word to the learners. She then asks them to point out an adjective in the first sentence. One learner gives a correct answer. The educator continues and asks learners to point out a word that is an adverb in the second sentence. One learner gives an answer. She continues to read the next sentence and pauses to ask learners for the meaning of the word, 'stare'. She then asks learners if they understand the first paragraph. Learners say, 'yes.'*

*The educator then reads the second paragraph aloud. She asks learners for a meaning of the word, 'fade'. One learner answers. She also asks for a meaning of 'seaweed'. Learners cannot give an answer. She then gives them an answer. She then asks for a meaning of a 'tunnel'. Learners fail to answer. Educator gives them an answer.*

*Educator then reads aloud paragraphs three, four, five and seven. This is done with pauses so as to ask for a meaning of a particular word. This exercise takes about 20 minutes of the lesson.*

*She then asks one learner to read the first paragraph aloud. Learner reads and struggles with pronouncing certain words, e.g., 'bundled'. She assists. Educator asks the second learner to read the second paragraph. This learner also struggles with pronouncing certain words. Educator assists. Another learner is asked to read the next paragraph aloud. This exercise goes on until all seven paragraphs have been read by learners. This exercise takes about ten minutes. Learners are then asked to answer questions that follow the passage orally. This concludes a forty-five minute reading lesson for the day.*

The lesson presented above, revealed two dominant techniques that were employed by educators when teaching reading. These are reading aloud and questioning. The same pattern emerged when observing the other four lessons not presented here. What also emerged is how limited understanding impacted negatively on how educators taught reading. Particular attention to each of these approaches are given because it is important to understand how they relate to the teaching of reading.

#### ❖ Reading aloud

From the observations this study found that educators employed reading aloud as the main strategy for teaching reading. This demonstrates how educators prioritize language development by focusing on fluency. This was done by either teaching reading for learners or learners were asked to read. This study found that educators were using this method in order to demonstrate or model independent reading for learners. For instance, Mrs Ndlovu's response, when asked why she used the strategy she used, confirms this:

*"I read first...and they must listen to me...because if I don't do that learners struggle with words and laugh. It's easier one they have heard it from me first".*

This suggests that the educator believes that reading aloud for learners helps them with modelling what they consider to be good reading. However, what the educator suggests as good practice is clearly problematic. For instance Pardo (2004) points out that educators have to teach decoding skills, help learners build fluency, build and activate background knowledge, teach vocabulary words, motivate learners and engage them in personal



responses to text. This shows that relying on reading aloud does not help much in terms of teaching learners how to read. Apart from modelling reading, it appeared that the educators were using reading aloud to monitor individual learner's fluency, use of punctuation, word identification, speed and intonation. These are all the various elements that the educators identified as crucial for the teaching of reading as discussed above. The educators believed that this strategy helped them to identify some of reading problems that learners have. When asked during the interview as to why they use reading aloud as a strategy, Mrs Mazibuko, responded:

*"I think if they read aloud, it does help them in a way, rather than to say they must read silently because you are not sure if that person is reading with understanding or maybe they are just browsing them, but if they read aloud, you are able to see that they are able to pronounce correctly, are they pausing where they are supposed to pause"?*

When asked the very same question, Mrs Zulu responded:

*"I think it helps a lot. It helps because it makes them familiar with reading. They get used to reading most of the time and it makes them confident. It gives them confidence to read in front of other pupils in my presence".*

From these responses, it is clear that the interviewed educators viewed reading aloud as an important approach in the teaching of reading. Educators argued, as illustrated by their responses, that this strategy helped them to model reading or to monitor the learners' fluency. They also noted that if a learner reads aloud well, that means that the learner understands. While the educators were convinced that this is the best approach to teach reading, scholars in the field have raised doubts about this approach. For instance, Eskey (2002) makes a distinction between reading aloud and reading. He decries the issue of reading aloud as it is about converting written language to spoken language. He suggests that this reliance on reading aloud does little to facilitate the teaching of reading and comprehension. He notes that sometimes a person reading aloud is so worried about the correct pronunciation of words, that he or she does not pay attention to what the text means. Eskey's (2002) observations are quite accurate in that during the lesson observations, it was clear that reading out loud had very little positive impact in teaching the learners how to read. As observed in the lesson captured above, simply reading out loud and explaining a particular word to learners without in-depth engagement cannot be considered effective teaching of reading. Additionally, Eskey (2002)

defines reading as acquiring information from a written or printed text and relating it to what you already know to construct a meaning for the text as whole. This definition problematizes the actions by the educators as learners were not really made to understand the text therefore highlighting the already established argument that the educators had a limited understanding of what the teaching of reading entails, which resulted in inappropriate strategies being employed.

### ❖ Questioning

This study also found that educators relied on questioning as a strategy for teaching. Learners were asked questions throughout the lessons. The educators argued as will be demonstrated by some of the responses, that using questions helps prevent boredom. There are some scholars who are in support of this strategy. For instance, Cotton (2001) argues that one of the aims of classroom questioning by educators, is that of developing interest and motivating learners to become actively involved in lessons. This means questions can be effective in ensuring that learners are actively involved in a lesson. Educators were also convinced that this is the best strategy. When Mrs Mkhize was asked during the interview why she was using this strategy, she responded as follows:

*"I don't want them feeling bored you know. I want them to use their own experience about the life situation when they are reading things. Some of these things they know. It's not about them coming to know when they are reading only. It's like their everyday life situation".*

Mrs Mkhize's response suggests that using questions that will force learners to draw on their experience will ensure that learners are actively involved in their lessons and are motivated during the lesson. While the other educators were also convinced that this was the best strategy, some scholars in the field of sociolinguistics and literacy development have raised doubts about it. For instance, Eskey (2002) argues that most educators take the reading process for granted and go directly to the creation of a related product like asking learners to answer comprehension questions orally or in writing without first ensuring that learners understand what they have read. Pardo (2004) argues that that implies allowing learners in their interaction with text to use their background knowledge, previous experience, information in the text, and the stance taken by the learner in relation to the text. Eskey (2002) argues that these activities such as asking learners to answer questions, test reading

but do not teach it. This suggests that focusing on asking questions could be a result of the limited understanding of what it entails to teach and promote reading. During class observations, educators asked questions even before ensuring that learners understood the texts.

