

**TEACHING METHODS USED BY GRADE ONE EDUCATORS WHILST
DEVELOPING READING SKILLS**

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Of the requirement for the degree of Masters in Education
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DECLARATION

I Pinky Princess Mhlongo declare that this dissertation entitled “teaching methods used by Grade One educators whilst developing reading skills” is my own work and has never been in the past submitted for any degree.

Signature

Date.....

(Researcher)

Signature.....

Date.....

(Supervisor)

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I would like to pass a special recognition, to the All Mighty my Creator and my Mentor Who has given me strength for engaging in this study, there were lots of obstacles in my life but I was given guidance by Him.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to:

The two most important people in my life, who are my reason for living: my daughter Enhle and my son Khono who will be only 17months by the end of this study. I have cheated myself of some precious moments with them but it has been for a good course. A mothers' love will always be deep within her heart and so it is with me.

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ABSTRACT

This study is an exploration of teaching methods used by Grade One educators whilst developing reading skills at a school in Durban. The researcher has positioned herself within an Interpretivist paradigm in order to approach this study.

It is a case study which has been conducted specifically at one primary school in Durban with three Grade One educators as participants. The researcher targeted this group in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population and there is no attempt to generalise the findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000). Purposive sampling has been used because it focusses on participants who are information-rich, based on the purpose of the study (Maree, 2007). Cohen *et al* (2000) argues that purposive sampling is mostly suitable for small scale research and it is less complicated to set up and is considerably less expensive.

This study aims to gain an in-depth knowledge and greater understanding of teaching methods used by Grade One educators to develop reading skills. It has been conducted within the qualitative framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) with interviews, observations and document analysis as research instruments for data collection. This study attempts to understand the activities, actions and operations performed by participants and to reveal their motives, goals and instrumental conditions respectively on teaching methods of developing reading skills (Mwanza & Engestrom, 2003). The study has employed an Activity Theory as a theoretical frame work. The main issues which are discussed are the teaching methods used by Grade One educators in developing reading skills as well as the manner in which these methods are used in developing the reading skills. The findings of this study could be used to guide the school management team, school governing body and the educators to compile a set of guidelines on the effective methods of teaching to develop reading skills within the context of this study

CHAPTER ONE

Introductory chapter

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives the background to the study with an explanation of how the researcher came to the idea to conduct it, its focus and purpose, the research question, its objectives as well as the overview of the study.

1.2. Background

With the first South African democratic elections of 1994 came many changes in education for the majority of South African citizens regardless of race, gender and class. This resulted in an introduction of the South African School's Act of 1996, which made all schools self-governing. Two policies, the Language-in-Education Policy and the Norms and Standards Regarding Language Policy, were announced. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2002), the Language-in-Education Policy Document should be seen as part of a continuous process by which policy for language-in-education is being developed as part of the national language plan which includes all sectors of society.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa has provided the basis for curriculum transformation and development in South Africa (DoE, 2002). It was recommended that, in the foundation Phase, where children learn to read and write, their home language should be used for teaching and learning where possible. The government has adopted a multilingual language policy that gives recognition to eleven languages: English, Afrikaans and the nine indigenous languages. This study focuses on the teaching methods for reading which are used by Grade One educators whilst developing reading skills.

Reading is an important aspect in the teaching of any language. Therefore teaching methods which are used whilst developing reading skills should be explored. Van Staden and Howie (2008) argue that the PROGRESS IN INTERNATIONAL READING LITERACY STUDY (PIRLS) is a systemised vehicle to derive nationwide empirical data that can be used to inform decisions on curriculum and language policy. South African researchers have added some questions to the one that the PIRLS aims to answer.

These questions seek to delve into how young children are taught to read, and what things are needed to improve the reading literacy of young children in South Africa.

Van Staden and Howie (2008) argues that PIRLS is concerned with the implementation of the reading literacy curriculum in the Foundation Phase (Long & Zimmerman, 2008). Long and Zimmerman, 2008 further state that, if one considers the poor level of reading literacy development displayed by South African learners in the PIRLS, it is necessary to consider reasons for this in order to assist in the development of targeted interventions aimed at addressing the improvement of learners' reading literacy at all levels of the education system. In 2011 South African learners from Grade One to Grade Seven were introduced to the Annual National Assessment in Literacy and Mathematics. The analysis of the results shows a very poor performance in reading (DoE). This raises concerns about the state and level of literacy throughout South Africa.

1.3. Focus and purpose

This is a case study that seeks to explore the teaching methods that are used by Grade One educators whilst developing reading skills in a school in Durban.

1.4. Research Questions

The following are the research questions which will help disclose the situation:

- What teaching methods do Grade One educators use in developing reading skills?
- How do Grade One educators use these teaching methods in developing reading skills?
- Why do Grade One educators use these teaching methods in developing reading skills?

1.5. Rationale for this study

Interest in this study has been generated and influenced by the changes in educational policies, and the problems encountered by Grade Three educators of this school with the reading incompetency of learners as well as the general poor level of learners' performance (DoE, 2008). The visits by language departmental officials for learner assessment in reading have yielded dissatisfaction. The above experience has therefore influenced the inception of this study. As a Grade Four language teacher who has been engaged in the language teaching for the past six years, the researcher has noticed that the standard of learners' performances in reading is declining year after year. It then becomes important to explore the teaching methods used by Grade One educators in developing reading skills to understand why

reading competencies have declined in other grades. Grade One was chosen because that is where learning and teaching begins.

Having looked at the concerns raised about the poor reading performance of the learners in this school, the researcher was then tasked by the School Management Team (SMT) to explore the teaching methods used by Grade One educators whilst developing the reading skills. She was a relevant choice for this task because she is one of the Foundation Phase managers. Therefore, this study may help the school in taking an informed decision in guiding the school management team, school governing body as well as educators to compile a set of guidelines on the effective methods of teaching to develop reading skills. This study is significant in that it may also inform the department of education of the challenges educators are facing with regards to the teaching methods of reading. The Department might assist by giving out more workshops specifically addressing the issues of teaching methods of reading.

1.6. Objectives of study

The study intends to identify and define the teaching methods used by Grade One educators in developing reading skills. It will further attempt to explain how these teaching methods are used in developing the reading skills. By so doing, the reasons behind the use of these methods will be explored.

1.7. Overview of study (Orientation to the study)

The following are the six chapters into which the study has been organised:

CHAPTER ONE (Introductory chapter)

This chapter gives the background to education in South Africa after the 1994 democratic elections that brought about Curriculum 2005 (C 2005) under an Outcomes-Based Education policy (DoE, 2002). This chapter discusses the focus and purpose of the study, the rationale behind the study, objectives of the study, research questions as well as the overview of the study.

CHAPTER TWO (Literature Review)

Chapter two brings together all the literature that the researcher has read in relation to the topic. Studies conducted abroad as well as those conducted in this country are brought together to give the reader information on the teaching methods of reading.

CHAPTER THREE (Conceptual and Theoretical Framework)

In this chapter the core terms: reading as well as teaching methods are defined. Activity Theory, which underpins the study, is intensely discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR (Research Approach and Methodology)

Chapter four is the core chapter of the study as it presents the paradigm and the approach in which the study is located. It discusses the sampling and the methods used to collect data. It also focuses on the ethical issues considered in this study, data analysis and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE (Findings and Discussions)

This chapter presents the findings of the study. These findings are presented as per participant responding to the study's critical question. The discussion will also be based on the theory that frames the study.

CHAPTER SIX (Conclusion and Recommendations)

This chapter presents the conclusion as well as the recommendations based on the discussion of the findings of the study.

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter presents the overview of what the study entails. Each chapter has been brought to readers' attention. The following chapter will discuss the literature connected to this study, discussing different scholars' arguments as well as research conducted locally and abroad.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter traces the history and origins of reading. Moreover it seeks to focus on the South African context as it defines the concept of reading especially for foundation phase and discusses the methods and approaches that teachers use whilst teaching reading in their classrooms.

2.2. A brief history of reading

According to Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008), at the beginning of the 1800's, the sound or phonic method of reading instruction was used. It was based on the relationship between sound and symbol. By the mid 1800s, the approach changed from the sound method to the look-and- say method, where the learners were taught to read by memorizing strings of words as a whole without analysing the words according to their sound and meaning. Joubert *et al* (2008), further state that by 1980 reading was regarded as a constructivistic process that gave meaning. By 1990, the phonic approach method was regarded as a critical reading strategy.

Since 1994, South Africa has been undergoing radical social, political, economic and cultural changes. Changes on the education front included that of the new curriculum with the introduction of an Outcomes-Based System of Education. A single Department of National Education replaced the 19 different education departments of the past era. It has been proven that 16 million South Africans have never attended school and cannot read or write (Read Education Trust, 2008). Potential advantages of the PIRLS for South Africa are that it could provide a comparative basis to benchmark progress in reading literacy.

The PIRLS is a systematic vehicle to derive nationwide empirical data that could be used to inform decisions on curriculum and language policy (Van Staden & Howie, 2008). According to the South African Schools Act (no.84 of 1996), it aims on providing a uniform system for the organization, governance, funding, monitoring and evaluation of schools. The Act introduces a new national education system that addresses a range of issues, but more specifically, those related to reading. As a result this act has not yet been fulfilled as there is still no uniformity in schools in terms of monitoring, funding-for resources and governance. Schools are still unequal as vast inequalities still remain amongst them.

Bowman (2010), reported in a newspaper article that recent research shows that almost nine out of ten pupils at Grade Four cannot read whilst eight out of ten at Grade Five cannot read. This is an indication that South Africa is faced with a vast reading problem.

The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy states this important aim: To ensure that every South African is able to read, write, count and think. This statement supports the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). In 2001 and 2004, the Department of Education conducted two national systemic evaluations to establish literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools. These surveys showed shockingly low levels of reading ability across the country. This implies that large numbers of our children simply do not read. The Department of Education continues to investigate why the levels of reading are so poor, and to find ways to deal with the problem. The National Strategy for Reading is part of its response. Clearly there is a need for a study of this nature as there is a serious national problem in reading development among learners.

The main goal of the National Reading Strategy is to improve the reading competence of learners. The strategy aims to improve the reading level of all learners in the country, including those who experience barriers to learning and those learners who are at special schools and youth centres. Therefore everyone has a responsibility to get involved in the national effort to combat illiteracy. South Africa faces many challenges in promoting literacy. It is rare to find schools with libraries. Books written in African languages are scarce, so children do not have the opportunity to read in their home languages.

However, those systemic evaluations conducted by the Department of Education (provincial and national) as well as International bodies show that learners in South African schools performed poorly when tested for their ability to read at age-appropriate levels (DoE, 2008).

2.4. What is reading?

According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2008), reading used to be seen only as an ability to recognize and say each separate word in a text using knowledge of letters and sounds. It further states that reading is the ability to get meaning from the text. This implies that reading is a complex process that involves many skills which need to be developed. Thus the study is exploring the methods used by Grade One educators whilst developing these skills.

The National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002) states that the important task of the Foundation Phase teacher is to ensure that all learners are taught to read. It is recognized that all learners need to be taught strategies that help them unlock the code of the written task. According to Van Staden and Howie (2008), a wide variety of projects have been set up around the world to promote literacy on different levels and for different contexts.

Van Staden and Howie (2008) argues that PIRLS, aims to provide trends and international comparison on the reading achievement of Grade Four learners. It measures learners' competencies in relation to goals and standards for reading education, the impact of the home environment and how parents foster reading literacy. In addition, it evaluates the organization, time and reading materials for reading in schools, and curriculum and classroom approaches to reading instruction. Although PIRLS was designed for Grade Four learners, it is also relevant to the Grade Ones as they need to develop their reading skills at this early stage so that they will not experience reading problems especially at the Transition Grade (Grade Four).

According to Schickedanz (1999), reading literacy is a constructive and interactive process. This suggests that the reader is regarded as actively and constructively acquiring meaning and as knowing effective reading strategies. Hence Hiskey (2005), defines reading as a conversation between a reader and an author. He also refers to reading as a 'remote control' to faraway places. Similarly, Joubert *et al* (2008), state that reading is one of the most powerful ways of receiving ideas, information and stories. Therefore to help learners acquire good reading skills, teachers should use different types of methods effectively.

According to Blair, Rupley and Nichols (2007), it takes a variety of classroom strategies to be an effective teacher of reading. Therefore learners should receive quality of instruction for effective reading success. William (2007), argues that some people look at reading as a straight forward process of recognizing vocabulary and decoding printed text, whereas reading is strictly the making of meaning from print, with an emphasis on phonemic awareness, vocabulary, phonics, fluency and comprehension. The Department of Education (DoE, 2002) emphasizes that to develop their reading ability, learners should read many books at the right language level.

According to Minskoff (2005), reading cannot be narrowly defined as the ability to identify words or sound out words, rather, reading must be defined as a process for getting meaning

from the printed page. She further states that students must be taught many different skills so that they can understand all types of print materials that they have to read. Minskoff (2005), also mentions that, at the third level of the communication system, children are taught to understand language in written form. They associate words that they hear or speak with words that are represented by print symbols.

According to Montgomery, Durant, Fabb, Furniss and Mills (2000), reading involves two complementary processes or dimensions. The first involves making sense of various aspects of language, sounds or images of the text itself. The second includes continuously constructing possible models of the text's surrounding social and historical context on the basis of one's own views about the world and understanding of other possible or likely views about the world. This study saw a need to explore teaching methods of reading in order for the learners to improve in their reading.

To read a text we must decode what the text literally says and at the same time bring our knowledge to the text to determine what the text actually means. The knowledge that we bring can be knowledge of history, the everyday world, geography, zoology or botany, literature, or science. Any kind of knowledge can in principle be relevant in making sense of a literacy text (Ransinski, 2004). This study draws its context from the participants' (the Grade One educators) knowledge of their every-day world (homes and communities).

Moss (2005), expresses concerns about the need for content reading instruction to occur well before the fourth Grade so that students are prepared for reading required at the upper primary level. Although, according to the Department of Education (2007), some vocabulary can be learned incidentally from the context of the text that the learner is reading, there is a need to teach vocabulary in a planned and deliberate way. Therefore the study explores teaching methods used by Grade One educators whilst developing reading skills so as to prepare them for higher grades.

2.5. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and Reading Literature

Long & Zimmerman (2008), state that according to PIRLS, there are concerns about the implementation of the reading literacy curriculum in the Foundation Phase. The South African learners' overall achievement indicates that higher level reading skills are being implemented at a very slow pace. When compared to international data, South Africa lags

behind in introducing the higher order skills. Long and Zimmerman (2008), also indicate that the problem lies with the implementation of the curriculum.

Educational experiences are deliberately shaped by the vision of what education should be (Long & Zimmerman, 2008). Teaching curricula which offers plans for teaching can be presented in various forms: The intended curriculum is one which represents the ideal or vision underlying a curriculum as well as the actual formal/written curriculum which outlines curriculum intentions in policy documents and materials (Van den Akker, 2003). According to Bower (2004), in reading programmes that focus on the bottom-up approaches or phonological processing, learners are expected to decode individual letters and words before any focus on comprehension is done.

