

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING  
READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE  
IN RURAL AREAS OF BOLOBEDU,  
LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

by

**Moore Fridah Mafokwane**

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the

degree of

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

In the subject

**CURRICULUM STUDIES**

at the

University of South Africa

Supervisor: Dr MJ Sethusha

2017

## **Table of contents**

ABSTRACT .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii.
DECLARATION.....	iii
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	iv.

## **CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

1.1 Introduction and background context.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	2
1.3 Rationale of the study.....	3
1.4 Research questions.....	4
1.5 Aims and objectives.....	4
1.6 Research methodology.....	4
1.6.1 Qualitative research.....	4
1.6.2 Case study.....	4
1.6.3 Selection of participants.....	6
1.6.4 Data collection methods.....	6
1.6.5 Data analysis and interpretation.....	7
1.6.6 Ethical considerations.....	8
1.6.7 Chapter division.....	9

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 Importance of reading in the foundation phase.....	11
2.3 Theoretical Framework.....	14
2.4 Factors inhibiting the acquisition of reading skill.....	14
2.4.1 Socio-economic environment.....	14
2.4.2 Parental involvement.....	18
2.4.3 Family configuration.....	21
2.4.4 Poverty, literacy and school performance.....	22
2.4.5 Teacher competency.....	25
2.4.6 Availability of resources.....	26
2.4.7 Language of learning and teaching.....	27
2.4.8 Learners with barriers to reading.....	29
2.5 Conclusion.....	30

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

3.1 Introduction.....	31
3.2 Research methodology.....	31
3.2.1 Qualitative research.....	32
3.3 Research design.....	34
3.3.1 Case study.....	35
3.4 Site selection and background.....	36
3.5 Selection of participants.....	37
3.6 Data collection.....	37
3.6.1 Observation.....	37
3.6.2 Semi-structured interview.....	39

3.6.3 Document analysis.....	40
3.7 Data analysis and interpretation.....	40
3.8 Quality criteria of the study.....	41
3.9 Ethical consideration.....	43
3.10 Conclusion.....	43

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS**

4. 1 Introduction.....	45
4.2 Background context of the schools.....	45
4.2.1 School A.....	45
4.2.2 School B.....	46
4.3 Case study one: Teacher 1.....	47
4.3.1 Workshops on reading.....	48
4.3.2 Promotion of reading.....	49
4.3.3 Teaching reading.....	49
4.3.4 Addressing barriers to reading.....	50
4.3.5 Challenges regarding reading.....	50
4.3.6 Parental involvement.....	51
4.3.7 Socio-economic environment.....	51
4.3.8 Home language.....	51
4.3.9 Poverty.....	52
4.3.10 Overcrowding.....	52
4.3.11 Support from the Department of Education.....	53
4.3.12 Classroom management and control.....	53
4.3.13 Methods of teaching reading.....	54
4.3.14 Lesson observations.....	54

4.3.15 Synthesis.....	55
4.4 Case study two: Teacher 2.....	57
4.4.1 Workshop on reading.....	57
4.4.2 Promotion of reading.....	58
4.4.3 Teaching reading.....	58
4.4.4 Addressing barriers to reading.....	58
4.4.5 Challenges regarding reading.....	59
4.4.6 Parental involvement.....	59
4.4.7 Socio-economic environment.....	59
4.4.8 Home language.....	60
4.4.9 Poverty.....	60
4.4.10 Overcrowding.....	60
4.4.11 Support from the Department of Education.....	61
4.4.12 Classroom management and control.....	61
4.4.13 Methods of teaching reading.....	61
4.4.14 Lesson observation.....	62
4.4.15 Synthesis.....	63
4.5 Case study three: Teacher 3.....	63
4.5.1 Workshop on reading.....	64
4.5.2 Promotion of reading.....	65
4.5.3 Teaching reading.....	65
4.5.4 Addressing barriers to reading.....	66
4.5.5 Challenges regarding reading.....	66
4.5.6 Parental involvement.....	67
4.5.7 Socio-economic environment.....	67
4.5.8 Home language.....	67