Another aspect with regard to the use of questions was the fact that educators asked questions with no consideration of construct validity of the questions asked and as well as the cognitive level of questions. For example, if we look at questions that were asked during Mrs Ndlovu's lesson, she asked:

*"What does the word 'shore' mean? ", 'Give me a word that is an adjective in the first line. ", "Give me a word that is an adverb in the second sentence. "*

These questions suggest that the educator believes that asking these types of questions will help learners to understand the passage. This type of practice is in opposition to the views of Cotton (2001) and other scholars in the field of teaching and learning, who believe that educators need to consider the type and level of questions that they ask learners. For instance, Cotton (2001) argues that questions at a higher cognitive level are less effective with primary level learners, especially those in disadvantaged contexts . He goes on to say that " increasing the use of higher cognitive questions produces superior learning gains for learners above the primary grades and particularly for secondary learners" (Cotton, 2001, p. 4). This view is supported by Pretorius (2002), in the South African context, who argues that asking literal questions does not help much in helping learners develop meaning-making skills because it does not require the processing of text at a deeper level. From the scholars cited, it becomes clear that when asking questions, educators should have a mixture of lower and higher grade questions. This was absent in the lessons presented by the educators. The dominance of the two strategies highlighted above shows not only a limited understanding of what it entails to teach reading, it also shows that educators were not taking into account the contextual realities of learners, which Tatum (2008) decries as being among the key reasons for the failure of schools to prepare underprivileged learners. This aspect will be revisited at a later point in this study.

Apart from being limited to poor questioning, the study also found that educators relied on questions that were provided in the textbook. The educators would ask a question and learners had to respond. It seemed that educators understood their role as that of asking questions drawn directly from the text and having learners respond according to the guide.

One aspect that seemed to be missing in all lessons which scholars in the field have written extensively on was that of learners generating their questions in order to interact with the text. This is what Salinger and Fleischman (2005) refer to as the *Questioning the Author (QtA)* strategy. Palinscar and Brown (1984) earlier referred to Reciprocal Teaching which is aimed at helping learners to focus on main ideas and providing a check on their present understanding of what they are reading. What is significant in this strategy is that learners themselves generate questions that are prompted by the passage they have read and also respond to these as a group. This encourages them to be actively involved. It therefore becomes a two-way process. Regrettably, all the lessons observed did not provide learners with this opportunity. It was more about educators asking questions and learners responding. On completion of reading the passage, learners were then asked to answer comprehension questions on the passage as a classroom activity or homework. When asked as to why they asked questions from the text book, the participants responded by suggesting that the questions from the texts would assist the learners in understanding the reading process more effectively, an obviously limited response as already shown. These findings highlighted here are consistent with other international studies. For example, when investigating the method of teaching comprehension by educators in secondary schools through asking questions, Sunggingwati and Nguyen (2013), in the context of Indonesia, discovered that educators were heavily dependent on questions provided in the textbook. Learners had to answer those questions without any new questions from the educator him/herself, or from the learners in the classroom. Eskey (2002, p. 8) aptly captures the problem with this approach from educators when noting that “These activities [drawing questions from textbooks] test reading but do not teach it, and this contributes little to improving any learners’ reading performance”(Eskey, 2002, p. 8).

#### **4.1.3 Theme 2: Inadequate resourcing and the limitations this presents in the teaching and promotion of reading.**

This study found that inadequate resourcing (lack of access to libraries and reading material) does create problems when teaching and promoting reading. The educators who were selected for this study all teach in schools that are situated in a rural area where poverty and unemployment rates are high. Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) point out that schools in Africa tend to be framed by disadvantage: schools have limited physical resources, overcrowded classrooms and inadequate supplies of learning materials and books. Out of the five schools

that were part of the study, only one had a library. This was both observed and confirmed by the participants in the study. Gardiner (2008) notes that there are very few books, magazines or newspapers in rural communities, and there are no libraries. Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) point out that in South Africa, only twenty- seven % of schools have libraries. This impacts negatively on the teaching and promotion of reading, and ultimately the provision of quality education, because the non-availability of libraries does not provide a conducive environment for effective teaching and the promotion of reading. Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) further note that schools need to have functional libraries in order to provide learners with easy access to print material. This is especially more important for learners in rural communities who come from homes which do not provide an environment that is conducive to literacy development. Additionally, Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) point out that promoting reading by way of books and magazines is beyond the means of many parents in South African rural schools. This study found similar challenges in the contexts visited as highlighted by Pretorius and Ribbens (see discussion below).

Coupled with the non-availability of libraries, is an inadequate supply of reading material for both intensive and extensive reading. Pretorius (2002) points out that in South Africa, many learners go through primary and high school without ever having had their own book to use for their content subjects, let alone access to a wide variety of texts for pleasure reading. Krashen (2004) has also noted the relationship between a ready supply of books in the classroom, time set aside for reading, and the amount and breadth of reading. Four of the five schools that were visited had a dire shortage of reading material. For instance, in Miss Cele's class where *Animal Farm* was used as a text, there were learners with no books in front of them. It was a normal practice to have learners sharing books. When questioned on the availability of books, Miss Cele responded:

*"We don't have literature books. So what I requested from the learners earlier on in order to meet the challenge in term one, was that they buy the book Animal Farm. So that's the book that everybody will use. Some of them were able to afford it, others could not".*

This did not only apply to literature books. When asked if she had enough textbooks, Miss Cele had this to say:

*"We are facing a shortage of language books as well. I have between 20 and 40 books that I am using between two classes and the method that I have to use is they*

*pair up to do the work because sometimes it is not enough for me to give an exercise that they can complete in class. I do not have enough to give each learner individually. They have to share”.*