Learners must be taught to decode printed language, to translate print into sounds and to learn alphabetical principles associated with sound-symbol relationships (Lerner, 2003). In contrast with this argument, Pretorius (2003), states that the skill in decoding does not automatically mean that skill in reading comprehension has been achieved. The Department of Education's National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002), introduced learning outcomes to be developed at both the Foundation and the Intermediate Phase levels with regards to reading. Various strategies for the development of a learner's reading comprehension should be employed by all teachers. Long and Zimmerman (2008) emphasize the importance of a teacher in the implementation of a curriculum. They maintain that the curriculum acts as an underlying "skeleton" which shapes and gives direction to instruction in the education system. This study reveals what really happened inside each of the Grade One classrooms during the reading lessons.

2.6. The National Reading Strategy

In an attempt to promote reading in South Africa, the Department of Education (DoE, 2008) developed the National Reading Strategy that envisions every South African learner as a fluent reader who reads to learn, and reads for enjoyment and achievement.

The Department of Education (DoE, 2008), states that South Africa faces many challenges in promoting literacy. It is rare to find school books in well-used general libraries and many homes do not have any books. Books written in African languages are scarce so children do not have the opportunity to read in their home languages. This suggests that there are classes

which do not have books and the few books that are found in some classes are of an inappropriate standard. Books in the learners' home languages remain insufficient.

Poor matriculation results are in part due to the low levels of students' reading skills (DoE, 2008). University students are not proficient in reading, in terms of international standards. This National Reading Strategy aims to promote a nation of life-long readers and life-long learners. It states that reading skills need to be developed at an early stage in order to help learners throughout their academic studies. As mentioned earlier, teachers play an important role in developing learner's good reading skills. According to research conducted by the Department of Education for learning outcome 'Reading and Viewing', it showed that 51% of learners were able to read at an age-appropriate level. For half of the learners, the learning outcome was not achieved. It became clear that learners' language competence affected their performance in all subjects, at all grades. This indicates that poor language competence limits conceptual development, if reading competence is poor, then the learners' writing competence will be poor, and their understanding will also be poor.

The Department of Education (DoE, 2008), wants teachers to raise their standards of teaching, while acknowledging that poor literacy and numeracy are generally related to historical disadvantages and poor socio-economic conditions. It therefore came up with the National Reading Strategy which will also address specific challenges which South Africa is facing that relate to: teacher competency, libraries, teaching conditions, print environment, language issues, and inclusive education.

2.6.1. Teacher competency

According to Taylor, Peterson, Pearson & Rodriguez(2002), many teachers in South Africa have an under-developed understanding of teaching literacy, reading and writing. Many teachers simply do not know how to teach reading. Too often, teachers know only one method of teaching reading, which may not suit the learning style of all learners.

Teachers do not know how to stimulate reading inside, and outside, classroom. Many foundation Phase teachers have not been explicitly trained to teach reading. That is why they find it difficult to help learners with reading difficulties. This is an indication of why most teachers are using only one method of teaching reading which exposes their incompetency.

The Department of Education (DoE, 2008), has stated very clearly that teachers need to use different types of methods while teaching in their classrooms. Hence, Westwood (2008), argues that there is no-one method which is the best, but there are factors which influence the choice of selection. However, methods which are effective with educator A and children X may not at all work for educator B with children Y considering the importance of what children bring to school as it enhances their reading ability and ensures continued development. These are termed Pre-reading and early reading experiences.

Therefore the study will focus on the teaching methods used by Grade One educators whilst developing reading skills, even though these educators are from the same school but have differing learners' needs. Winch and Hoogstad (1985), state that it is thus important to explore teaching methods used by teachers to develop reading skills. Since reading cannot be taught in isolation, it should be part of every lesson and teachers must make a positive and conscious effort to expose children to a variety of material across the curriculum and relevant methods.

Too often, teachers know only one method of teaching reading which may not suit the learning style of all learners. They are unable to stimulate reading inside and outside the classroom. Furthermore, there has been a misunderstanding about the role of the teacher according to the Curriculum 2005 and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). For years, many teachers believed that they did not have to 'teach' reading but simply had to 'facilitate' the process. They believed that learners would teach themselves to read (Cummins, 2000).

The expectation that teachers had to develop their own teaching material and reading programmes further aggravated the situation for teachers as they had no experience in developing material. The employment of under-qualified teachers, especially in rural schools, and in the Foundation Phase, has been common practice. The employment of such teachers has had a negative impact on the quality of teaching and has contributed to the poor performance of learners. The following is a discussion of the issues that relate to the challenges that were mentioned above.

2.6.2. Libraries

Taylor *et al* (2002), indicates that the majority of schools have no access to libraries. This also impacts on the quality of teaching and learning. The Department of Education has

recommended that in the absence of school or community libraries, classroom collections of books can promote reading and understanding, therefore each and every primary school class should have a reading coner, and it should be kept in mind that thirty minutes for reading for enjoyment should be observed (Hornsby, 2000).

2.6.3. Teaching conditions

As it has been stated by the Department of Education (DoE, 2007), crowded and dilapidated classrooms hinde the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). High learner- educator ratios, combined with poor physical conditions and inadequate facilities for teaching and learning, such as inadequate instructional support materials, make it more difficult to deliver quality education (Hornsby, 2000).

2.6.4. Print environment

The educational background of parents has a strong influence on their children's achievement. Uneducated parents, or parents with little education, find it difficult to help their children if they themselves do not understand the tasks that their children are doing (Taylor *et al*, 2002).

According to the DoE (2008), about 60% of the parents had either not completed primary school or had not achieved education levels higher than primary school. This suggest that most learners who are not performing well are victims of their poor parents' educational background which may need teachers' intervention in reclaiming these learners by creating conducive learning environment.

2.6.5. Language issues

Taylor *et al* (2002), argues that Foundation Phase teachers have generally not been taught to teach reading in the home language of African learners. There is also a concern that African languages are structured differently from English or Afrikaans (DoE, 2008). This suggests that it may take time for these learners to master the reading skills if the medium of instruction is different from their home language. It is advisable that all learners should be taught in their mother tongue at a school entry level (Cooper, Chard & Kiger, 2006).

2.6.6. Inclusive education

Learners who experience barriers to learning often do not receive the support that they need to become fluent readers (Rog, 2000). This is despite the policies of Inclusive Education that recognize the special needs of learners in all sectors of education. According to the Department of Education (2008), the National Reading Strategy is the response of the Minister and Department of Education to promote reading in schools in South Africa. It is a management tool that states the vision for improving the competence and level of reading of learners. South Africa's education system needs a common approach to promote reading. A common approach does not mean that all children must be taught in the same way at the same time. Good education allows for different contexts – it differentiates between children and does not treat all children in class as a single unit (Westwood, 2008).

2.6.7. Purposes of the National Reading Strategy

It is stated according to Taylor *et al* (2002), that this was developed in order to put reading firmly on the school agenda by creating a number of activities for developing reading as well as reading for enjoyment. It was developed in order to ensure that not only teachers, learners and their parents but also the broader community should understand the role of improving and promoting reading. The importance of acknowledging and advancing the use of all languages will assist in creating a fruitful reading environment. Reading must be taught across the curriculum and must clarify its expectations.

According to Taylor *et al* (2002), the success of the National Reading Strategy requires the involvement of a range of role players. The learner who is central to improved reading competence should want to improve so that he/she can read fluently and with comprehension. The teacher who has to actively teach reading and has to be trusted by the learners must provide each learner with the competence and skills of reading, and the love for reading.

This kind of teacher should be supported by the principal and the school management team (SMT) who must create an environment that promotes reading and the teaching of reading. Parents and the community who need to value reading and books, need to read to their children and encourage them to practise reading. The Department of Education must, at all levels, provide the necessary resources and support required for the National Reading Strategy to succeed.

2.7. Approaches influencing the teaching methods of reading

For each and every teacher's behaviour in class, there is an underlying influence of a certain approach. Therefore the manner in which a particular educator chooses a certain teaching method in class indicates his/her beliefs with regards to the issue of approach.

Behaviourism

According to Mills (2003), the behaviourist approach claims that the environment controls learning in that people respond to stimuli in their environment, and their response, or behaviour, is positively or negatively reinforced. This suggests that a person will learn from this reinforcement to either continue displaying that behaviour if it was positively reinforced, or not to display that behaviour if it resulted in a negative reinforcement or consequence. Bertram (2004), states that Behaviourists also believe in a method of training called operant conditioning. This method is based on the idea that we behave the way we do because of the consequences that resulted from this type of behaviour in the past. This suggests that our behaviour is the product of our conditioning, and our reactions are caused by stimuli, rather than by a conscious act. By controlling the consequences that result, either by rewarding or punishing, you can shape the behaviours of the person.

Cognitivism:

Sweller (2008), states that the cognitivist approach essentially argues that the "black box" of the mind should be opened and understood; learner is viewed as an information processor (like a computer). Cognitivism focuses on the inner mental activities – opening the "black box" of the human mind is valuable and necessary for understanding how people learn. Cognitivism is "the psychology of learning which emphasizes human cognition or intelligence as a special endowment enabling man to form hypotheses and develop intellectually" and is also known as cognitive development. This suggests that the main focus of cognitivism involves how we think and gain knowledge. Mills (2003) stresses that Cognitivism involves examining learning, memory, problem solving skills, and intelligence. Cognitive theorists may want to understand how problem solving changes throughout childhood, how cultural differences affect the way we view our own academic achievements, language development, and much more.

Constructivism:

Long (2000), claims that within the constructivist approach, the accent is on the learner rather than the teacher. It is the learner who interacts with his or her environment and thus gains an understanding of its features and characteristics. The learner constructs his own conceptualisations and finds his own solutions to problems, mastering autonomy and independence. According to constructivism, learning is the result of individual mental construction, whereby the learner learns by dint of matching the new against given information and establishing meaningful connections, rather than by internalising mere factoids to be regurgitated later on. In constructivist thinking, learning is inescapably affected by the context and the beliefs and attitudes of the learner.

Therefore, learners should be given more latitude in becoming effective problem solvers, identifying and evaluating problems, as well as deciphering ways in which to transfer their learning to these problems. This suggests that if a student is able to perform in a problem solving situation, meaningful learning should then occur because he has constructed an interpretation of how things work using pre-existing structures.

Therefore, the context of South Africa favours the Constructivism approach with regards to teaching and learning based on the above discussion. Hiskey (2005), states that the best teacher of reading is a teacher who conveys not only the value of reading, but also its joy. A teacher who has a plan for teaching the learners how to read. A teacher who considers learners expectations. This teacher should be able to help learners to achieve satisfactory reading levels. This suggests that teachers are key to the successful teaching of reading, and should allow learners to take responsibility in their learning. This will allow learners to construct their own conceptualisations and find their own solutions to problems (Long, 2000).

Having discussed the above approaches, the study will discuss the teaching methods which are highly influenced by Constructivism as well as the components of teaching reading which are important and need to be considered when one chooses the methods of teaching reading.

2.8. Components of teaching reading

The Department of Education (2007), highlights components of teaching reading which are: Phonemic awareness, Word recognition, Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Fluency.

2.8.1. Phonemic awareness

According to Hiskey (2005), phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, hear sounds within a word when it is spoken and work with individual sounds in spoken words. This suggests that it is an auditory skill that can be developed. Therefore learners should be made aware about phonemes, otherwise they would not be able to speak or understand speech, nor understand that each sound can be written as a letter or group of letters.

Westwood (2008), states that phonemic awareness is thus the foundation for phonics as the acquisition of phonic skills is in turn dependent upon the child's phonemic awareness. Hill (2009), Westwood (2008), Bald (2007) as well as Gooch and Lambirth (2007), argue that children develop an increasing awareness of the phonemes in spoken language as they begin to attend to words, syllables, rhyme, alliteration and analysis of phonemes. This component should be used in conjunction with writing skills development. Therefore to develop phonemic awareness educators need to make use of the poems, songs and rhymes. Learners should be engaged in singing and recitation.

2.8.2. Word recognition

It refers to the skills that readers need in order to read unknown words. Phonics and sight words are the two main elements involved in word recognition. Phonic means decoding a word by breaking it down into units (DoE, 2007). It is an important building block in the teaching of reading which is about making and understanding meaning. The purpose of phonics instruction is to give the learners tools so that they can easily decode the words. According to Morrow (2007), phonics is the connection of sounds and symbols. The use of phonics requires children to be taught letter sounds and combinations of letter sounds or phonemes, associated with their corresponding letter symbols or graphemes.

Phonics can be used to introduce learners to the letters of the alphabet. Children in Grade One should be taught phonics. This suggests that once a certain letter has been introduced, children may be asked to come out with their own words with the same letter and then draw and paste pictures.

It is important that teachers should make word charts using words from the books that begin with the letter in question. This method encourages active participation when correctly used (Bald, 2007).

2.8.3. Comprehension

“As a teacher of reading, you need to keep a close check on whether learners are simply barking at print’ or whether they are really understanding and interpreting what they are reading” (DoE, 2008 p.15). Therefore, teachers should keep an eye on children when they are reading to ascertain if they merely have the ability to read as opposed to the ability to read and understand.

According to Wessels (2007), comprehension is the ability to understand an author’s message. Therefore learner’s comprehension skills should be developed at an early stage, it cannot be left until the learners are able to break words into their components or until they can read a certain number of sight words. Van Staden and Howie (2008), state that the processes of comprehension refer to ways in which readers construct meaning from text. Readers focus on and retrieve specific ideas, make inferences, interpret and integrate information while examining the text features. They continue to state that there are two main purposes for reading that account for most reading young learners do, namely reading for enjoyment and to acquire and use information.

The following is the discussion of the ways in which one can develop learner’s comprehension as discussed by READ Education Trust (2008).

Learners prior knowledge needs to be activated in the Foundation Phase by creating an accommodative atmosphere for each and every individual in class. The following activities should be considered when developing learner’s comprehension:

Reading aloud to learners: Foundation Phase learners enjoy a lot when listening to the teacher read to them, learners should be read to at least once a week for 30 minutes to benefit all learners from different levels. Developing the reader’s decoding skills, fluency and increasing their vocabulary are also the important ways of developing comprehension to learners. Develop learners’ ability to apply high-order thinking skills like analysing, evaluating and interpreting when given a story to read, they need to practise deducing what the story is about and when looking at a picture they need to draw the conclusion of what is going on.

The idea is to use the stories they read, tell, and listen to as the basis for thinking activities: expressing their own opinions, drawing conclusions based on the information provided in the text, summarising the text, and providing a different ending, etc (Cook, 2009).