4.5.9 Poverty.....	68
4.5.10 Overcrowding.....	68
4.5.11 Support from the curriculum implementers.....	68
4.5.12 Classroom management and control.....	69
4.5.13 Method of teaching reading.....	69
4.5.14 Lesson observation.....	70
4.5.15 Synthesis.....	71
4.6 Case study four: Teacher 4.....	71
4.6.1 Workshop on reading.....	72
4.6.2 Promotion of reading.....	72
4.6.3 Teaching reading .....	73
4.6.4 Addressing barriers to reading.....	73
4.6.5 Challenges regarding reading.....	74
4.6.6 Parental involvement.....	74
4.6.7 Socio-economic environment.....	75
4.6.8 Home language.....	75
4.6.9 Poverty.....	75
4.6.10 Overcrowding.....	76
4.6.11 Support from the Department of Education.....	76
4.6.12 Classroom management and control.....	77
4.6.13 Methods of teaching reading.....	77
4.6.14 Lesson observation.....	77
4.6.15 Synthesis.....	78
4.7 Case study five: Teacher 5.....	78
4.7.1 Workshop on reading.....	79
4.7.2 Promotion of reading.....	79

4.7.3 Teaching reading.....	80
4.7.4 Addressing barriers to reading.....	80
4.7.5 Challenges regarding reading.....	81
4.7.6 Parental involvement.....	81
4.7.7 Socio-economic conditions.....	82
4.7.8 Home language.....	82
4.7.9 Poverty.....	82
4.7.10 Overcrowding.....	83
4.7.11 Support from the Department of Education.....	83
4.7.12 Classroom management and control.....	83
4.7.13 Method of teaching reading.....	84
4.7.14 Lesson observation.....	84
4.7.15 Synthesis.....	85
4.8 Case study six: Teacher 6.....	85
4.8.1 Workshop on reading.....	86
4.8.2 Promotion of reading.....	86
4.8.3 Teaching reading.....	87
4.8.4 Addressing barriers to reading.....	87
4.8.5 Challenges regarding reading.....	87
4.8.6 Parental involvement.....	88
4.8.7 Socio-economic environment.....	88
4.8.8 Home language.....	89
4.8.9 Poverty.....	89
4.8.10 Overcrowding.....	89
4.8.11 Support from the Department of Education.....	90
4.8.12 Classroom management and control.....	90

4.8.13 Methods of teaching reading.....	91
4.8.14 Lesson observation.....	91
4.8.15 Synthesis.....	92
4.9 Conclusion.....	92

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 Introduction.....	94
5.2 Summary of the findings.....	94
5.2.1 Findings about workshops on reading.....	94
5.2.2 Promotion of reading.....	95
5.2.3 The teaching of reading.....	95
5.2.4 Addressing barriers to reading.....	96
5.2.5 Challenges regarding reading.....	96
5.2.6 Parental involvement.....	97
5.2.7 Socio-economic environment.....	98
5.2.8 Home language.....	98
5.2.9 Poverty.....	99
5.2.10 Overcrowding.....	99
5.2.11 Support from the Department of Education.....	100
5.2.12 Classroom management and control.....	100
5.2.13 Methods of teaching reading.....	100
5.3 Significance of the findings and contribution of new knowledge.....	101
5.4 Suggestions for further research.....	101
5.5 Recommendations.....	101
5.6 Conclusion.....	102



REFERENCES.....	103
APPENDICES.....	103
Appendix A: Request for permission to conduct research.....	104
Appendix B: Permission letter from Limpopo Department of Education.....	105
Appendix C: Permission letter from School A.....	106
Appendix D: Permission letter from School B.....	107
Appendix E: Letter to the participants.....	108
Appendix F: Consent letter to the participants.....	110
Appendix G: Letter to parents.....	111
Appendix H: Consent form of Parents and Assent of learners.....	112
Appendix I: Interview Schedule.....	114
Appendix J: Reading related questions.....	116
Editing Certificate .....	118
Editing Certificate.....	119

## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to investigate the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase and to explore the different approaches that teachers use to address them. The research is qualitative in nature and used a case study approach. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analyses. Participants were teachers from two different schools in the rural areas of Bolobedu, Limpopo Province of South Africa. The data collected revealed the challenges encountered by teachers in teaching reading in the foundation phase of schooling. I also analysed documents that teachers used in teaching reading. The documents were used to triangulate the data obtained through observations and interviews. Content analysis was used to interpret and make meaning of the data. The findings revealed challenges of a socio-economic nature, parental involvement, family roles, poverty, teacher competency, availability of resources and language barriers leading to barriers to reading. In addressing these challenges, teachers rely on workshops, phase and grade meetings and their personal experiences.