The above response suggests that Miss Cele uses the same book across the grades as a result of not having enough books. Not having enough books means that she cannot give learners homework. The same applies when she has to teach *Animal Farm*. This is a text that has to do with the Russian revolution. This is a topic that is prescribed for Grade 11 history learners in South Africa and yet learners in Grade 10 who have serious deficits in terms of their reading abilities as evidenced by the systemic report by the South Africa Basic Education (2005), some of whom are not even enrolled for history, are expected to have no problem in understanding this text. While one understands that *Animal Farm* is not only about the Russian revolution as it also deals with issues of greed and discrimination, it is important to interrogate its appropriacy for Grade 10 English FAL learners. The shortage of books makes it difficult for Miss Cele to teach. She has to use this book across the grades without any consideration of the level of applicability. This sharing makes it difficult also for learners to interact with the text as confirmed by class observation where there were learners who did not even have a book in front them. This meant that as another learner was reading aloud, they had to just listen and not read. As Pardo (2004) pointed out, learners need to interact with the text if they are to understand. Learners, who are forced to listen to a text being read aloud as a result of the shortage of books, are denied the opportunity for meaningful interaction with the text.

Another important aspect that became evident through the data generation process was that the lack of available reading material also affected the manner in which reading was promoted in schools. The only way that the educators could promote reading was through the use of newspapers and magazines. The situation was worse when it came to materials for extensive reading. For instance, when I asked Mrs Mazibuko if there are any strategies she was using to teach and promote reading, she responded:

*“Yes, we got lots of newspapers. I get them from home and use in class. They just read if it is a reading period. I give them local newspapers. They will choose the stories that they find interesting”.*

Mrs Ndlovu also responded to the same question by saying:

*"I encourage them to read for themselves magazines and newspapers. I sometimes ask them to summarize the stories they have read"*

Clearly, these educators relied on the use of newspapers articles in order to promote reading. While the use of newspapers and magazines has a role to play in the promotion of reading, it is still limiting in a sense that Krashen (2004) defines extensive reading as free voluntary reading where learners read what they want to. A large body of research (including Bamford & Day, 2004 and Mason, 2003) also agrees with this particular definition. This implies that learners must be exposed to a wide variety of texts so that they can choose what they want to read. It was clear that the learners in the schools visited were not being exposed to a wide variety of texts. This implies that learners did not have a choice in terms of which material to read. They had to make do with what was given to them without consideration to their own preferences. Worthy and Broaddus (2001) suggest that effective extensive reading time must make it possible for learners to have a wide variety of reading texts based on their interests and comfort levels. Relying on newspapers does not provide learners with access to a wide variety of texts. This does not in any way suggest that newspapers have no role to play in the promotion of reading. Perhaps some learners may prefer to read newspapers, however, the unavailability of resources creates a problem for the teaching and promotion of reading in that educators do not have enough resources at their disposal. Tatum (2006) argues that learners must be provided with texts that they can both enjoy and also liberate them from their environments of disadvantage. In the schools visited, the limitation of resources resulted in learners having very little access to crucial material for their own development.

It is of utmost importance to note that the educators interviewed are working under severe conditions of disadvantage, including the educator who at least had a library in the school. One must therefore commend these educators for promoting reading to the best of their abilities under these difficult circumstances. Providing the learners with newspapers seemed like the only practical way of ensuring that learners had something to read. Pretorius and Mampuru (2007), argue that the quality of any education system depends largely on the availability of books. This is important because it points out the importance of books in the hope of improving the reading skills of learners. Schools and educators cannot foster a love for reading if there is no reading culture in these schools. Access to books will assist the schools and educators to establish that reading culture. Creating a culture of reading in this context is also important because the majority of learners in the schools visited come from families that have no access to books, making the development of their reading skills

absolutely vital. It was therefore clear that the non-availability of books in these schools was seriously hampering the teaching and promotion of reading.

#### **4.1.4 Theme 3: Selection of text**

Continuing on the above point, this study also found that educators were relying on passages taken from prescribed textbooks instead of selecting texts that are appropriate for their contexts. When examining the texts used by educators in their lessons, Mrs. Ndlovu used a passage taken from a textbook written by an American teenager, titled *Sea Glass*. Mrs Mazibuko used a passage also taken from a textbook titled '*Can social networking boost literacy skills?*' Mrs Mkhize used a passage from a textbook, titled, '*Another learner parent*'. Miss Cele used *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. It does seem that the educators only consider the content of the passage when selecting a text. While the content of the passage is important, David and Norazit (2000) argue that while familiarity with content is important, other aspects, like paragraph organisation, word choice and sentence structure, interest in the text, presentation of the text and motivation for reading the text should be taken into consideration when selecting a text. Much has been written about the importance of choosing appropriate texts (Rush, Ash, Saunders, Holschuh, & Ford; Tatum, 2006; Yusoff) when teaching reading. Tatum (2006) argues that a meaningful reading programme should include texts that encourage them to follow a positive life path and also help them resist non-productive behaviours. Although his focus was on African-American males, the points he raises are also relevant for South Africa, given the socio-economic backgrounds of most learners. Tatum (2006) argues that by selecting appropriate reading texts, educators can help engage African-American adolescent males with text, particularly those that have not learnt the skills, strategies, and knowledge that will lead to positive life outcomes. This illustrates the importance of selecting texts that are appropriate for learners when teaching reading. Tatum (2006) explains these empowering texts as those that move beyond just focusing on skill and strategy development, but also include a social, cultural, political, spiritual or economic focus. What is clear, given what the cited scholars are saying, is that a choice of text is much more complex than simply looking at the topic of the passage.