Similarly, Center (2005), mentions the importance of comprehension when reading a text. Fluency is also important because of the influence it exerts on comprehension. Children should be introduced to a great deal of reading so that the same common words are encountered repeatedly. Introducing children to reading activities such as role-play, shared-reading, read aloud, paired-reading, guided-reading and literature circles helps children to increase their comprehension skills (Center, 2005).

Hill (2009), Westwood (2008) as well as Gouch and Lambirth (2007), argue that comprehension is the act of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning from the text. Both decoding and comprehending are necessary in reading. Therefore, educators can clear road blocks to a child's comprehension of a text by supporting them to build active involvement, learn to hold attention, be persistent, take time to reflect, and be flexible. Different kinds of texts should be employed as they prompt children to read in different ways: fiction is read for characters and plot, information books are read to find facts and to build concepts.

2.8.4. Vocabulary

Moore and Cunningham (2003), argue that words are used to communicate ideas. Therefore for learners to be able to communicate they need to have knowledge and understanding of wide range of words. The Department of Education (2007) mentions that teachers can teach vocabulary through allowing their learners to read regularly or listen to texts that interest them. They can also motivate them to try to work out meanings from the contexts.

Similarly, the influence of home background plays an important role in developing vocabulary. For example, a child who comes from a home where reading happens often will most probably know many more words than another child who does not often hear reading (DoE, 2007). It is further emphasized that when teaching vocabulary during sessions like reading aloud, shared and guided reading, the teacher should explicitly teach at least 6 to 8 new words from the text by explaining the meaning of the word and encouraging learners to use the word orally. Learners can also take new words home for review as home work after they have been displayed on the word wall or charts.

2.8.5. Fluency

The Department of Education (2007), defines fluency in reading as the ability to read texts smoothly, accurately and with understanding, if the learner reads just one word at a time without fluency, it probably means that they also have problems in understanding the text. Similarly, Duke, Pressley and Hilden (2004), noted that word recognition and reading fluency difficulties may be the key concern for about 90% of children with significant problems with comprehension. Hence the research conducted by Rasinski and Padak (1998), reported that among struggling elementary-grade readers referred for compensatory instruction in reading, reading fluency was a greater deficit than word recognition or comprehension. This suggests that learners can understand and recognise a word but, reading fluency is not completely achieved if comprehension is lacking.

Other research by Samuels (1979), reported that for many young and struggling readers of all ages, repeated readings seem to be an essential method for achieving fluency. This was corroborated by Samuels (1979) seminal work on the method of repeated readings which found that when students orally practised a piece of text they improved on their reading of that text in terms of rate, accuracy, and comprehension. So, too, is reading fluency achieved through practice, wide reading for some readers and repeated practice of particular pieces for others.

Accomplished readers are often able to achieve and maintain their fluency through wide and independent reading. Even young successful readers can move towards higher levels of fluency through independent reading as found in sustained silent reading and its various permutations (Rasinski, 2004).

Independent repeated readings might work for readers who are already sufficiently accomplished to be able to evaluate and monitor their own reading. However, for most younger and struggling readers repeated readings need to be under the guidance of a teacher or coach. This is where direct instruction in fluency comes in. In the same way that an actor is guided by an acting coach or director, the athlete by a trainer or coach, the musician by a teacher or conductor, the novice driver by a driving instructor or parent, the young or struggling reader involved in reading fluency instruction needs the assistance and guidance of a teacher.

The reader's coach can select appropriate materials, model fluent reading, provide assistance while reading, evaluate progress within and between passages, give encouragement, and celebrate successes.

Although on the surface it may seem that the reader develops fluency simply by finding a quiet spot and practising a text several times through, the reality is that there needs to be a coach to model, guide, and encourage in order to make that practice as valuable as possible.

2.9. Stages of reading development

Educators should be able to identify the levels of the children's reading according to the stages of reading development. This will help the teacher to understand each and every learner's performance in class. There are six stages: The pre-reader, the emergent reader, the early reader, the developing reader, the early fluent reader and the independent reader.

According to Fleisch (2008), there are four stages of reading development, relevant to Grade One learners:

2.9.1. The pre-reader stage

During this stage the reader holds books and turns pages correctly. He/she recognizes the beginning and the end of the book, listens and responds to stories, interprets pictures, pretends to read, knows some letters and shows interest in print when he/she sees it. Therefore the learner operating on this stage should be exposed to activities which will cater for him/her.

2.9.2. The emergent reader stage

The learner can now use pictures to tell stories. He knows some of the sounds and letters that make the sounds. The learner joins in with the teacher or reader when reading familiar books. At this stage the learner knows that the print for European and African languages runs from left to right and from top to bottom. He/she can recognize some words, read some print in the environment and can also read familiar books with patterns.

2.9.3. The early reader stage

This is the stage during which the reader/ learner knows most letter-sounds and names. He or she can use pictures to make meaning. Readers can read aloud when reading to self. The

reader is still not a fluent reader but can read 70% of words correctly in a familiar text at his or her level and can picture books with pattern and repetition and rhyme in home language and additional language.

2.9.4. The developing reader stage

During this stage the reader, as in the early reader stage, uses pictures to make meaning. He/she does not read word for word anymore, but combines words into phrases. He/she also uses knowledge of sentence structure and phonics to decode words. The reader retells the beginning, the middle and the end of the story in some detail. He/she has basic right word vocabulary of at least 50 words, recognizes the words, knows their meaning, begins to apply punctuation to reading, records silently and reads longer books with large prints.

2.10. Methods of teaching reading

Teachers play an important role in teaching learners how to read. According to Fleisch (2008), teachers are the core of the content that is taught and the pedagogy that carries that content, and also the key to successful reading. Before the implementation of the new curriculum, it was assumed that the major source of school failure was the use of outdated teaching methods. Those methods were referred to as ‘rote-learning’ or the ‘rote-rhythm method’ which were ineffective and disempowering. After the introduction of the new curriculum, it was assumed that the new methods would lead to a decisive improvement in achievement.

Fleisch (2008), reveals that contrary to expectations of the new curriculum implementation, classroom teaching methods have not changed. Forms of rote methods continue to dominate classroom interaction. A paper written by De Klerk (2002), suggests that fairly dramatic changes have taken place and that the new methods, which are themselves hybrids of the approaches that were advocated by the curriculum planners, may be contributing to the failure. According to Prinsloo (2008), literacy teaching methods followed by the majority of schools in their day-to-day practices, do not succeed in giving full effect to the good intentions and substantive content of existing curriculum policy, and may have serious negative effects on the majority of children who are from socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

These methods often include a loosely-applied whole language approach which emphasizes reading whole passages of meaningful and authentic text. They also include more lenient approaches to literacy development in conjunction with communicative approaches to

language, which in turn emphasize authentic communication where the purpose of using language is to interpret, express and negotiate meaning. Van Staden and Howie (2008), state that, as reading literacy is a major tool for enabling all other learning, it has to be developed in the early stages of schooling in order that learners will not have problems later on. This study will therefore trace the teaching methods used in Grade One in order to develop reading skills.

2.10.1. Shared reading

According to Wessels (2007), if children are fortunate enough to grow up in an environment with caring adults who spend time reading books to them, they experience the intimate bond that grows between reader and child. Both the child and the adult read a book together. Children become aware of the print and the relationship between the print and the story. Children also realize that the pictures illustrate the story. Shared reading at home is almost always a very pleasant, warm experience. If learners associate reading with happiness and entertainment, they will want to read more. Shared reading that takes place at home, is very important since it prepares the Grade One learners who come to school for the first time for what will happen when they are engaged in shared reading with their teachers.

During the shared reading activity the teacher reads with the class or group, using a large book that has big, bold print. Learners follow the text and they become highly motivated. They gradually take over the task of reading. Shared reading should take place in a relaxed teaching environment. Reading at school should not be dull and joyless. Learners must look forward to reading time, and this happens when they hear and read interesting stories that can touch their hearts (Center, 2005).

Teachers teach shared reading by demonstrating, by showing how to read expressively and reading from left to right. Demonstration is very important especially for Grade One learners who like to imitate (Cook, 2009). Teachers should also model and teach a variety of reading strategies (DoE, 2008). When teachers share Big Books with a class of learners, they hold the book so that everyone can read the print and see the pictures. A pointer is used so that learners can see which words the learners are reading.

Unfamiliar words are discussed while the book is being read. During the shared-reading time teachers set a scene. They make sure that children gather around them while pointing at the

word. They talk about the words and pictures or the cover. The following step is to read the story with the children while encouraging predictions. The last step is when learners recall events in sequence.

2.10.2. Reading aloud

Cunningham (2005), argues that teachers' reading-aloud has shown to be one of the major motivators for children to read. One of the simplest ways to motivate children to read at all grade levels, is for the teachers to read aloud to their classes. In reading-aloud lessons the teacher reads to the whole class or to a small group using material that is at listening comprehension level of the learners.

Reading aloud builds childrens' enjoyment of books, literary language, vocabulary and knowledge about how to read, good picture books have several features that all work together to be effective (Hill 2009, Bald 2007 as well as Gooch & Lambirth 2007). This method should be employed when teaching at an early reading stage. A reading-aloud lesson can be divided into three stages (Hill, 2009). These are: Pre-reading stage, during reading stage, after reading stage. Schickedanz (1999), also states that Reading aloud introduces the language of books, which differs from language heard in daily conversations, on television, and in movies.

This suggests that book language is more descriptive and uses more formal grammatical structures. Therefore reading aloud lets children use their imaginations to explore people, places, times, and events beyond their own experiences. The following is a discussion of these stages by Cummins (2000):

2.10.2.1. Pre-reading stage

During the pre-reading stage, teachers motivate learners by asking questions about the cover page and the title of the book. They also ask questions about the setting and the characters found in the story. It is important that teachers help learners predict what the book will be about. Unfamiliar words are explained during pre-reading activity. If there is a song or a rhyme in the story, it must be written on the board so that learners can join (Cummins, 2000).

2.10.2.2. During reading stage

During this stage teachers show learners the pictures as they read the story. They ask learners what they see in one or two pictures. Teachers should ask learners a few questions to ensure that they follow the logic of the story. To hold the attention of learners, teachers should read with expression and animation and allow learners to join in the refrain (DoE, 2007).

2.10.2.3. After-reading stage

To check whether learners have understood the story teachers ask questions that will make them talk about the main idea or message, how the story ended, who the main characters were and why the learners liked or disliked them. Teachers have to ask learners to talk about the sequence of events and the issues in the story. They also should pose questions that will help them respond emotionally to the story.

2.10.3. Group-guided reading

According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2007), group-guided reading is a teacher directed activity. It involves using carefully selected books at the learners' instructional level. Learners can be grouped for guided reading according to their reading abilities. Group-guided reading gives the teacher the opportunity to observe reading behaviours, identify areas of need and allow learners to develop more independence and confidence as they practise and consolidate reading behaviours and skills. It also provides opportunities to integrate learners' growing knowledge of the conventions of print, letter-sound relationships and other foundational skills in context. Teaching Grade One learners group-guided reading helps teachers to identify those learners who need special attention such as those who might have reading difficulties, and helps learners become independent readers.

Wessels (2007), states that group reading gives learners more opportunities to read aloud to an audience. It must be carefully planned to ensure that every group member has a task and that everyone understands what must be done. In the context of this study, Grade One teachers teach Group-guided reading through the use of pre-reading activities, where learners associate pictures with what will happen and with the help of their teacher, dramatize certain parts of the story, or even the whole story. The Department of Education (2007), states that Group-guided reading provides the bridge to independent reading.

2.10.4. Independent Reading

Learners choose their own books according to their interest and ability. Learners should be guided to choose books which they will be able to read. The teacher should always be observing, listening and gathering information about learners' reading behaviour during independent reading sessions. Organizing reading corners helps to develop in learners, especially the Grade One learners, independent reading skills. They page through their books' pages. Independent reading means having structured daily time during which learners associate themselves with books. It is a planned activity. Learners choose their own books. They need to be guided to choose texts they can read with a high degree of success.

2.10.5. The look-and-say method

Joubert *et al* (2008), state that the look-and-say method focuses on the whole and not on the part. They further state that a three-pronged approach is used in the look-and-say method, the word, the sentence and the story. The teacher uses flash cards with words, sentence strips and story cards. First, learners read the flash cards as a whole, and then write the words down. Sentence strips are used to read a sentence. The words are cut out, pieced together again and a sentence is built up in different ways. The teacher tells a story. Learners then use the sentence strips to build the story after which they read it. The easiest way to read is to use the look-and-say approach to reading (DoE, 2007).

Children can learn to recognize words printed on large cards so that when a card is held up the child can pronounce the appropriate word. The following paragraph looks at how the phonic method is used.

2.10.6. The phonic method

Joubert *et al* (2008), say that when the phonic method is used, somas are learnt step-by-step. It connects the auditive and visual, pays attention not only to the phonological structure of the spoken word, but also to the meaning and the syntax of the words. In the first step, a vowel or double vowels followed by a consonant are taught. The word is then sounded and read. Pictures of the actual objects can be used. Next, teachers teach learners the vowel-consonant combination. Words learnt in this way are then read in composition. Double vowels, as well as multiconsonant blends are taught as the learners gradually build up reading and writing vocabulary by sounding words as shown.

Joubert *et al* (2008), mention different strategies that support the phonic method: making different associations to fix the various sounds such as presenting the letter as a snake and making hissing sounds when the 's' is seen, writing the letters of the sounds forming the word in the air or on the ground, tracking/copying the word in different ways while it is sounded out aloud, drawing pictures to illustrate the sound, using flash cards to practice different words, using the words in different contexts, and word repetition. This suggests that for effective teaching of reading these strategies cater for every individual in class.

According to Minskoff (2005), phonics is the most important word identification skill. It is the means to the ultimate goal of reading instruction, which is understanding the meaning of words, sentences and texts. It enables learners to understand the alphabetical principle which explains letter-sound associations. Most phonics programmes present similar, but not exact scopes and sequences of all the sounds to be taught. With some languages such as English, vowels are harder to master than consonants because they have more than one sound associated with them.

For the letter 'a', it is possible to say different sounds, such as the short or long sound. In the isiZulu language, the letter 'a' has only one sound. Minskoff (2005), also mentions that teachers must make sure that students know the vowels before teaching consonant sounds. Phonic education certainly is very important for learners in the Foundation Phase because that is when children learn to read and write.

Bald (2007), defines phonics as the systematic teaching of the sounds conveyed by letters and groups of letters, and includes teaching children to combine and blend these to read or write words. Hill (2009), concurs and states that phonics can be thought as a puzzle and needs to be taught in classrooms that promote active investigation about sounds and letters. While Hill (2009), Bald (2007) as well as Goouch and Lambirth (2007), are all in agreement that phonics is one of the information sources that children will use to identify unfamiliar words.