In South Africa, the compilation of lists of books to be used by educators is done by the National Department of Education. Educators have to choose books from this prescribed list of books, which limits the educators' choice of books. Given the fact that all educators observed relied on these books for teaching, this raises concerns with regard to the



appropriateness of texts that are prescribed for South African schools, given the diverse nature of the South African population. When I asked Mrs Mkhize as to whether or not learners' background is taken into consideration when selecting text for the lesson, she responded by saying:

*"Yes I do. Fortunately I was born in the rural area, so I understand their challenges".*

But when she was asked if she finds the material that she has in her disposal useful, given that learners are from a rural background, she responded by saying:

*"It's not about the rural background. It's about how you motivate your kids. If you are honest and look at the matric results, learners who are scoring high marks are those who are coming from deep rural areas. This is because they have people who motivate them".*

Clearly this educator does not think that background is an important factor in the selection of texts. She thinks that if learners are motivated enough they will have no problem reading the text. What this educator is saying is disputed by the available body of literature (Berardo, 2006; Rush et al.; Tatum, 2006) which puts the background of the learners as a starting point for any selection of texts.

When Mrs Zulu was asked this same question, she responded by saying:

*"Not always. Most of the time we ignore that fact. If I get a passage which I think they might be able to read, I don't think about where they come from. If it is something they are going to connect with easily. I don't think about their background".*

It does appear that most educators choose a text by only looking at the topic. If they feel that the topic is what they think learners can relate to, that text is selected. For instance, if a topic is about teenage pregnancy or love, that text gets chosen irrespective of the context of the text. Mrs Zulu chose a passage about love that was titled, *Sea Glass* written by an American teenager. Clearly these educators assumed that learners in a rural area will have no problem understanding that title. This is not denying that learners can relate to a text that talks about love, but selecting a text needs to go beyond just looking at the topic. Perhaps one should pose a question as to whether a teenager in America views and understands love the same way as a teenager in a deep rural area in South Africa would. Perhaps there is a universal

meaning of love. David and Norazit (2000) point out the importance of a culture-specific schema when selecting a text. It is not just about relating to background, it is about having texts that learners can relate to; that are connected to what they know. Of course we also know that it is important to expose learners to texts beyond their contexts.

Miss Cele used *Animal Farm* for Grade 10 as a text to teach reading. In terms of Circular S8 of 2014, *Animal Farm* is prescribed by the Department of Education for learners who are doing English as their home language. This book was used to teach reading in a rural school where learners are taught English as their second language. The assumption from the educator was that the learners' backgrounds did not matter when it comes to a selection of texts. Is *Animal Farm* thus an appropriate text for a Grade 10 FAL learner, particularly if the learner is in a rural area? Pardo (2004) points to the importance of learners' background knowledge when it comes to comprehending a text. In as much as the educator pointed out the shortage of texts, this does not negate the importance of selecting appropriate texts for learners. Stallworth, Gibbons, and Fauber (2006) point out that school districts create book lists, filled with canonical texts, but often adolescents assigned to read them do not feel connected to them. Franzak (2008) defines canonical texts as those gatekeeping texts, essential for making sure all learners have the cultural capital necessary to be successful in high-performing high schools and post-secondary institutions. This is perhaps true in South Africa where the DoE prescribes literature books for Grades 10-12. It is common in South Africa to have set works by William Shakespeare prescribed for all learners. This will also explain why Miss Cele decided to use this text in Grade 10. It is clear the selection of appropriate text for the teaching of reading is problematic.

#### **4.1.5 Theme 4: The Negative Impact of Examinations on Classroom Practices**

Another theme that emerged during the interviews was that of how educator practices are negatively influenced by assessment. From some of the responses given by educators to some of the questions, it was evident that examinations were foremost in their minds when teaching reading. This unfortunately impacted negatively on teaching and learning of reading. For instance when I asked Mrs Zulu how much time she spends on teaching reading, she responded:

*"I am going to be honest, we don't give much time to reading because most of the time we are rushing to paper 2 which is literature. Even in a week when you are supposed to include reading or something like that, we push paper 2 and we find that most of the time paper 1 and 3 lack behind because we are pushing paper 2".*

The follow-up question was whether this was also happening in Grade 10. She responded:

*"Yes, and also grade 11".*

This response is revealing in that it shows the depth of the impact of examinations on their teaching practices. Abrams et al. (2003) note that educators have responded to the pressure to improve test marks, particularly in high-stakes settings, by spending more classroom time preparing learners specifically for the State tests. This clearly also affected how educators teach in their classrooms in these rural schools.

Two things need to be noted from Mrs Zulu's response. Firstly, it is the fact that educators tend to neglect certain aspects of their work so as to complete the prescribed literature text with the learners. This perhaps emanates from the pressure exerted by the Department of Education to improve examination results. Menken (2006) notes that because of the high-stakes consequences and the challenges that are posed by these tests, educators are under considerable pressure to teach to the test. The second issue that must be noted from Mrs Zulu's response is her constant reference to a literature paper as Paper 2. This use of exam-related terms was not unique as other educators tended to use these terms frequently. For instance when I asked Mrs Mazibuko which aspect of English she enjoys teaching, she responded:

*"It's Paper 3."*

Paper 3 is the English First Additional Language examination paper that assesses creative writing in Grades 10-12. When I then asked Mrs. Mazibuko if there are any theories that might have influenced her teaching and promotion of reading, she responded:

*"Barrett's Taxonomy because they have to look at different types of questions so that they are able to answer all questions."*

This refers to Barrett's Taxonomy of Cognitive Difficulty of Questions. In terms of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Grades 10-12, this informs language educators when formulating questions for assessment purposes. This use of exam-

related terminology is indicative of the influence exerted by examinations on teaching. This practice was prevalent, especially amongst educators who also had a Grade 12 class. Miss Cele and Mrs Ndlovu, who do not teach Grade 12 classes, did not respond in exam-related terms.

It is clear from the above discussion that examinations impact on the educators' classroom practices, especially as it concerns the teaching of reading. Chisholm and Wildeman (2013) make a similar point when they argue that despite public pressure on the South African Government to examine and the widespread support for examinations, there is already anecdotal evidence that tests result in the narrowing of curricular aims and teaching to the test. This is no surprise as South Africa is known to have a high drop-out rate, especially in Grades 10-12. This is supported by Motala, Dieltiens, and Sayed (2009) when they point out that there is evidence of more learners in South Africa dropping out of school in Grades 10, 11 and 12. Whilst one does not dispute the educational value of assessment in education, it should be borne in mind that educators assess what has been taught. This implies that there should be teaching and learning that has taken place before an assessment. Teaching and learning should therefore inform assessment and not the other way round, as was apparent from the responses given by educators.

This is not unique to South Africa. A number of countries have fallen victim to this phenomenon. Abrams, Pedulla, and Madaus (2003) point out that much of the research on State testing programme addresses effects on what is taught and a common finding has been that educators report the giving of greater attention to tested areas. Findings in the studies by Hoffman, Assaf, and Paris (2001) confirmed the impact that Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) was having on educators and learners in Texas. They were affecting teaching and learning in negative ways and also contributed to the high drop-out rate.

#### **4.1.6. Theme 5: Lack of Professional Development.**

The successful teaching and promotion of reading requires that educators must be in possession of requisite skills to do the job. This means that on top of the qualifications educators have, they need to be involved in continuous professional development in order to sharpen their skills (Tatum, 2008). Most of the educators who were interviewed had between nineteen and thirty years of experience in the teaching profession. Only one had taught for a year. It was clear that these educators have never been to any professional development

workshop that focused on how to teach reading. When Miss Cele (who only had one year teaching experience) was asked whether she had had any kind of training on how to teach reading, she responded:

*"No we have not. Besides what you call my practicals for my qualification itself, I have not had a workshop I went for a grade 10, 11 and 12 training on reading".*

Given that Miss Cele only has one year teaching experience, one would accept that her limited professional experience explains the lack of professional training. When asking Mrs Mazibuko (who has nineteen years of experience) the same question, she responded with a "No"

Two other educators also gave the same answer. This is worrying, given that South Africa has in recent years been undergoing a number of curriculum changes. Some professional development would have been necessary to help educators cope with these changes. This prompted the question as to why they have not had any training in all these years. Mrs Mazibuko responded by saying:

*"I assume maybe they (Department of Basic Education) think we know because we are English educators. They tell you about policies. Even then, we still need new strategies especially because things have changed now. We need workshops".*

This was confirmed by Mrs Zulu (who has twenty-nine years of experience) when she responded to the same question by saying:

*"I really do not know. Maybe they assume that people (learners) can read. I really don't know, but from asking that question now, we have never been trained on how to teach reading".*

It is clear from these responses that the last time educators had any form of training was when they were still learners. This became clear during the lessons observed as educators relied on only two strategies and the lesson plans presented were poor. This is despite a number of curriculum changes have taken place in South Africa since then. Two things need to be noted from Mrs Mazibuko and Mrs Zulu's responses. They both agree that there has not been any kind of professional intervention that capacitated them on how to teach reading over the years. There is also another assumption that English educators in the FET phase know how to teach reading. This does not take into consideration the fact that these educators have been

in the teaching profession for more than nineteen years. Tatum (2008) argues for an ongoing professional development in the teaching of reading. Given that these schools service rural communities coming from backgrounds with no reading culture, these schools need to have educators who are well-versed with the latest strategies on how to teach and promote reading. Only Mrs Mkhize had some kind of professional development workshop on reading. This was organized by a Non-Governmental Organisation, which again proves the point that the Department of Basic Education has not conducted any professional development opportunities for educators. From the findings presented here, it can therefore be concluded that there are many challenges faced by schools when it comes to the teaching and promotion of reading.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented and analyzed findings by focusing on five themes that were generated from data. These themes were limited understanding of reading, inadequate resourcing and limitations presented when educators teach and promote reading, the selection of text, which is then followed by the negative impact that examinations have on classroom practices and finally, a discussion on the lack of professional development. It would appear that educators do have a limited understanding of what it means to teach reading. It also emerged that this limited understanding impacted on the educators in Grade 10 when teaching reading. Reading aloud and questioning seemed to be more dominant. It was clear that teaching reading in these schools was a challenging exercise. These are schools that are working with learners who come from very disadvantaged background. This was complicated by the fact that schools did not have enough resources and the department was not coming to educators' rescue by equipping them with new strategies to teach reading. One needs to point out though that these educators were trying under very difficult circumstances. The use of newspapers is perhaps an example of that innovation. My observations in these schools and responses from educators have serious implications for other rural schools in South Africa. In the next chapter I will discuss these implications of this study by highlighting how the findings of this study respond to the research questions and thereafter by providing implications for further research and practice.

## CHAPTER 5

### Findings and recommendations

#### 5.0 Introduction

The intention of this study was to explore the practices and strategies of Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators when teaching and promoting reading.

Chapter 5 concludes the study and here the key insights that have contributed to the field of reading in secondary schools are examined. Each question together with the findings will be presented in order to show how each of the research questions were addressed in this study. This will be followed by a discussion on the implications of the study for policy, research and practice, by highlighting a few recommendations.

#### 5.1 Discussion of findings

There were essentially four questions that this study sought to answer. These research questions were motivated by a need to understand how educators teach and promote reading in secondary schools that are located in disadvantaged, rural contexts. The research questions are addressed as follows:

**Research Question 1: What do Grade 10 English First Additional Language Educators teaching in disadvantaged, rural schools consider as the teaching and promotion of reading?**

In chapter four it was indicated that educators seemed to have a limited understanding of what it means to teach reading. It became clear from the findings that educators saw the teaching of reading as being closely associated with language teaching and comprehension. Within this understanding, they focused on fluency. Rasinski et al. (2005) argue that reading fluency is about learning to decode words in a passage automatically and interpret those words in a meaningful manner when reading. In their attempt to focus on attainment of language skills, educators also focused on reading aloud and questioning. Rasinski et al. (2005) further point out that improved fluency leads to comprehension. Rasinski et al. (2005) are supported by Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, and Jenkins (2001) who propose recommendations for educators to include fluency as an indicator of reading. This implies that if you improve