Phonics is part, but not all, of what children need in order to read and write. The content of phonics includes letter identification, onset and rime, blends and diagraphs (Minskoff, 2005). There are different approaches to teaching phonics such as: synthetic, visual, auditory, analytic phonics, analogy, word study, making words and whole-to-part phonic. Whereas Bald (2007), criticizes the teaching of a whole-word, known as look-and-say, by stating that it

does not give children the information, they need to work with words out for themselves. This creates problems to learners who struggle to work independently.

2.10.7. The bottom-up approach

According to Jourbert *et al* (2008), the bottom-up approach, which is also known as the skills acquirement theory, accentuates the development of sub skills which gradually leads to complex reading skills. Reading approaches based on the bottom-up theory can be classified under the synthetic and analytical reading approach. The synthetic approach concentrates on the alphabet and sound method (phonic approach). The analytical approach concentrates on the look and- say method. The eclectic method combines the phonic and the look-and-say methods. The bottom-up models start with the recognition and decoding of letters, clusters of letters and words, with the reader processing progressively larger units of print up to the sentence, paragraph, page and finally complete text. The assumption is that meaning is obtained in a step-by-step fashion going from the letter to the meaning as a sequence.

2.10.8. The top-down approach

In a top-down approach, Joubert *et al* (2008), state that the premise is that reading forms a meaningful whole in which the meaning and sense lie at the foundation. It focuses mainly on the learners' association with real books and authentic text, and on reading for meaning. In the top-down model, the reading process begins in the mind of the reader who hypothesizes about the meaning of the print to read. The third model of reading which is the combination of both the bottom-up and the top-down models is termed the interactive model.

2.11. Conclusion

This chapter has covered a brief historical beginning of reading before and after the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education. Factors that influence language teaching were highlighted. The chapter concluded by discussing methods used while developing reading in the classroom. Next chapter is the discussion of the core concepts used in this study as well as theory that frames this study.

CHAPTER 3

Conceptual and Theoretical Frame work

3.1. Introduction

The chapter discusses the core concepts used in this study as well as theory that frames this study.

3.2. Conceptual frame work

Conceptual frame work is a set of coherent ideas or concepts organized in a manner that makes them easy to communicate to others. A framework can help us to explain why we are doing a project in a particular way. It can also help us to understand and use the ideas of others who have done similar things. A framework can help us decide and explain the route we are taking: why would we use certain methods and not others to get to a certain point. People might have tried a similar path before and have had different experiences using one road versus another. Or, there may be paths that have never been explored. With a conceptual framework, we can explain why we would try this or that path, based on the experiences of others, and on what we ourselves would like to explore or discover (Archaeology dictionary, Undated). Therefore the following is the discussion of the main concepts of this study.

3.2.1(a) Reading

According to the Department of Education (2008), reading used to be seen only as an ability to recognize and say each separate word in a text using knowledge of letters and sounds. However, Hiskey (2005), defines reading as a conversation between a reader and an author. He also refers to reading as a 'remote control' to faraway places Similarly, Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008), state that reading is one of the most powerful ways of receiving ideas, information and stories. More has been discussed on Chapter Two with regards to this concept.

3.2.1(b) Teaching Methods

Williams (2007), defines teaching methods as types of principles and methods used for instruction. Therefore they need to be carefully chosen when they are to be used in the classroom.

3.3. Theoretical Framework

3.3.1. The theory that frames this study is an Activity Theory (AT)

According to Luria (1981), activity in its simplest term is defined as the engagement of a subject towards a certain goal or object. This researcher mentions that in nature an activity is typically unmediated. He / She make the example of picking a berry from a bush and eating it, this is considered a simple unmediated activity that involves direct action between the subject and the object. This researcher continues to say that in most human contexts the activities are mediated through the use of culturally established instruments, including language, artifacts and procedures. Bannon and Bodker (1991), further elaborate that in human activity theory, the basic unit of analysis is human activity (work).

This theory postulates that “the human mind emerges and exists as a special component of human interaction with the environment. The mind is a special ‘organ’ that appears in the process of evolution to help organisms to survive. Thus, it can be analyzed and understood only within the context of activity” (Kaptelinin, 1996, p.1).

According to Activity Theory, the following elements are very important when there is an activity undertaken: tools/artifact, subject, object, rules, community and division of labor Robertson (2008) and Ryder (2000) define these elements as follows: The subject is a human who is motivated towards the solution of a problem or a purpose (object), and mediated by tools (artifacts) in collaboration with others (community). The structure of the activity is constrained by cultural factors including conventions (rules) and social strata (division of labor) within the context. Therefore this study is conducted on the basis of these elements whereby a subject represents the educators who have a purpose.

The object in this case are teaching methods (Phonics, Phonemic awareness, Reading Aloud and Comprehension etc,) and the tools which will be used are all the reading resources the school uses (language, books, computers, magazines and newspapers).

The community will be the book donors, governing body, librarians, the division of labour among the learners and educators will be the stated rules for this activity which is based on curriculum expectations as well as the consideration of intended outcomes (development of reading skills).

The following is a diagrammatic presentation of Activity Theory by Mwanza and Engestrom (2003) and the discussion of these elements in a table.

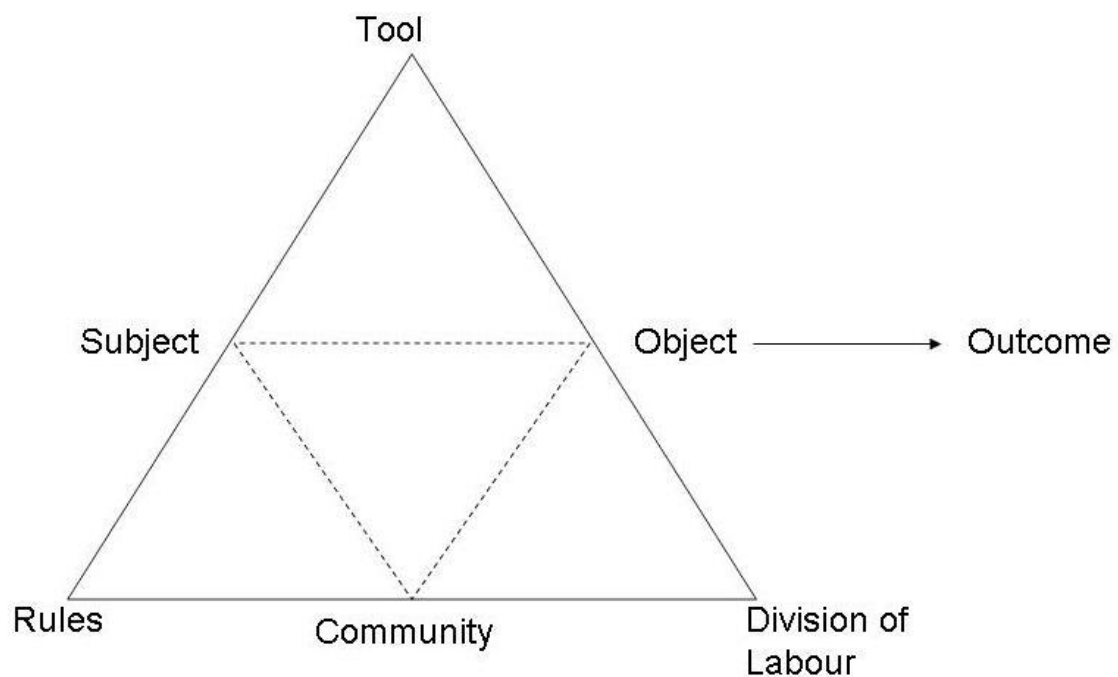


Figure: 3.1 Second Generation of Activity Theory (Mwanza & Engestroom, 2003)

Activity	What sort of an Activity is one interested in?
Object(ive)	Products acted on by the subjects during the activity.
Subjects	The actors involved in the activity.
Tools	Theories and methods, resources, supports, and online tools and environments that mediate the activity.
Rules & Regulations	Implicit and explicit rules and norms of the community that constrain the activity.
Division of Labour	Horizontal and vertical roles and relationships within the community that affect task division.
Community	Sociocultural context in which the activity takes place.
Outcomes	Transformation of the objects; the overall intention of the activity system

Table 3.1. Elements of Activity Theory (Cassens & Kofod-Petersen, 2003).

The above digram (Figure.3.1) is the presentation of the second generation of the elements in Activity Theory which are very important if a study has employed this theory. The above table gives a defination of each element of an Activty Theory. A basic notion of Activity Theory is that the subject participating in an activity does so because he /she wants to achieve a certain goal. His /her interest is directed towards the object of an activity which he tries to use and modify to achieve an anticipated outcome. His/ her interaction with this object is mediated by tools, creating the basic triangle of Subject, Object, and Mediating Artefact (Cassens & Kofod-Petersen, 2003).

Therefore, according to this study these elements are as follows: Activity: all what will be done in a classroom. Object: are the teaching methods which have resulted in the inception of the study. Subject: Participants (Educators) who are involved in carrying out the activity. Tools: all the resources which were used by the participants in order to fullfill the object. Rules: for each and every activity there must be stated rules. They can be department rules, school or community rules as well as the norms. Division of labour refers to whether everybody involved understands what is expected of them.

Community refers to the environment in which the activity is taking place which in this case is the school, community which surrounds the school and the classroom. The outcomes achieved are set out by the subjects and are about the transformation of the objects.

3.4. Principles of activity theory

This study also includes principles of an activity theory as discussed by different researchers. The following is the discussion of the principles:

3.4.1 “The most fundamental principle of activity theory is the unity of consciousness and activity”

According to Kaptelin (1996 p: 1), the term ‘Consciousness’ refers to the human mind as a whole and ‘activity’ refers to human interaction with the objective reality. This principle explains that the human mind emerges and exists as a special component of human interaction with the environment. According to Kaptelin (1996), mind is a special “organ” that appears in the process of evolution to help organisms to survive. Thus it can be analyzed and understood within the context of activity.

This principle implies that a person must have enough understanding in his mind in order to perform an activity, and the knowledge that a person has will be detected by the nature of the outcomes. In other words, the more comprehension the teacher has for the activity to be undertaken with the learners in developing reading skills, the more successful the results will be. Educators should be well equipped with the skills of using these teaching methods so that better results will be attained.

3.4.2. The principle of object-orientedness

According to Kaptelinin (1996), in order to understand peoples’ behavior in different situations and to find out how they progress, one needs to take into account the behavior in question. Kaptelinin (1996) further argues that Activity Theory differentiates between activities, actions and operations. The criteria for separating these processes are whether the object to which the given process is oriented is impelling in itself or is auxiliary, or whether the given process is automated. This implies that actions are goal directed processes that must be taken to fulfill the object (phenomenon).

The Department of Education (2008), presents processes, methods, knowledge and skills which need to be followed while teaching. Thus, this study explores the teaching methods

used by the educators whilst developing Grade One's reading skills comparing them against those recommended by the DoE. Luria (1981), stresses that not everyone qualifies to teach. Therefore someone who is qualified, with experience in teaching a specific grade is needed. The study takes into consideration whether the educators who are teaching these Grade Ones are qualified with the relevant qualifications and are experienced of being Junior Foundation Educators.

According to Bannon and Bodker (1991), the principle of object-orientedness states that human beings live in a reality which is objective in a broad sense. The things which constitute this reality have not only the properties which are considered objective according to natural sciences but have socially/culturally defined properties.

Therefore, the above suggests that there should be clear reasons why the activity has to be undertaken. The object which leads to the performance of an activity should be clearly determined.

3.4.3. The hierarchical structure of activity.

According to Leont'ev (1981), Activity Theory can be described according to a three-level scheme. These three-level schemes clarify the hierarchical structure of the activity. The top-level is that of activity, the central-level is that of actions and the bottom one is that of operations. In the top-level the activity is designated as motives.

Each activity chosen by the teacher has a certain objective or skill that the learners must acquire. Leont'ev (1981), further argues that 'motives correspond to human needs and their (motives) are objects which motivate human activities. Actions are performed consciously and consist of non-conscious operations.

In the central level, what is going to be done (actions) is determined by the goals that the teachers and learners need to achieve. Most of the individuals according to Leont'ev (1981), are not aware of, or responsive to actual conditions.

Leont'ev (1981), emphasizes that 'the activities which are driven by motives are performed through certain actions which are directed at goals and which, in turn are implemented through certain operations. This suggests that each and every action should be driven by what one wants to achieve at the end.

3.4.4. The principle of internalization-externalization.

Bannon and Bodker (1991), argue that the difference between internalization (internal activities) and externalization (external activities) is that internalization refers to the activities that are performed without the use of real objects. These activities can also be taken as mental activities whereas external activities are performed through the actual manipulation on real objects. In order to understand the internal activities, one needs to analyze the external activities and vice versa. External activities are supported by processes that are originated inside the subject (Mwanza & Engestrom 2003, Rodriquez 1998). However, the researcher was driven by internal motives to conduct this study. The learners in the intermediate phase were performing poorly in reading and the subject advisors were always complaining. The researcher was tasked by the school as there was a need to research the problem and had to focus on Grade Ones.

3.4.5. Principle of mediation- Human activity is mediated by a number of tools

Bannon and Bodker (1991), emphasize that there is the necessity for the agent to interact with the environment and the society. This explains why the principle of tool mediation is so important that when learners have developed their reading skills, they need to be exposed to appropriate teaching methods by relevant educators who are qualified to teach the Grade Ones. Vygotsky (1978), divides tools into two: the technical ones and the psychological ones. The technical tools refer to physical objects (teaching aids used during the activity) whereas psychological ones are used by human beings to influence other people or themselves e.g. procedure followed while doing an activity. This concludes that human activity is mediated by a number of tools. For success of an activity, there should be utilization of tools. Therefore, a lack and mis-use of tools can result in poor teaching and learning.

3.4.6. Development

Bannon and Bodker (1991), states that in Activity Theory development is when there is interaction with reality. Therefore what influence practical issues should be traced. Activity Theory does not consider development as psychological theory but it sees all practices as a result of historical development under certain conditions and as a continuous re-forming and developing processes. This implies that the more learners are exposed to the different methods of developing reading and the consultation of what was once used by others so as to develop the new, the more improvement there will be. That is why Activity Theory is not

traditional laboratory experiment but a ‘formative experiment’ which includes active participation with the monitoring of development. This study acknowledges interaction with reality which was observed and analysed in the context of development of an activity.

Conclusion

Having discussed the position of the study and the theory to be used, further explanation about each has been given. This chapter has explained that this is a qualitative study that is framed within Activity Theory. Furthermore the principles of activity have been discussed with relation to the study. Next chapter is the discussion of the research approach and the methodology.

CHAPTER 4

Research Approach and Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In this study a case study has been chosen as a methodology and for the data collection or production the following methods have been used: Observation (complete observer), interview (semi-structured), and document analysis. This chapter firstly gives brief description of an approach as well as different paradigms and expands on the paradigm upon which this study is premised. Secondly each method used to collect data is explained in detail and the advantages as well as the disadvantages of these will be explained. It then explains how data was collected using these methods.