fluency, you are simultaneously improving comprehension. This approach is flawed because it focuses on one aspect of reading and neglects others. It tells us that reading is understood by educators as being mainly for the purposes of language access. While this is useful, it is limiting in that it does not allow learners to see reading as being associated with fun and enjoyment. For instance, the educators said very little about how they ensured that learners enjoyed reading. Their approaches were mainly outdated. It seemed educators did not understand the complexities surrounding the teaching and promotion of reading. Teaching and promotion of reading is not just about linguistic competence and comprehension. It is actually more than that. For instance, educators need to also allow learners time to read books during their lessons. They also need not be pre-occupied with examinations as the findings reveal. Even the comprehension aspect that they mention has various dynamics. For instance Pardo (2004) regards comprehension as a process in which readers interact with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relation to the text in order to make meaning. This definition points out the complexities involved in the teaching of reading. Pardo (2004) also argues that comprehension is affected by a reader's culture, based on the degree to which it matches with the writer's culture or the culture espoused in the text. Eskey (2002) points out as a result of reading being a sociocultural practice, people read different texts for different purposes. Both the text and purposes are provided for by people's cultural practice. Serafini (2003) adds another dimension to this concept of reading when he points out that reading cannot be separated from the politics and power relations of everyday life in literature cultures. This implies that classroom practices should address cultural, political and historical issues and their impact on the lives of learners. It should aim to develop the learner's critical thinking skills. The scholars cited here point out some of the complexities of the reading process that educators tend to ignore.

**Research question 2: How do these Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators teach and promote reading in disadvantaged learning contexts?**

The observation of the lessons presented provided the researcher with a unique opportunity to see first-hand the actual strategies that are employed by educators when teaching and promoting reading and how these relate to certain theories. As noted in chapter four, two strategies were dominant when educators presented their lessons. Learners were asked to read the passage out aloud to the whole class. The question that arises is whether this reliance on two strategies is effective when teaching this to learners who are in Grade 10. This is more



important as many scholars have pointed out the importance of using different strategies when teaching reading. For instance, when Lawrence, Rabinowitz, and Perna (2008) considered reading instructions used by educators, they discovered that educators use a wide variety of instructional strategies to teach reading, learners engage in a wide array of literacy practices. In their integrative review of teaching reading, Commeyras and Inyega (2007) also point out different methods used by educators when teaching reading. Educators who were part of the study did not use a wide variety of methods. Worthy and Broaddus (2001) argue that while the practice of asking learners to read aloud has been commonly used with basal readers, it is not recommended because it focuses upon the accurate identification of words rather than the construction of meaning. Be that as it may, reading aloud featured prominently in the lessons observed during this study.

Another strategy that educators used was that of asking questions. As noted in chapter four, this is a strategy that many educators are using in their classrooms. Erdogan and Campbell (2008) argue that if educators' questions are used appropriately, they can engage learners by focusing their attention, and promote translation and processing of instructional objectives. What was happening in these classrooms was similar to what Sunggingwati and Nguyen (2013) discovered in Indonesian secondary schools where the educators asked lower order questions taken from the textbook. Their focus was on language skills, which, as pointed out earlier, appears to be a traditional approach. It was observed that often, in asking questions, some educators did not consider reasons why questions were asked and the cognitive levels of those questions. This means that questions were asked just for the sake of asking questions. This happened in most of the lessons observed. It would immediately be followed by the educator asking learners to answer the questions following on from the passage. Salinger and Fleischman (2005) argue for an approach that encourages the learners to be actively involved in constructing meaning as one way of making learners interact with the text. What is clear with the use of the two strategies used by educators is that it focused on certain aspects of the reading process while neglecting others.

In terms of the promotion of reading, this study found the use of newspapers and magazines to be two main strategies used by educators when trying to promote reading. During interviews, all educators pointed out that they bring newspapers to school so that learners can read. In other cases learners would bring these newspapers to school. Whilst this may be useful in terms of encouraging learners to read, it is still limited in a sense that it does not actually give learners an opportunity to read a variety of texts. As many scholars have pointed

out, the importance of extensive reading in promoting reading is critical. They all view extensive reading as a way of providing learners with an opportunity to read what they want to read. This implies that there is a need to expose learners to a wide variety of texts to choose from. From the responses given by educators, it was clear that learners are not exposed to a wide variety of texts because there is a reliance on newspapers to promote reading. Tatum raises doubts regarding this approach because he speaks about the importance of selecting texts that matter when promoting reading. This study found that this reliance is caused by the unavailability of resources. Pretorius (2002) argues that the problem of having no books is doubly acute for learners who study through a medium of an acquired language in South Africa, because they come from a largely oral culture, not a reading culture. This means that they have very little experience of the printed word and of storybooks before they start school. Lukhele (2013) also makes a similar point when she points out that reading for pleasure is negatively affected by the lack of reading material. This means that learners' experience with the printed word is severely limited. It was also clear that these schools did not have a reading culture. This is because, even though few of them had a reading period that is time tabled, it was hardly used for reading purposes because educators use it to teach their subjects. This again shows that educators are actually pre-occupied with curriculum coverage and see no significance in having a reading period when they prefer to prioritize their subjects.

**Research question 3: Why do these Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators teach and promote reading in the way they do?**

From the interviews, lesson plans and observations, it was clear that educators have received no professional support in terms of developing modern ways of teaching and promoting reading. They are of the opinion that they teach this way because of their training. Reliance on two strategies to teach reading proves that educators have not been exposed to other innovative and well-researched strategies of teaching and promoting reading. For instance, when asked why they use reading aloud as a strategy, one of the educators responded by saying that it helps to see if learners are reading fluently. For these educators, it is important that learners are able to pronounce words correctly at a reasonable pace. In other words, given their responses, if learners read aloud perfectly, that indicates that they are proficient in their reading. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, this is a limited understanding as it does not take into consideration all other complexities in the reading process. As a result of these complexities, different approaches need to be adopted when teaching and promoting reading.

These approaches should take context into consideration. Serafini (2003) makes an important point in stating that instructional practices should be constructed in classrooms by the educators themselves. They are not predetermined or mandated. Clearly, lack of professional development is impacting negatively on the educators' ability to teach reading. The same applies to the promotion of reading. It is possible that educators do not understand the benefits that are associated with extensive reading; hence they attach no significance to it. These reasons could be somehow related to the first research question on what educators think is implied by reading.