4.2. Qualitative approach

According to Maree (2007), the qualitative approach is based on the interpretive paradigm. Its emphasis is about understanding how people make meaning of phenomena in their environment. This research study has drawn meaning from what the participants said as well as from what transpired in the classroom setting. Qualitative methods are concerned with detailed and indepth analysis (Bertram, 2004). Similarly, Henning, Gravett and Van Rensburg (2005), agree that a qualitative approach is used for an in-depth inquiry. This is related to this study since the researcher interacted with the participants during interviewing and observation. The study also allowed for a deep understanding of what has been happening in the classroom.

According to Denzil and Lincolnm (2002), qualitative researchers stress the socially-constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied, and the situation constraints that shape the inquiry. It is a systematic attempt to generate and use non-quantitative techniques that facilitate the understanding of socio-cultural contexts of educational processes and institutions. Similarly, Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006), argue that qualitative researchers want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world, and they therefore want to study them in their natural setting.

In this study the participants were observed in their classrooms as their natural setting while using teaching methods to develop Grade One reading skills. McNiell and Chapman (2005), argue that qualitative data takes the form of words rather than numbers. They go on to say that data collected in qualitative way concentrates on presenting the quality of the way of life described rather than on presenting statistics. In this study, data was collected from the three Grade One educators as the school has only three classes of Grade One. Data is presented in the form of words.

Qualitative researchers look at human events in a more holistic way that attempts to locate individual actions in their cultural contexts. Human activities are investigated in terms of meaning – why people say this, do this or act in this or that way – and must be interpreted by linking them to other human events to enable greater understanding (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 1999). Qualitative research therefore acknowledges an interactive relationship between the researcher and participants as well as between the participants and their own experiences and how they have constructed reality based on those experiences. The researcher therefore observed and conducted interviews so as to create that relationship between the researcher and the participants and the understanding of the experiences of the participants and the activities they are performing.

4.2.1 Characteristics of qualitative research

Henning *et al* (2005), argue that in qualitative research, researchers want to look at social reality. They wish to investigate the qualities of phenomena rather than the quantities. Qualitative research also gives a clear and detailed account of action involved and the researcher thus gains a better understanding of the world and tries to use it to bring about social changes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Patton, 2002). The aim is for depth rather than quantity of understanding. Conducting research using a qualitative approach provides the researcher with clear and detailed data from which findings for the research study are drawn, by providing better understanding of the classroom situation thus allowing for some recommendations (Bertram, 2004). Therefore the study has employed the Activity Theory which focuses on people's actions for the achievement of outcomes. Educators actions and intentions were explored whilst developing learners' reading skills.

4.2.2. The nature of qualitative research

Qualitative research methodology produces descriptive data which is often produced by the spoken word, written information and/ or observable behavior (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2002).

However, the study used instruments like interviews and observations so that the data collected will be spoken and observed. The collected data was textual. The data produced in qualitative research can be termed as ‘soft’ since it describes and represents many facets of the participants (Maree, 2007). Furthermore, the beliefs of the qualitative researchers themselves are often reflected in their research and findings may also be shaped by individual interests and branch of study. The research begins with only vaguely formulated research questions and the research follows a flexible path (Taylor, 1984).

4.2.3 .Qualitative research designs

The types of research designs that are qualitative in nature include those that aim to gather and describe new observations or interpretations where little or no prior information exists (Seaman, 1991). The purpose of such studies is to attempt to understand and explore phenomena from the point of view of those being studied.

According to Taylor (1984), qualitative research is naturalistic and researchers interact with the participants in a natural and self-effacing manner. People are studied in the context of their past and the situations in which they find themselves while researchers try to understand them from their own reference. Researchers develop concepts and insights from the patterns in the data produced (Bertram, 2004). Therefore, the participants were observed in their classroom setting so as to understand the situation in which participants find themselves. Qualitative research is designed to ensure that there is a close fit between the data produced and what the participants are actually saying, thus allowing them to stay close to the empirical world (Taylor, 1984). This was evident after the participants’ observations were done which were followed by the interviews.

According to Berry (2006), there are four main types of qualitative research designs. These are: Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Ethnography and Case Study. This is a case study and as such, other designs were not considered since they are not relevant to it. Berry (2006),

further defines a case study as research which involves empiricism (a sensory experience through enquiry of real life experiences).

This methodology was appropriate because the main focus is on the teaching methods used by participants while conducting activities to develop reading skills for Grade One learners.

4.3.Paradigm

According to Popkewitz (1984), a paradigm is a general belief or model that defines the ways in which people think or act, and which makes people understand the world they live in. Popkewitz (1984), asserts that each paradigm entails an underlying principle based on thought, reason and enquiry. He further argues that this implies that each paradigm in research is characterized by its own:

Ontology: The way things are their existence, their traits of reality and the nature of being.

Epistemology: The theories of knowledge, i.e. how we know what we know.

Methodology: How a researcher goes about studying whatever he/she believes can be learnt.

There are four paradigms under which research is conducted in the social sciences, viz; positivism, the critical approach, the constructivism and interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Positivist research is used to examine, explain, build and test theories (Sarantakos, 2005). The main purpose of critical research is social critique which focuses on the conflicts and contradictions in today's society, and seeks to be emancipatory (Myers, 1997). The term constructivism implies that the researcher is partly responsible for the creation of data. In other words, individuals do not 'discover' knowledge, but 'construct' it (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Consequently this study has been conducted within the interpretive paradigm as it aimed at the exploration of teaching methods used to develop Grade One's reading skills. The research methods employed in this study will invariably make the researcher responsible for the creation of data.

4.3.1 Interpretive Perspective on Qualitative research

Interpretive research is steered by a set of views, beliefs and opinions on the world and how it should be interpreted and studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Every individual has his/her own interpretation of everything that goes on around us; for this reason, the ontology associated with this approach, is a subjective reality-referred to as “*nominalism*” by Falcner and Mckay (1999). Subsequently, the epistemology is one where the values of the participant as well as the observer / researcher become interlaced. Hence the methodologies that lend themselves to interpretation, such as interviews and participant observation are employed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The purpose of such studies, therefore, is to attempt to understand each and every individual on his/her space that is why this study explored the teaching methods used by the Grade One educators whilst developing reading skills.

The research seeks to understand what is going on in the developing of Grade One reading skills. The findings will be acquired by coming into contact with the accountable educators and interviewing them. Similarly, Cicourel (1964), argues that the interpretive paradigm as it postulates that truth is negotiated through dialogue which means there must be direct contact.

Maree (2007), contends that the interpretivist theory was developed in the 19th century with three key focuses namely: meaning, understanding and literary interpretation. It is also based on hermeneutic theory. According to the hermeneutic theorists such as Friedrich, Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey, understanding is considered to be a process of psychological reconstruction, whereby the readers reconstruct the original intention of the author.

This leads to subjectivism and the realization that knowledge is not absolute. Henning and Smit (2004), elaborate on the point of knowledge by arguing that it is not only constructed by observing the phenomenon but also by descriptions of peoples’ intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning making and self-understanding. That is why the study conducted interviews so as to understand participants’ ways of doing things, whether those are influenced by their beliefs and values.

Maree (2007), argues that in interpretive studies a researcher understands the phenomenon through what is said by the participants; In fact interpretivism is a philosophical theory of meaning, understanding and literary interpretation. This paradigm also takes the form of a ‘hermeneutic circle’, meaning that in order to understand the whole one needs to understand the parts. That is the reason why the study employed Activity Theory as a frame work. This study attempts to understand the activities, actions and operations performed by participants and to reveal their motives, goals and instrumental conditions respectively on teaching methods of developing reading skills (Leont’ev, 1981).

Maree (2007), discusses the following assumptions based on the interpretivist paradigm:

a) Human life can only be understood from within

Maree (2007), states that the main point in this assumption is experience. In order to understand human life one must focus on the people’s experience.

In developing Grade One’s reading skills, it suggests that the researcher will be able to understand the educators’ experiences by the responses that will be given by them. This means that all responses will be coming from within or from their experiences in their teaching. Since it is impossible to observe experiences it will be preferable to discuss them.

b) Social life is a distinctively human product

Maree (2007), main argument meant on this assumption is that reality is constructed socially not determined objectively. In order to understand peoples’ perceptions one needs to place them in their social context. These contexts are unique which then makes it important to understand and interpret the meaning that is constructed.

How learners perform during the development of reading skills was determined by the skills they acquired while they were taught reading. In order for this study to be able to understand those performances, it has employed a theory which deals with the activities performed. It is referred to as an Activity Theory. Therefore, after having achieved all the skills, learners should be able to improve their social life.

c) The human mind is the purposive source of original meaning

This suggests that after exploring the richness, depth and complexity of phenomenon we understand the meaning given by people to phenomena and their social context. Once one

understands the meaning given by people then they can improve their comprehension of the whole.

When educators are trained, they should be equipped with the understanding of the different kinds of methods used in teaching reading. Therefore the gained knowledge on how to use these methods will make them become resource persons with their minds being the source of original meaning. Applying knowledge to the learners will be effective.

d) Human behavior is affected by knowledge of the social world.

Maree (2007), argues that there are numerous, not single, realities and that they seem to differ across time and place. Construction of people's knowledge and understanding of social world and realities enhances their behavior. However, learners' improvement on reading was determined by how they became familiar with the use of these methods.

e) The social world does not 'exist' independently of human knowledge.

What the researchers know and understand about the phenomena has an influence in terms of the questions asked during research. What the researchers know and understand is also limited to their exposure, unique experience as well as the meanings they have imparted. What they know informs and directs them while investigating. Examples of what influences them can be: intuition, beliefs, or prior knowledge. It is important for a researcher to get rid of subjectivity of endeavor.

4.4. Case Study

Henning *et al* (2004), argue that there is an assumption that if the parameters of the case are clearly set and the researcher is then able to respond specifically to the question, it means that it is a case. Henning *et al* (2004), continue to mention that case studies are not only defined by their boundedness regarding the unit of analysis of the topic, but also by their methodology. They mention that case studies are characterized by the focus on the phenomenon that has identifiable boundaries. Henning *et al* (2004), add that in a case study the description of how, where and why things happen are noted and form part of the study. This study then observed how the participants were using teaching methods in developing reading skills, why these methods were used and where these activities were taking place.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), argue that a case study tries to explain what it is like to be in a particular situation, to catch up to close reality and thick descriptions of participants' lived experiences, thoughts about and feelings in a situation. Grade One educators were observed during their teaching in the classrooms and were interviewed to find exactly how they use the teaching methods of reading to develop Grade One's reading skills.

Cohen *et al* (2007), discuss the following:

Strengths

The results of the case study are easily understood by everyone as they are usually written in non-professional language. This means that they need not be translated. They speak for themselves. The unique features they employ might hold the key to understanding the situation. These results show the reality of the situation. In a case study different results provide insights into other similar cases. What is also good about a case study is that a single researcher can undertake a study-research without needing any help from a team. Lastly, the results can embrace and accommodate anticipated events and uncontrollable variables. Therefore, the researcher allowed the participants to conduct classroom activities with no interference.

Weaknesses

Case study results are not generalisable except where other researchers see their application. They may not be easily cross-checked and they may be personal and subjective. Another problem with a case study is that the researcher may be biased. The study overcomes this weakness by avoiding personal influences, and was objective in all that was being done. This researcher had no intentions of generalizing the findings. That is the reason the case study methodology was employed.

4.5. Sampling Techniques

Having chosen the case study as methodology, the researcher had to carefully think about the sample methods to be used (Henning *et al*, 2004).

4.5.1 Sampling

According to Maree (2007), sampling refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for study. Maree (2007), goes on to say that sampling decisions are therefore made for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions. The study chose the Grade One Educators as they are the richest sources of information. They are the ones who are using the teaching methods whilst developing Grade Ones' reading skills.

Description of the school

This school was opened in 2004 and is classified as disadvantaged in terms of its inadequate resources and also the community where it is situated. It is in the heart of an informal settlement. The HIV prevalence and the widespread unemployment are in part responsible for malnutrition and poor attendance of the learners. The level of parents' illiteracy results in the absence of parental school support. There is no pre-primary education for the learners. There is a high crime rate, high teenage pregnancy rate as well as the use of drugs. These children have no role models. The school's language of teaching and learning is isiZulu which was chosen by the parents. This school starts from Grade R to Seven and there are three Grade One classes with an educator assigned to each. These three educators were used for the study as participants. Therefore, sampling was influenced by the number of these educators.

4.5.2 Purposive Sampling

Qualitative research is generally based on purposive sampling. Purposive sampling means that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study. Cohen *et al* (2007), indicate that this type of sampling is chosen for a specific purpose and is used in order to access 'knowledgeable people'. Therefore three Grade One educators have been specifically chosen for this study as they are information rich. Purposive sampling decisions involve the settings, incidents, events and activities to be included for data collection (Maree, 2007). The most accessible school was chosen (the researcher's school). This means that the study started with convenience sampling followed by purposive sampling.

4.6. Methods of data collection

4.6.1 Observation (This method was used to gain the full view of what is happening in Grade 1)

Educators were observed interacting with the learners during reading lessons. Observations only lasted for an hour for each participant which was an equivalent of two periods.

The researcher was only allowed to observe participants once to avoid disturbing the school's programme. The types of methods they were using as well as the use of resources were observed. According to Maree (2007), an observation is an everyday activity whereby researchers use senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting) to gather bits of data. It is used to enable the researcher to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon being observed. This study has observed the educators' daily activities when they develop learners reading skills.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioral patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. This distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from a naturally-occurring social situation. This method of gathering data (observation) enabled the researcher to collect 'live' information from three Grade One Educators. Observation method is a powerful tool for gaining insight into a situation in that the researcher is able to get information that the participant might not have talked about during an interview (Leedy, 2005).

The reason for the researcher to use observation is that it is appropriate for describing the environment e.g. the size of the classroom, and other contextual factors (Fink, 2008). According to Wisker (2001), observation is considered to be a rich source of information which captures what the people are doing instead of what they are saying. Observations can be conducted in two ways; the researcher may choose to be a participant observer or non-participant observer. If the researcher chooses to be the participant observer or he/she becomes part of the group being observed while on the other hand the non-participant observer does not intrude, he/she observes the actions of others (Bertram, 2004). In this study the researcher was a non-participant and never interrupted what was happening in class. Planning was carefully done before the researcher went to the field.

Fink (2008) warns that observation, like any other method, has its own advantages and disadvantages. The following is their discussion:

4.6.1. a) Advantages

Observation provides first-hand information. The data collected through this method could not be changed because the researcher is there when the unforeseen occurs.

As far as Cohen *et al* (2007) are concerned, observation provides ‘live’ data, enables the researcher to understand the context of programmes, helps researchers to record non-verbal behaviours, enables the researcher to see what is actually happening in a classroom and is powerful for gaining insight into a situation. This was advantageous to this study as the researcher got all the first hand information during observations and managed to see exactly what is done by the educators during a reading period.

4.5.1. b) Disadvantages

Two people may witness the same event but interpret it differently. So people need to get proper training and have a structured format before using this method. Observation is time consuming and if people being observed know that they are ‘watched’, they tend to change their behavior. This study overcame this challenge by making participants aware that for the true reflection of what would transpire in class, they needed to be original. Nothing had to be changed.

4.6.2. Interviews

According to Cohen *et al* (2007), interviews enable participants, be it the interviewers or interviewees, to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and express feelings about how they regard situations from their own point of view. They go on to say that an interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard. They further state that an interview is a powerful implement for researchers. It is constructed and is a different form of an everyday conversation. In addition, it has a specific purpose, and is often question-based. This means that interviews should be carefully planned so that there will be flexibility between the researcher and the participants.

Similarly, Henning *et al* (2004), argue that a planned interview is not a free, naturally-occurring conversation between partners who are talking as part of their everyday lives, but a

contrived social interaction. This suggests that even though it is a flexible tool, it is not free as there are planned questions which should be responded to. At school, in a classroom situation, it is where teachers interact with their learners. Conducting an interview is a more natural form of interacting with people than making them fill out questionnaires, do a test, or perform some experimental approach to research (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 1999).

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (1999), further state that an interview gives researchers an opportunity to get to know people quite intimately so that researchers can really understand how participants think and feel. The researcher was able to be closer to the participants and understood their behaviours very well.

Similarly, Maree (2007), defines an interview as a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions in order to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant. Qualitative interviews aim at seeing the world through the eyes of the participants and they too can be a valuable source of information. The aim is always to obtain rich, descriptive data that will help the researcher to understand the participants' construction of knowledge and social reality. Using interviews allows the participants (in this case, teachers interviewed) to trust the interviewer and feel free to answer questions (Cohen *et al*, 2007). Conducting interviews allows interaction with the participants and enables the interviewer to find out exactly how they feel, what they dislike and what their beliefs and attitudes are (Bertram, 2004). The researcher in this study after interacting with the participants was able to see things as the participants do.

According to Fink (2008), interviews can be conducted personally or telephonically with people who have difficulty completing self-administered questionnaires. It also provides in-depth information. Because it involves direct personal contact, interviewers need to be well trained and monitored. There was a direct contact between the participants and the researcher during the interviews.

Fink (2008), discusses the following based on interviews:

4.6.2. a) Advantages

It allows the researcher to ask about the meaning of responses and accommodates people with difficulty in reading and writing as everything is conducted orally.

The study opted for this method so that the participants will present themselves orally because to some people writing is a daunting task.

4.6.2. b) Disadvantages

Interviews are time consuming and labour intensive. Researchers need proper training and monitoring in order to produce precise information in a timely manner. Researchers need special skills to interpret responses that are off record. Therefore interviews were recorded in order to save time and were later transcribed.

4.6.3. Semi-structured one to-one interview

This type of interview allows for probing and clarification of answers. In this type of interview the researcher needs to be attentive to the responses of the participants so that she/he can identify new emerging lines of enquiry that are related to the phenomenon being studied and then to explore and probe these (Maree, 2007).

Semi-structured interviews have been used as they give the researcher the flexibility to ask predetermined questions. They also allow for flexibility as the researcher can probe and ask for clarification of answers. Here the researcher was able to control the interview and bring the interviewee back to the focus of the study (Maree, 2007 & Kumar, 2005).

4.6.4. Document Analysis

Documents have been analysed in order to identify the teaching methods used by Grade One educators in developing reading skills.

Henning *et al* (2004) as well as Cohen *et al* (2007), argue that documents and other artifacts are a valuable source of information. Some documents that are of private nature like diaries, medical records or prescriptions, need to be treated with care and full ethical implication in mind (Henning *et al*, 2005) . Cohen *et al* (2007), further argue that where documents exist, they may be in many different forms in the sense that a standard analytical format (e.g. content analysis) may be impossible. In this study the researcher analysed different forms of documents.

In order to get more information on what the educators were teaching during the year, the educators were asked to bring their year plans consisting of learning programs, work schedule as well as the lesson plans. Class time tables were also looked at in order to find out whether the reading period as per the DoE proposition is adhered to. Documents from the Department of Education with guidelines on teaching reading were also analyzed. What was noticed was that some of the participants were not following the DoE's documents which espouse the relevant methods of teaching reading even though somehow their plans were surprisingly satisfactory.

Advantages

Robson (2002), argues that documents are unobtrusive and can be used without imposing on participants. They can be checked and re-checked for reliability. The study analyzed the documents without interfering with or imposing to the participants.

Disadvantages

A major problem is that documents may not have been written for the same purposes as the research and therefore conclusions will not usually be possible from document analysis alone (Robson, 2002). Therefore the study overcomes this shortfall by using more than one method of data collection for triangulation.

Steps to data reduction

The collected data was reduced before it was presented. It was further discussed according to the following steps as outlined by McMillan and Schumacher (1993):

Step1: The researcher starts by recording the data sets (interview transcripts, field notes, observation notes) as a whole, to get a sense of what is happening. The researcher writes down the ideas that come to him or her as she/he reads. In this study the researcher collected and transcribed the data from both the interviews and the observational sheets, so as to have a true reflection of what transpires in a Grade One classroom during the reading period.

Step2: The researcher identifies the topics which emerge from the data. A topic is the descriptive name for the subject matter of a piece of text. The researcher writes down the topics in the margin. Themes emerging from data collected during interview and observation processes were identified and were attended to.

Step3: The researcher writes lists of topics that have emerged from the different data sets and sees if there is any duplication. She/he now has a set of topics with which to classify or categorize live data. Classification means that one puts similar aspects together in the same group. In this study themes were categorized taking out similarities and differences. The topics with the same categories were identified and these themes will be discussed based on the principles as well as the elements of the theory employed by the study (AT).

Step4: The researcher then applies this provisional classification system to all the data sets.

He/she may abbreviate the topic to a code next to the appropriate piece of data.

4.7. Ethical considerations

The researcher throughout the research process, tried to ensure that the rights of the research participants were not compromised in any way. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the educators, Department of Education as well as the school principal. In order for the study to meet the ethical requirements of the university, the researcher applied for the Ethical clearance with the University and was granted.

A letter from the Department of Education granting the permission to conduct a study (Appendix A). The letter to the school principal was written stating the nature of the research, sampling and the instruments to be used for data collection and the reasons of choosing them (Appendix B). Prospective participants were given a letter of consent to sign, containing details of the study with the option of participating and / or withdrawing at any given stage of the research (Appendix C). Anonymity and confidentiality were also guaranteed (Rand Afrikaans University, 2002). The letters stated that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained by using pseudonyms instead of real names of teachers as well as the name of the school. The letters indicated that the description of the school would be slightly altered to disguise easy recognition by those who are familiar with it.

The data will be kept confidential and it will only be used for research purposes only and the public will not have access to it. The information will be kept in a locked storage at the University for a period of five years following completion of the research. The school and the participants have a right to review a copy of any information being used in this study.

4.8. Limitation for the study

Interviews are not simply a data collection exercise, but they are a social, interpersonal encounter. Thus power relations influenced the process of the interview (Bertram, 2004). In this study, it was noted that the participants were reluctant to speak honestly. During interviews there were responses that seemed untrue. It would seem that this was done in an attempt to please the researcher. The characteristic fake behaviour from the two participants was as a result of the respect that they had for the researcher since she was their superior. Private information that was gathered or observed could not be reported (Creswell, 2009). This suggests that no matter how fascinating those issues could be, they could not be reported if they are regarded as private by the participants.

The researcher was given the maximum of one hour for observing each participant and one visit per participant. Clearly, the data was not sufficient enough. The researcher feels that if more time was given, more data could have been gathered.

4.9. Validity/ Reliability/ Trustworthiness

“The absolute ‘Truth’ is not possible, but validity can be enhanced, so that the research is as trustworthy as possible” (Bertram, 2004, p.71).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1988), Lather (1991), Wolcott (1994) as well as Creswell (2003) validity is not always clearly measurable in a qualitative research. Instead, the trustworthiness quality proves a better term to describe the authenticity and quality of the research study. They have suggested the use of words like credibility, dependability, confirmability, verification and transferability instead of the word validity.

The study used more than one instrument for data collection in order to provide triangulation. This enhances validity and credibility for the study and prevents personal bias (Denzin, 1989).

Conclusion

This chapter has explained different methods used in data collection and revealed how the researcher went about collecting data. In fact, it described the methods used, which are: Observation, Interview and Document Analysis. The next chapter is more about participants from whom the data was collected.

CHAPTER 5

Findings and discussions

5.1. Introduction

This study explored methods used by Grade One educators whilst developing reading skills. The case study allowed some insight into what really happens inside the three Grade One classrooms during the reading lessons. The data was collected through interviewing the three Grade One teachers, observing them while conducting their reading lessons and analyzing documents. The findings are based on three critical questions. Here, generated themes are discussed according to the principles of a theory employed by the study. The discussion is based on the three participants.

The interviewing of the three educators helped to compare the data collected through observation. The analysis of documents such as time tables, learners' workbooks, calendars, policy and reading records helped in the gathering of data for this chapter.

Description of the participants and their respective classrooms.

Participant 1

She is in her late forties and qualified to teach the junior primary learners. She has been teaching Grade One for eight years. This class comprises of twenty five learners. Twenty two of them are repeating Grade One for the first time and three of them are repeating for the third time. Learners were seated in groups of four. This classroom was once used as a store room refer to (figure 5.5). She is very worried about the ones repeating for the third time because they do not show any visible improvement. It would seem they need special schools but their parents seem to be in denial of the fact that their children have learning barriers.

Participant 2

This is a female teacher in her late forties, she grew in Johannesburg and still has a problem in speaking the same IsiZulu as the learners she teaches. She is qualified to teach Junior primary learners. She has taught Grade One for eight years. This class consists of fifty six learners who are all Grade One beginners. Learners are sitting in rows facing the front. This classroom was used as a library and one can still see the shelves and books along the walls refer to (figure 5.1). There are also old computers cluttering the room.

Participant 3

This is a female in her late thirties with a Senior Primary Diploma from a College of Education. She sits with fifty five learners in class. Her class has no pictures on the wall besides the time table, duty roster, calender and the chart written 'Imisindo' (Sounds) which looks old and faint (I wonder how the learners are able to see what is written on that chart). The learners face the front. There is a very small space to allow for the movement between the desks. Learners are generally noisy. There is no educator discipline.

Discussion of findings

It has been stated that the findings are derived from three critical questions where generated themes are discussed based on the principles of a theory employed by the study as well as the elements of the study. The discussion is based on the participants and assumes the interpretivist approach. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) state that the purpose of such studies is to attempt to understand each and every individual in his/her space. Therefore each educator was visited in her own classroom for in-depth understanding of what transpires whilst developing reading skills (Bertram, 2004).

Critical Question 1:What teaching methods do you use as Grade One educator in developing reading skills in your class?

In order to find answers to the above question, document analysis was used to collect data. Documents such as the Departmental guidelines on teaching reading, educators' workbook with year plan, school and departmental calendars, a class timetable and reading records were analysed.

The Departmental guidelines document on teaching reading states all the recommended guidelines as well as the methods which can be used when teaching reading such as Reading aloud, Group guided reading, Comprehension, Phonemic awareness, Fluency and Vocabulary. The time allocation for the daily activities regarding the teaching of reading was also stated. Analysing this document proved useful as it laid the foundation of what was to be observed.

The School and departmental calendars were closely related to each other. Important days and events such as the Readathon week, Library week and others were highlighted in the calendars. However, there was no record showing that the learners participated in any of these events whereas recording is considered a very important thing to do as it gives a true reflection of what has transpired or what is to be undertaken.

Report on Document Analysis

The above documents as well as the class timetable, homework timetable, reading records, workbooks and calendars were analysed. Timetables assisted the researcher to find out whether the reading activities were given any time slots in the classrooms as per the Department of Education (2007) requirement. The Department states that the time allocated for reading in the Foundation Phase is one hour per day which gives a total of five hours a week. From the records that the participants kept, there was proof that reading did take place daily but for only 30 minutes. They said it was reading for enjoyment. This was contrary to what the Department of Education (2007) advocates.

The workbooks with the planning for the whole year, starting from the learning programme, workschedule and lesson plans were analysed. The learning programme and the workschedule had no evidence of the use of the various teaching methods of reading. So were the lessons plans. These documents showed records of only one teaching method for reading which is Reading aloud.

The reading records for learners showed that they were not performing at the same level and that they were struggling a lot to read well. However, there were no records showing the programme that was set aside for those struggling learners. Participant One revealed that her learners were excelling in reading only because they were repeating the grade and that they were a small class. The other learners from large classes were struggling a lot. This was an indication that class size does affect teaching and learning (DoE, 2007).

It was observed, from all participants' homework timetable, that reading homework was only given to learners to be done during school vacations. This suggests that there was insufficient reading practice whereas Rasinski, Homan and Biggs (2009), argue that reading is achieved through practice-wide reading. For some readers it can be repeated practice of a particular piece. Therefore, enough practise for learners' reading should be encouraged by educators.

The Activity Theory theory as employed by the study favours the engaging of activities, with number of tools help achieve an outcome.

This study noted that the participants had calendars where special events like, “Readathon and Library weeks” were recognised and the school does cater for these special activities in certain weeks. This showed that the school was trying to develop learners’ reading skills even though there were no records showing that the learners had taken part in these events.

It was evident from this study that the three participants did not follow what was stated in the Department policy guidelines on teaching methods for reading. The policy guidelines discuss the teaching methods of reading, e.g. reading aloud, group guided reading, independent reading and others. It also suggests methods of teaching reading which can be employed in order to assist those struggling learners.

According to the elements of the Activity Theory, division of labour was not met because these participants lacked the knowledge of what was expected of them as they were not familiar with the policies and the rules to be adhered to when conducting activities using teaching methods of developing learner reading skills. Thus the outcomes set were not fully met. The Activity Theory stresses that all the elements should be considered as there cannot be an effective outcome if they are not all engaged.

Critical Question 2: How do you use teaching methods whilst developing reading skills?

Observation

For data collection regarding this question, observations as an instrument were used. Maree (2007), contends that the interpretivist paradigm takes the form of a ‘hermeneutic circle’. It suggests that in order to understand the meaning of the whole one needs to understand the parts, hence observations were used and the Activity Theory was employed as a frame work.

Each participant was observed for an hour and this was done only once. This was suggested by the principal so as not to disturb the school programme. The researcher wanted to gather ‘live’ data from a naturally-occurring social situation after having analysed the documents (Cohen *et al*, 2007).

The observations enhanced the quality of the data collected during document analyses and the data from the interviews as they had the potential to help the researcher discover things that participants might not freely talk about in an interview situation (Maree, 2007).