**Research question 4: What role, if any, does context play in the way in which educators teach and promote reading?**

This study has found that context plays an extremely important role in the way reading is taught and promoted. To begin with, the many learners had to share books as there were inadequate books available for the class. At one school, the learners had no books in front of them. This unacceptable lack of resources negatively impacts on the way educators teach and promote reading. The shortage of books also implies that learners cannot be given homework as not every learner will have a copy of the book. This means that educators only have to make use of the time that is allocated to them in the school time table. One of the educators mentioned that they spent much of the time teaching prescribed set works. This is because they are forced to read these set works with the learners in class, which then leaves little time for in-depth analysis of the text. If they spend most of the time on set works, it means other aspects receive little attention. This is different when compared to other studies in former Model C contexts, where learners have access to libraries and always have a book to read. While the availability of libraries and books does not automatically lead to reading, it must be pointed out that lack of these resources is an impediment to promoting reading. Ribbens and Pretorius (2005) noted a high level of reading proficiency in a former Model C primary school where reading and books were an important part of the school routine. This also means that educators can also give learners homework and will have more time for other aspects of reading.

Secondly, the study also found that learners were often given books that were above their levels of competency due to a shortage of books. For instance one educator was teaching *Animal Farm* in Grade 10, not because this was needed but because this was what was available to her. This places learners at an incredible disadvantage as they have to deal with a

text that may not be appropriate for them. Thirdly, educators were encouraging learners to bring newspapers and to read newspapers at home. While one concedes that this is debatable and may have been useful for the learners to be up-to-date with information, it could not have done much to encourage learners to see reading as fun and enjoyable, as they were reading content which may not have been helpful for them.

Fourth, there was more focus on testing than on reading. Learners were being prepared for examinations as opposed to being encouraged to read. This study and other studies in rural schools also found that some of the educators were not qualified English educators. This is caused by the fact that most of the schools visited had very low enrolment figures. This means that these schools are forced to have less staff members as a result of the Department of Education's redeployment policy. If a qualified educator is redeployed to another school, the principal of that school is forced to find someone from the staff establishment to take over. This leads to educators who are not qualified teaching certain subjects being requested to take over. Clearly this shows that the contexts of these schools play a definitive role in how educators teach. Nkambule et al. (2011) point out that education in rural areas continues to face a unique set of problems due to, among other factors, the diverse geographic location of the schools, diverse learner backgrounds and diverse learning styles. Masinire et al. (2014) also point to the poor culture of teaching and learning, the inadequate supply of qualified educators and a high level of educator burn-out, as some of the challenges that affect teaching and learning in rural schools. Much of what was found in this study was similar to the findings of these cited studies. This suggests that rurality does impact on the teaching and promotion of reading.

## **5.2. Implications and Recommendations**

The above findings suggest that the teaching and promotion of reading in secondary schools located in disadvantaged, rural contexts have to be prioritized by all stakeholders if there is any hope to improve the quality of education for all South African learners. This study has wide-ranging implications for schools that are located in disadvantaged contexts in terms of policy and practice. Based on the findings therefore, the study recommends the following:

### **5.2.1 Implications for policy**

- The Department of Basic Education needs to revisit the policy on the redeployment of educators as it has been shown on a number of occasions that schools that are

negatively affected by redeployment are those in rural areas, where the majority of people reside. This study found that educators are forced to teach from Grades 8-12 because the school does not qualify for an additional teacher. This means that schools that have qualified English educators force those educators to teach all the Grades. Those schools which do not have a qualified English educator are forced to appoint someone within the school establishment to teach English, irrespective of his/her qualifications. All learners must have access to qualified educators irrespective of where they live. This is an issue of social justice.

- The Department of Basic Education also needs to reconsider their resource provisioning policy as it is clear that rural schools are neglected in terms of resources. These communities need to be prioritized by the Department of Basic Education. The Department also needs to prioritize the issue of providing schools with libraries and books. The availability of meaningful reading material to all learners, especially those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds is crucial for the provision of quality education in South Africa

### **5.2.2 Implications for practice**

- The Department of Education needs to take seriously the issue of continuous professional development on the teaching and promotion of reading for educators in secondary schools. This professional development should provide educators with a deeper understanding of the teaching and promotion of reading at both theoretical and practical level.
- Educators need to be involved in the selection of meaningful reading material for their schools. This implies that they have to know what is considered as meaningful texts

### **5.2.3 Implications for research**

Conducting this study enabled a deeper understanding of the issues around the teaching and promotion of reading. One of the limitations of this study was the fact that it was a small scale study focusing on rurality. Based on the data collected, the following areas for future research are proposed:

- A study exploring how English first Additional Language educators teach and promote reading in well-resourced schools. This will assist in making comparisons and determine the differences if any in terms of practices adopted by educators in these schools.

- A study exploring practices and strategies of educators in secondary schools when teaching and promoting reading, focusing on a larger sample.
- A study exploring the experiences of the learners in secondary schools with regard to strategies used by educators to teach reading.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

- Educators need to familiarize themselves with current research on teaching reading
- They also need to work as a team in identifying the level of their learners' reading abilities so as to be able to employ strategies that are appropriate for their learners.
- Educators need to seek innovative ways of fostering a culture of reading in their schools.
- Schools should allocate time for extensive reading in their composite timetables.
- School management should find innovative ways of ensuring that learners have reading material.
- Schools should also ensure that there is staff development programmes aimed at capacitating educators with research-based instructional methods of teaching reading.
- Department of Basic Education should prioritise the issue of reading in terms of both professional development and resource provisioning

### **5.4 Lessons to be learnt from the study**

Conducting this study has provided the researcher with a deeper understanding regarding the teaching and promotion of reading. This realisation occurred through observations, interviews and document analysis during the process of data collection and coupled with reading extensively on the subject. The knowledge gained through this work in terms of reading means and current well-researched strategies on how to teach and promote reading will benefit all the educators in the area of study.

In terms of conducting the research itself, it was often difficult to collect data due to unavailability of some of the participants. Educators were busy with examinations and therefore had no time for class observations. The initial intention to interview ten educators from five schools did not happen as these schools had only one educator teaching Grade 10 and finally only five educators were available as participants. Two more schools were included which was originally planned for and only one of the two

schools allowed me to conduct research after the school holidays. This delayed the data generation process and interfered with the initial schedule.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to explore the practices and strategies of Grade 10 English First Additional Language educators when teaching and promoting reading in secondary schools in disadvantaged, rural contexts, and the factors that inform their practices. The findings of this study suggest that educators do not have a common understanding of what it means to teach reading. It was also found that reading aloud and educator questioning were the most commonly used strategies when teaching reading. There were a few instances where prediction and activation of background knowledge were used. Texts used were taken from prescribed textbooks and educators chose a topic that they believed learners could relate to. Educators relied on newspapers for extensive reading. This resulted from the unavailability of reading material in these schools. Educators have not attended any professional development activity on teaching and promoting reading ever since they started working.

It is hoped that this study has contributed meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge, by highlighting the need for secondary school educators who work in disadvantaged contexts, to have a deeper understanding of what it means to teach and promote reading and the implications thereof, in terms of their classroom practices. This also points to the need for more professional development opportunities for secondary school educators on teaching and promoting reading. This knowledge and competence, however, will be of no importance without meaningful and appropriate reading material.

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**UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL**  
INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

18 August 2014

Mr S Magutshwa (962115721)  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0845/014M

Project title: Exploring the practices and strategies of Grade 10 English First additional language secondary school teachers in the teaching and promotion of reading: A case of Umbumbulu circuit

Dear Mr Magutshwa,

**Retrospective – Expedited Approval**

With regards to your application for ethical clearance dated 29 May 2014. The documents submitted have been accepted by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and **FULL APPROVAL** for the protocol has been granted.

Any further violation of the UKZN Code of Ethical Conduct will result in a disciplinary process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenika Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Thabo Msibi  
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele  
cc School Administrator: Mr Thabo Mthembu

**Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**

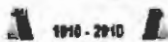
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100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

FOURTH CAMPUS IS: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville



Faculty of Education  
College of Humanities  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
(Edgewood Campus).

The Principal  
NAME OF SCHOOL  
PLACE

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Sithembiso Magutshwa. I am a Masters of Education candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus, and South Africa.

I would like to request your permission to conduct research at your school in order to establish what strategies are used by English First Additional Language educators in secondary schools in order to teach and promote reading. My research will focus on the Grade 10 educators as they are at the entry level of the FET phase. Data collection methods to be used will include lesson observation, document analysis (lesson plans and texts) and will conclude with a semi-structured interview.

Please note that:

- A fictitious name will be used instead of real school name.
- Participants' confidentiality is guaranteed as their contribution will not be attributed to them but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview will last for approximately about 30 minutes and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by participants will not be used against them, and the collected data will be used for the purpose of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- The selected participants have the right to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. They will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- The research aims at knowing the practices of Secondary school educators when teaching and promoting reading.
- Their involvement is for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

Your positive response to this request is be highly appreciated

Yours Faithfully

S Magutshwa

I can be contacted at:

Email: [sithembisoma@yahoo.com](mailto:sithembisoma@yahoo.com)  
Cell: 0823329803

My supervisor is Dr. Thabo Msibi who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: [msibi@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:msibi@ukzn.ac.za)

(Tel) 0312603686 (Cell) 0724227261

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION (Principal)

I..... (Full names of principal) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating as a school in the research project.

We understand that we are at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should we so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL

DATE

.....

.....

Education, College of Humanities,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Edgewood Campus,

Dear Participant

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Sithembiso Magutshwa. I am a Masters of Education candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa.

I am interested in learning about secondary school educators' practices when teaching and promoting reading.. Your school is one of my case studies. To gather the information, I am interested in observing one of your lessons, look at lesson plans and texts used and also asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 30 minutes and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at knowing the practices of Secondary school educators when teaching and promoting reading.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Voice Recorder		

I can be contacted at:

Email: sithembisoma@yahoo.com

Cell: 0823329803

My supervisor is Dr. Thabo Msibi who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: msibi@ukzn.ac.za

(Tel) 0312603686 (Cell) 0724227261

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

**DECLARATION (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 the research project.**

**I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.**

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

.....

.....

## **OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

1. What strategies are used by educators when teaching reading?
2. How much time is spent on teaching reading?
3. What texts are used by educators when teaching reading?
4. Does the educator take context into consideration when teaching reading?

## **INTERVIEW ONE SCHEDULE**

1. How many years have you been teaching English?
2. What made you choose English as a subject?
3. What are your qualifications in the subject?
4. Do you enjoy teaching English?
5. Which aspect of English do you enjoy teaching? Why?

## **INTERVIEW TWO SCHEDULE QUESTIONS**

**Time Frame:** 28 August- 23 October 2014

1. What do you think teaching reading entails? What do you understand by this?
2. What strategies do you use when teaching and promoting reading?
3. Why did you use the strategies you used in your lesson?
4. Are there any theories which you have used to teach and promote reading?
5. What are the challenges you encounter when teaching reading?
6. Do you take into account learners experiences and cultures when planning your lessons and selecting your teaching tools?
7. How often and how much time do you dedicate to teaching reading? Why?
8. Do you have enough reading material to use?
9. Do you find the material available useful?
10. Given the under privileged context of learners, what actions do you take to ensure that the text selected is designed to support and empower your learners?
11. How do you ensure that your learners understand the texts they reading?
12. Do you draw on the cultural experiences of your learners when selecting readings?
13. What are you qualifications in the subject?



14. Have you had any training on how to teach and promote reading?
15. What on the job professional development opportunities have you had on the teaching of reading?
16. How often do you have these professional development opportunities?
17. Which aspects of reading were addressed by the professional development opportunities you attended?
18. Were you able to implement them in the classroom? Why?