Sometimes what people do differs from what they say. That is the reason it is important to collect 'live' data (Taylor *et al*, 2002). It was evident that these participants were faced with the problem of overcrowding which led to the shortage of floor space refer to (figure 5.3). Only one participant had a normal classroom since the other two were converted rooms. High learner enrollment made it necessary for this conversion. This resulted in teaching environment that was not conducive. This further corroborates the fact that poor teaching conditions make it more difficult to deliver quality education (DoE 2007).

The photos below show some of the problems which were observed. The spaces between the desks are used by learners to keep their school bags. The photos were taken in the absence of the learners because they were not participants in the study. The researchers' agreement with the school was that only three Grade One educators were to be part of the study as participants.



Figure 5.1: A class which was once a library.



Figure 5.2: Resources hanging on the wall.



Figure 5.3: A class with very limited floor space.



Figure 5.4: Teaching resources on the wall.



Figure 5.5: A class which was a storage room and accomodates only twenty three learners.

These classrooms had a few items hanged on the walls which is contrary to the stipulations in the Government Gazzete (2008), which discusses the recomended teaching aids for literacy in Grade One to Grade Three such as alphabet charts, word charts, vocabulary charts etc refer to (Figure 5.4 & 5.2). These should be within reach for learners so that they will assess them everytime. In one class there was only a class time table and a reading chart with-imisindo (Phonics). The elaboration on these was inadequate.

Learners were at some point given books and ordered to read from a page that had a picture. The principle of mediation states the importance of using the tools correctly when an activity is undertaken as this helps in achieving the desired outcomes. Clearly, the use of tools was inadequate in this case. Classes did not have enough tools for reading.

There were no reading corners which was a blatant disregard for the DoE's reading guidelines. The reading books were the only tools which were mostly used by the participants. They were not varying the tools. The handing out of books to learners indicated that the participants wanted to draw their leraners' attention in order to bring order. This behaviour by the participants was indicative of their learning on the behavioural approach because the leaners knowledge of making their own book choices was not considered.

These participants were all conducting an iSizulu lesson on reading. This is good for the learners as they learn best when taught in their mother tongue especially when they have just entered school (DoE, 2008).

This was done because the Language of learning and teaching of the school is IsiZulu. It is according to the principle of Activity Theory, called Object Orientedness, which seeks to establish whether actions performed are goal-directed processes that will fulfill the object. It was observed that the participants tried their best to observe this principle since their activity addressed a method of teaching reading. They seemed to be goal directed to achieve their set outcomes. Their activities were object oriented.

Before the participants presented a lesson of the day, they did some pre-activity work with the learners as a warm up. This indicated that they do acknowledge the fact that the learners do bring some knowledge from their homes and the fact that they are not just empty vessels. Therefore it is important for an educator to build from what the learners know.

The learners in participant 1's class, analysed a picture in a book of a man selling vegetables and a small boy standing, looking very sad. One little boy says: "Memu lomfana ulambile umalume kamniki ukudla manje usephatheke kabi- *The boy is hungry but uncle does not give him food, that is why he is now crying*". Participant was happy about the response. Learners continued to say things they were seeing in the picture. The words they were mentioning some of them the participant has prepared on word cards, she asked if anyone could be able to identify the words on cards which were placed on a small table, they came and pick up and read the words plugged them on the board. This participant was seen to go all her way out in order to assist learners in her class. The learners were in emergent-reader stage, they could recognise words and were able to join the teacher when reading the book.

Participant 1 was observed using a number of teaching methods yet her plan did not reveal that. She read aloud a story to learners and allowed learners to read individually word cards. She asked them questions to check whether there was any comprehension which took place amongst the learners. All the participants read the story while learners were listening and then re-read the story with the learners following the educator. The two participants with large classes were not checking whether the learners were pointing at the words as they read or they were just following what the teacher was saying. Other learners were not concentrating even though they were able to say after the teacher.

Wessels (2007), states that as a teacher of reading, you need to keep a close check on whether learners are simply barking at print' or whether they are really understanding and interpreting what they are reading. This was an observation from the class of participant 2 and participant 3.

Having read the story with learners, participants asked questions to check whether the learners comprehended the story. One participant put up words on the chalkboard which appeared most in the story. Learners were asked to read them. What was noted was that these participants chose stories from the book which addressed a certain 'msindo' (phonics). This suggests that they were teaching word recognition using Phonics as a teaching method, but this method never appeared in their planning.

Some learners were struggling to read the phonics of the day but had no problem in responding orally to the questions asked based on the story. While learners were trying to read they were seen picking up their hands and saying vowels, giving each finger a vowel name and then they proceeded to read refer to (Figure 5.6). This method seemed to be more helping to the learners when coding a word. Minskoff (2005), mentions that teachers must make sure that students know the vowels before teaching consonant sounds. Phonic education certainly is very important for learners in the Foundation Phase because that is when children learn to read and write. These participants were doing what Minskoff (2005) advocates.

The emphasis of using a hand while trying to locate the vowel was very useful to the learners. They quickly got what the word was and immediately read it aloud. Participant 1 was observed reminding a boy who was struggling with the word card, by saying: "Sipho, baphi onkamisa bakho, pho awubacingi ngani esandleni?" – (Sipho, where are your vowels, so why dont you find them on your hand?). Eventually the boy did as he was told and he read the word with nobody's help. Seeing how easy it was for learners to use their hands in locating the vowels fascinated the researcher a great deal..

Participant 2 gave each learner a worksheet as an extension of the work. She read aloud a worksheet and the learners followed her. The whole class completed the worksheet.

Participant 1 wrote the phonic of the day on the board where there were still placed words from the story. These learners were instructed to write their own five words except for the ones appearing on the board.

She gave each of them, five nicely cut, small and colourful papers where they wrote their words. The learners came up with 'beautiful' words and each of them read to the whole class and gave a meaning of the word. They enjoyed this activity a lot. This participant made sure that when she gave out the rules on how the activity should be done, they were clear to everyone and that every one understood his/her roles (division of labor). It was the use of the tools that she had that contributed to the achievement of the outcomes.

Participant 3 extended her activity by calling ten learners to the same row. Then she told them to take out their spelling books. She started to shout out the spelling words. The rest of the class were ordered to keep quiet. That never worked at all as they were instead hitting one another and going to her to report the incidents. Others were repeatedly asking to go to the toilet. The class was simply noisy and it lacked discipline. This is the participant who had no relevant qualification to teach in a Foundation Phase. The reading performance of the learners was worse compared to that of the other similarly large class. This participant level at which she is, according to the Hierichal structure, is Level 1. This level requires serious consultation with the people who have more experience than her.

This should not be the case with someone who has taught the same Grade for the past six years. She should have developed to the operational level which is the top one where all is well understood by the person conducting the activity.

The observations revealed that the participants were faced with challenges of contextual factors as well as the class size. Thus, when they did planning, only one method came to mind because they believed that it would bring about order in their classes as it is mostly liked by the learners. Contraly to their planning, these participants were observed to be using more than one method, methods observed were teaching of word recognition- Phonics Comprehension where the learners were given follow up questions and asked to analyse the pictures. The learners were allowed to develop their ability of noticing, thinkng about and working with individual sounds before reading the print (Phonemic Awareness). This was done by using their hands where the fingers were allocated certain vowels.

For there was an issue which seemed not addressed by the participants, the learners who are struggling to read they had no provision in place, there was no activity catered for them. Whereas group-guided reading as a method gives the teacher the opportunity to observe

reading behaviours, identify areas of need and allow learners to develop more independence and confidence as they practise and consolidate reading behaviours and skills. It also provides opportunities to integrate learners' growing knowledge of the conventions of print, letter-sound relationships and other foundational skills in context, and it states that group reading gives learners more opportunities to read aloud to an audience (Wessels (2007). Therefore these participants should have considered the use of group-guided method in accomodating learners who struggles.

It was evident that participants believed in constructivism as an approach which influences their teaching. They acknowledged that the learners' existing knowlegde should be considered in terms of the requirements of the Department of Education.

Critical Question 3: Why do you use the teaching methods in developing reading skills.?

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews as a data collection tool were used in response to the above question. Henning and Smit (2004), argue that knowledge / understanding is not only constructed by observing the phenomenon but also by descriptions of peoples' intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning making and self understanding. Therefore, this tool was used to enhance the researcher's understanding and knowledge of the participants' behaviors whilst developing reading skills in their respective classrooms.

The research revealed that the participants were using mostly the same method which was appearing in their lesson plans (Reading Aloud). There are other methods which they were using which never appeared in their records. The interviews assisted in finding out from them what really was the cause of all that had transpired in their classes during the reading lesson period. The participants were asked a number of questions.

In order for the researcher to make sense of what these educators were doing in class, there was a need to find out what the concept of reading means to them. They were therefore asked to define the term Reading. Finding out their understanding of this concept was going to make the researcher understand better some experiences gained during observations.

Participant 1 responded: *It's the gaining of new knowledge, information about things that are happening. Regarding learners, they learn new words, understand them better and apply them in their daily communication.*

Participant 2: *I think it is about interpretation of prints to make meaning, understanding that those prints are called words and they make sense once read and applied correctly in relevant situations.*

Participant 3: *It focuses on how learners read and make sense of what they are reading, by pointing to a word that they are reading, following on while reading with the educator and making sure that they can see what they are reading.*

Deducing from these responses, one can see that the participants had an understanding of what reading is. They all mentioned that it is about making sense of prints and being able to apply those meanings to real life situations. This was contrary to what transpired during observation as they revealed that reading in these classes was all about taking a book and reading it aloud, and then following with the questions based on the story. William (2007), states that reading is strictly the making of meaning from print, with an emphasis on phonemic awareness, vocabulary, phonics, fluency and comprehension. This suggests that a variety of teaching methods for reading should be applied. According to Blair, Rupley & Nichols (2007), it takes a variety of classroom strategies to be an effective teacher of reading, therefore the teachers need to vary the methods so as to produce a competent and confident reader. These participants did vary methods but they were not aware of that fact.

According to the Hierarchal Structure, participant 1 is on the third level (Operational level). She is resourceful and knows exactly how to help learners achieve the best. Participant 2 still needs some help in order to move from level 1 to level 2. Participant 3 functions at level 1 but she seems to be relaxed, she has a lot of consultation to do. She is in denial.

After having heard their response with regards to the concept, the researcher wanted to know how they would go about developing the reading skill. What was evident from this study was that even though the Departmental documents provide the teaching methods of reading, these participants were not complying with what is in these documents. They were asked to give their own understanding of the teaching methods. From the three participants it was clear that they all understood *teaching methods as used for developing learners' skills in reading and*

that they need to cater for each and every individual need. A follow up question was posed about whether one method could be enough to develop the learner's skill?

They all said that methods should be varied so as to accommodate every individual in class. They were then asked whether they were varying the methods. The participants refused to respond to this question. Westwood (2008), argues that there is no-one method which is the best, but there are factors which influence the choice of selection. However, methods which are effective with educator A and children X may not at all work for educator B with children Y considering the importance of what children bring to school as it enhances their reading ability and ensures continued development termed as Pre-reading and early reading experiences. These participants records only had one method used. Maybe that is the reason why they never responded to the question. They knew Westwood's (2008) argument about learners being different individuals with differing needs.

According to the observations the teaching methods were varied, contrary to their planning. The planning reflected one method. The policies were not considered. The two large classes which had learners who were identified by the participants as struggling to read were a separate group. The fact that participants were not engaging with the policies resulted in them not understanding the teaching methods which they could use to cater for those who were struggling. The following question was asked: what programme addresses those who have serious reading problems?

The participants responded by saying that the issue of floor space as well as class size were barriers in their teaching and learning. Participant 2 said "*We are faced with the contextual factors such as classroom sizes as well as a large number of learners; it makes it hard to attend to individual needs*".

Participant 3 highlighted the issue of having under-aged learners and those learners who has never been to pre-school in their classrooms, she said this hinders teaching progress.

The issue of contextual factors has been noted by the Department of Education (DoE, 2007) by stating that crowded and dilapidated classrooms hinder the learner progress. High learner-educator ratios combined with poor physical conditions and inadequate facilities for teaching and learning such as inadequate instructional support materials, make it more difficult to deliver quality education. This suggests that there is no effective teaching and learning if classes are overcrowded. Contrary to this argument there are teaching methods for reading

which do not consider the class size, e.g; the Group Guided Method which states that learners can be grouped by reading abilities, and it provides the opportunities to integrate learner's growing knowledge of the conventions of print, letter-sound relationships and other foundational skills in context (Cooper, Chard & Kiger, 2006).

It was evident from the study that the participants were not following the Department's policy guidelines on reading. When probed about issues of policy, it was evident that they did not know of any policy from the department which discusses the methods of teaching reading. Participant 1 even said "*there are no policies which discuss the teaching methods of reading.*" These participants were not familiar with the department policies because when they are given policies they just throw them away and don't care to read so as to find out what is the document entails, they are themselves lazy to read.

It is believed that teachers are the key to the successful teaching of reading and should be exemplary to learners by showing love of reading (Hornsby, 2000). The researcher showed them policies which they were in possession of. All the three participants were astounded to realize that they were not using such great wealth of information. One could say that these participants were so lazy to read and yet they need to instill the love of reading in their learners

They were then asked if they could mention the teaching methods known to them. They mentioned a lot but surprisingly they were not using all of these methods. The only one they seemed to like was the Reading Aloud method. When asked how they came to know about these methods since they had earlier denied awareness of any Department policy Document, two of them could not answer. Participant 1 responded by saying: "*Some of the methods I find in the text books and others I learnt from college. It's only that I sometimes forget to use them and I don't record them in my lesson plan*" A follow up question was asked to find out why they mostly chose the reading aloud method based on their responses.

It was clear that they used this method in-order to read aloud text books to the learners which were chosen by them (participants), and to build confidence in the learners by making them see that to read aloud does not mean that one is not good in reading (Bald, 2007).

When asked of the criteria they used when choosing the text books that they were using, the participants stated that choosing the books needed special attention. They all believed that teachers must choose readers (books) that are at the level of the learners.

Moore and Cunningham (2003), concur when they argue that teachers provide access to print written at various levels of difficulty so learners can be taught from and experience materials within their range of experience. They further state that when using the reading-aloud method, teachers should take special care to select passages that are within the learners' capabilities as well as the text books which appeal to them.

According to The Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002) the most important task of the Foundation Phase teacher is to ensure that all learners learn to read. It goes on to say that it is recommended that all learners need to be taught strategies that help them to read with understanding and which help them to unlock the code of written text.

The participants were asked whether they see any relevance when using these methods (that they had mentioned) whilst developing reading skills. All the participants were not brave enough to respond to this question because they knew that they were not varying the methods. Participant 3 said: *"These methods if used in variation can bring about a lot of difference, more especially if there are no contextual factors and the large number of learners, which hinders progress"*

This suggests that the importance of varying teaching methods for reading is well understood but the problem is, they are not certain whether they are using them as they do not appear in their planning. These participants are in need of educator development so as to become better teachers of reading using differing methods.

The researcher wanted to find out from participants whether they had attended any workshops to help them improve their teaching of reading. The Department of Education promised to conduct workshops on reading as this is a problem facing the whole of South Africa.

These participants denied that there had ever been workshops rendered by the DoE which addressed the teaching methods of reading. Participant 2 responded by saying: *"there have been workshops conducted but there were not addressing the issues on reading."* It was really amazing how and where they could have gotten hold of the policy documents if they were even denying having attended a single workshop on the teaching of reading.

The participants were asked to talk about their experiences of attending the workshops. This was asked in order to make sense of their practices. The following are their responses:

Participant 1 *“No I have never attended workshop specifically for teaching methods on reading, but I have attended workshops when there are changes on curriculum and we would be work shopped also about how to use new documents addressing the change. Other than that, no workshops on teaching methods for reading’* This response was surprising because the DoE in 2007 promised to assist educators by giving them enough workshops to address this nationwide problem of poor reading among learners.

Participant 2: *“Not any specifically for methods of teaching reading though workshops have been conducted by the Department addressing issues on new policies and their requirements. Maybe now the Department will organize workshops on teaching methods for reading because of the ANA results which came up with the poor performance of learners in reading and in numeracy.”*

Participant 3: *“Other workshops that I have attended have been very fruitful because when we come back we share with colleagues and try to implement what has been said but I don’t remember attending any workshop which was only about reading.”*

From these responses it was evident that the workshops which the Department of Education conducts for the teachers are not sufficient enough and not straight to the point as there are neglected issues which they do not cater for and are important in teaching and learning.

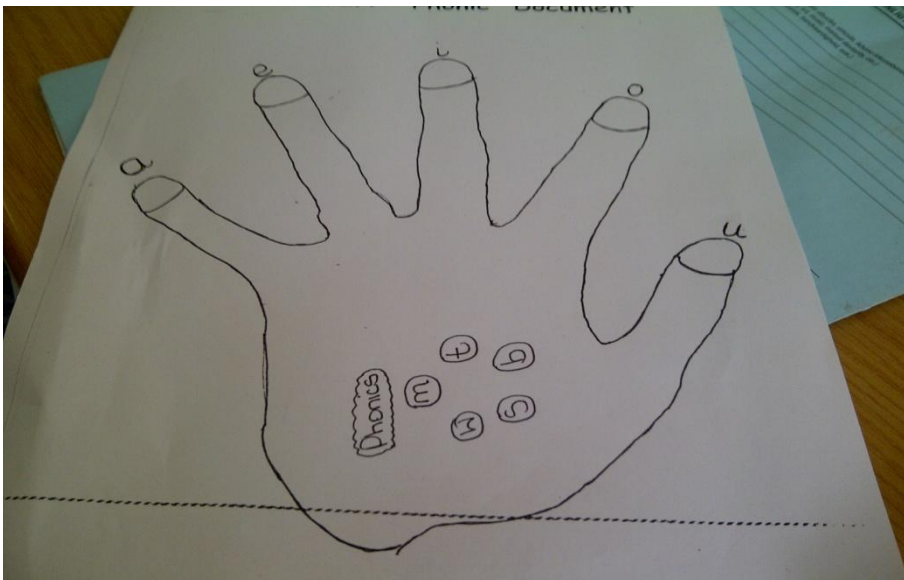
Conclusion

This chapter has reported and discussed the findings of the study by bringing some principles of Activity Theory, the elements of this theory as well as the influence that literature has on this study. The study has revealed that these participants are not familiar with the policy documents from the department. As a result, the participants did not do justice on their teaching of reading. There are a number of issues in their classrooms with regards to the teaching methods of reading which are not attended to as per discussion on the findings.

According to Prinsloo (2008), literacy teaching methods followed by the majority of schools in their day-to-day practices do not succeed in giving full effect to the good intentions and substantive content of existing curriculum policy, and may have serious negative effects on the majority of children who are from socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

This suggests that these participants are doing exactly what is argued by Prinsloo (2008). That is the reason they are confronted by poor reading performance of learners.

According to the theory employed by the study the activity cannot be understood without understanding the role of resources in everyday existence. It is concerned with the practice that it is doing of an activity. It is therefore of much importance to identify the resources and understand them explicitly. The use of resources was not explicit enough which resulted in this type of learner performance. There was a new method which was given a name by the researcher in the study: “**Hand Vowel Method**”. This method was never discussed anywhere in literature and in policies but it seemed popular to these participants and useful to the learners. Below is the figure of a hand.



This figure 5.6: is the representation of how learners understood their vowels and phonics. Vowels are on the tips of the fingers and phonics is on the palm.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

This chapter will briefly discuss the findings focussing on the areas which need attention which were identified from the study. It will then suggests recomendations on those areas which require attention. Finally it will conclude this study.

6. 2. Conclusion and recomendations

6.2.1. Monitoring learner perfomance for their improvement

It was evident from the study that even though the teachers keep reading records, this was not done as per Departmental policy requirement. Other important issues were left out. There was no trace of evidence that any monitoring of learners perfomance was done. There was no sign of programmes in place for those who were struggling with reading.

Recommendation

It is recomendated that these teachers should familiarise themselves with the Department Policies, especially the Foundation Phase with Early Grade Reading Assessment. This will enable them to assess the reading level of each and every learner, support and guide futher development through continous assessment. They should be able to measure whether their teaching methods in the classroom have resulted in improved reading by learners or poor learner perfomance (self introspection). It is highly recommended that the Department Of Education should see to it that education policies are re-enforced and adhered to.

6.2.2. Teaching practice and methodology

It was evident that there was a lack of variation of teaching resources as well as methods. There was also a teacher who had no qualifications of teaching the Foundation Phase learners. Learners were not attended to according to their different learning styles and individual needs. However, the Department of Education (2007) states that children are unique and that they all have different learning styles and individual needs. Therefore special attention should be given to each of them.

Recommendation

“The best teacher of reading is a teacher who conveys not only the value of reading, but also the joy of reading” (Rasinski & Padak, 2004).

Reading is a competence that teachers have to actively teach since learners do not simply “pick up” reading skills (Westwood, 2008). Therefore, there is no clear pathway for progress in learning to read unless the teacher has a plan for teaching the learners how to read. Teachers need to know what is expected of learners, know how to assist them in achieving satisfactory reading levels and where necessary they should ask for extra professional help by consulting Subject Advisors (Departmental Officials). These curriculum officials need to help teachers by mediating the reading material and other resources which will be made available to the teachers.

There are computer DVDs which show learners reading at different levels. Teachers can use these DVDs to establish appropriate expectations and standards. DVDs which show good reading and classroom management practices can also help teachers to learn about good practices to apply in their classrooms. Therefore these should be available and effectively used. It is also recommended that they need to vary teaching methods for reading as it is stated by (Westwood, 2008), that there is no single method to be used for reading which can bring about the perfect reader, the participants should then try to vary methods with understanding.

6.2.3. Class sizes and floor space

These were the problems that teachers were complaining about. These factors were hindering teaching and learning. Two classes had from 55-57 learners, which resulted in limited movement for both learners and teachers. Teachers battled to attend to each and every individual in class. It was impossible for the teachers to cater for each learner as the classes were overcrowded.

Recommendation

It is recommended that there should be at least 30 learners in each class, and certainly not more than 50. Grade One learners need individual attention. It is also recommended that school principals should be strict when admitting learners to a Grade One classroom in order for effective teaching and learning to take place.

6.2.4. School readiness of learners and learners with barriers to learning

This was also a complaint from the teachers that it was not only the under-age learners who struggled but many of the learners had not been through Grade R. There was also a problem of learners with barriers to learning who have repeated Grade One for more than two years. Their parents are not fully knowledgeable in matters like these ones.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Grade One learners should have received pre-school education before they are admitted to Grade One. The Department of Education needs to make it a rule in one of the policies that every learner should be admitted if they have pre-school education. It is again recommended that parents should be educated in the matters which contribute to their children's learning.

6.2.5. Parental Involvement

It was evident from the study that the parents are not fully involved in their children's learning. The educators mentioned that it was difficult to hand out homework as learners come back to school without having done it. It was also a problem that learners would take school books home only to return them stained, torn apart and hard to re-use. Therefore, the learners were no longer taking reading books home.

Recommendation

The parents of this school should be responsible in their children's learning. The school should provide literacy programmes to help parents to support in their children learning. Parents should be encouraged to take responsibility to ensure that reading continues even after the bell has rung for the end of the school day. Therefore teachers should improve on giving out reading homework to learners. Learners should also be exposed to the handling of the books even at home.

6.2.6. Principal Involvement

It was evident that the school principal does offer support with regards to reading and the programmes addressing reading in school, but needs to improve. For effective improvement the recommendations below can assist.

Recommendation

The school-Principal needs to improve in encouraging the reading programmes at school by allowing for staff training and support in the teaching of reading, involving parents in the reading programmes. The principal should see to it that the school has a functioning reading policy and that all the teachers should be involved in developing this policy. The principal should also try to see to it that every learner learns to read, steps are taken to promote reading, reading strategies are integrated in all school subjects and a culture of reading is instilled in the school. It is essential that the school principal takes a direct interest in reading in the school so that the Heads of Department and all other teachers within the school will follow suit.

6.2.7.Resources

There is no doubt that a good learning and text-rich environment in schools encourages children to perform better. It was evident that the school had no enough resources.

Recommendation

Educators need adequate resources for the teaching of reading. Good readers need access to good reading materials. Learners need access to appropriate reading books throughout the school year. They should be able to take books home in order to practise reading. Rasinski & Hoffman (2003), state that reading is an activity which needs practice like music and other activities which need a coach. Therefore, more practice should be given to the learners. Magazines and other materials can also enrich the reading experience and encourage the parents to engage in reading. Therefore parents should be made aware of this.

6.2.8.Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings and suggested recommendations for the study. The results of this study gave me insightful knowledge about methods of teaching reading in Grade One. From the observations conducted it appeared that learners were struggling to read. Educators claimed that resources were not enough. Overcrowding was also an issue raised by them.

Having reported on the findings and the recommendations, it is suggested that the school should attend to these recommendations.

This study can be used to guide the school management team, school governing body and the educators to compile a set of guidelines on the effective methods of teaching to develop reading skills.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

131 Montevista
147Corumbene Road
Durban
4001
02 June 2011

Dear Principal

I am undertaking a research project on “Teaching methods used by Grade One educators in developing reading skills at a school in Durban”. Therefore, it will be highly appreciated if you could participate in the study and start by filling the enclosed / attached declaration.

Research findings are influencing the ways in which people are being educated and trained. South Africa, like any other developing country, is forced to conduct studies of this nature in order to critically analyse teaching methods as pedagogical resources in education and training. Therefore, this study aims at providing valuable information on the teaching methods and learning as well as in decision making.

Please take note of the following issues:

1. There will be no limit on any benefit that the participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project;
2. Respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your own personal opinion;
3. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance;
4. There are no right or wrong answer;
5. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality;
6. Real names of the participants will not be used, but symbols such as School of Miracles with Participant: Participant1,Participant2 & Participant3 will be used to represent participants’ names;
7. The participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to themselves;
8. The participants will not be under any circumstance that force them to reveal what they don’t want to reveal; and
9. No video recording will be made but tape recorder will be used for the interview.

This research project is supervised by Dr SB Khoza. His telephone number is (031) 260 7595 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and his email address is khozas@ukzn.ac.za

Conducted by Ms PP Mhlongo. Her Cell number is 073 8532384 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and her email address is mpinkymamzo@yahoo.com

Thank you for your support, co-operation and valuable time: Best wishes from

Ms PP Mhlongo

University of KwaZulu-Natal (Student no. 204517960)

Cell: 073 8532384

Email: mpinkymamzo@yahoo.com

Please sign the following declaration and include your full names as indicated:

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

APPENDIX C

131 Montevista
147Corumbene Road
Durban
4001
02 June 2011

Dear Participant

I am undertaking a research project on “Teaching methods used by Grade One educators in developing reading skills at Nsimbini Primary School”. Therefore, it will be highly appreciated if you could participate in the study and start by filling the enclosed / attached declaration.

Research findings are influencing the ways in which people are being educated and trained. South Africa, like any other developing country, is forced to conduct studies of this nature in order to critically analyse teaching methods as pedagogical resources in education and training. Therefore, this study aims at providing valuable information on the teaching methods and learning as well as in decision making.

Please take note of the following issues:

1. There will be no limit on any benefit that the participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project;
2. Respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your own personal opinion;
3. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance;
4. There are no right or wrong answer;
5. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality;
6. Real names of the participants will not be used, but symbols such as School of Miracles with Participant: Participant1, Participant2 & Participant3 will be used to represent participants’ names;
7. The participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to themselves;
8. The participants will not be under any circumstance that force them to reveal what they don’t want to reveal; and
9. No video recording will be made but tape recorder will be used for the interview.

This research project is supervised by Dr SB Khoza. His telephone number is (031) 260 7595 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and his email address is khozas@ukzn.ac.za

Conducted by Ms PP Mhlongo. Her Cell number is 073 8532384 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and her email address is mpinkymamzo@yahoo.com

Thank you for your support, co-operation and valuable time: Best wishes from

Ms PP Mhlongo

University of KwaZulu-Natal (Student no. 204517960)

Cell.: 073 8532384

Email: mpinkymamzo@yahoo.com

Please sign the following declaration and include your full names as indicated:

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

APPENDIX D

15 September 2011

Ms PP Mhlongo (204517960)
School of Education Studies
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Mhlongo

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0874/011M

PROJECT TITLE: Teaching methods used by Grade One educators in developing reading skills at a school in Durban

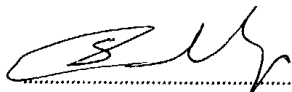
In response to your application dated 12 September 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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 school/department for a period of 5 years.

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

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor: Dr SB Khoza
cc: Mr N Memela/Mrs S Naicker, Faculty of Education, Edgewood Campus

APPENDIX E

Broad semi-structured interview questions.

Q 1: How did you feel about me being in your classroom? My presence, did it bother u and the learners?

Q 2 This school has a policy on teaching methods for reading. What are your views with regards to this policy?

Q 3: Does the policy allows /caters for the level of your learners?

Q 4: Are these teaching methods relevant to your learners

Q 5: Would you like to change any of these methods?

Q 6: Do you integrate these methods when teaching with other methods not mentioned on your school policy?

Q 7: Will you briefly explain how you apply these methods in your class?

Q 8: In which effective way can these methods be applied?

Q8: Why do you think these methods should be used?

Q 9: Are they serving the purposes intended?

Q 10: Who came up with these methods?

Q 11: Have you ever attended any workshops on developing learners reading skills?

Q 12: Tell me about your experience of attending those workshops and your practice in class.