**Key words:** Foundation phase, teachers, learners, socio economic status, parent involvement, poverty, teacher competency, resources, language issues, barriers to reading.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my Heavenly Father, who guided and strengthened me through his mercy and kindness.

This study would not have been successful without the support of the following people:

- My family who were always behind me throughout my studies, especially my husband and daughter, Lerato, who have always been there for me throughout.
- My supervisor Dr Mantsose Jane Sethusha, for her perseverance and guidance through all the research steps. I salute you.
- Prof MM Sepota, for words of encouragement throughout my studies. May the good Lord richly bless you.
- My brother Benjamin for his assistance throughout my studies. May you be abundantly blessed.
- Dr Lukas Mkuti and Dr L Molepo, for serving as my critical readers throughout my studies.
- Teachers who participated in this study, for their cooperation and availability.
- The Masters and Doctoral Support Programme (MDSP) of the University of South Africa for financial support.
- The Masters and Doctoral Research Team for providing research guidelines through workshops and taking us through research activities.
- Dr Andrew Graham, the first professional editor of this dissertation
- Brian Carlson, a Professional Editor who also edited my dissertation.

## DECLARATION

NAME: MOORE FRIDAH MAFOKWANE

STUDENT NUMBER: 7631359

DEGREE: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN RURAL AREAS OF BOLOBEDU, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

---

---

SIGNATURE.

DATE.

(MRS MF MAFOKWANE)

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ACE:	Advanced Certificate in Education
ANA:	Annual National Assessment
BA:	Bachelor of Arts
CAPS:	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CPTD:	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DoE:	Department of Education
FDE:	Further Diploma in Education
FET:	Further Education and Training
HOD:	Head of Department
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
LIEP:	Language in Education Policy
MEC:	Member of Executive Council
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
PTC:	Primary Teachers Certificate
R:	Reception
REQV:	Relative Education Qualification Value
SACE:	South African Educators Council
SADTU:	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SASA:	South African Schools Act
SEN:	Special Education Needs
SES:	Socio- Economic Status
SGB:	School Governing Body
SMT:	School Management Team
SPTD:	Senior Primary Teachers Diploma
TLM	Teaching and learning material
UNISA:	University of South Africa
UPE:	Universal Primary Education

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT**

When South Africa became a democratic country in 1994 it was a time of significant changes to the country and to the continent of Africa. Transformation became evident in many aspects of people's lives, one of the changes being in the area of education. The previous system of Bantu Education, based on racial discrimination, had to give way to new changes, one of which was to transform the rural areas in the majority of the population reside, to give these areas a voice and empowerment. When the government of National Unity took power it identified educational development as one of the key areas to be extensively remodelled and developed for the equal benefit of all its citizens.

Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution 108 of 1996: Bill of rights, Section, 29, states the following:

1. Everyone has the right:
  - a. To a basic education, including adult basic education.
  - b. To further education, which the state through measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

Education is now available to most people, even in remote areas of the country. However, challenges exist in the area of reading. Goodman (2010:126) argues that reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game, and a conscious effort that takes place in the mind. It is an active exercise, which makes the reader, guess which aspects associated with it are being presented. If it is a story, the reader has to be aware of cohesion and cohesive devices, logic of the text and other pointers that make it comprehensible.

The foundation phase of primary schooling is a critical stage of education, and forms the basis of all subsequent phases. If this phase is weak, the stages that follow are likely to be weak, whilst a strong and formidable foundation phase ensures that learners acquire solid skills of reading. Matlin (2006:284) defines proficiency in reading as a vehicle used to move through life, implying that the ability to read empowers people and makes them gain knowledge and capabilities that will make their life better. Reading improves one's life and therefore is a fundamental activity that children must master in order to be successful in school and in life.

The ability to read has the potential to empower individuals to undertake many types of activity or tasks in life. For many, being able to read means the realisation of their ambitions, however, the ability to read can become a challenge to some and so it cannot be necessarily taken for granted that reading comes naturally. As Rammala (2009) posits, inability to read can cause intense fear, frustration and low self-esteem, especially if such reading is presented in an additional language.

## **1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Rural South Africa is beset with various challenges including education provision. Schools in rural areas are few, forcing many learners to travel long distances, and there is a challenge of resources and underqualified educators. It is imperative that studies are conducted to find out what learning conditions prevail in schools, what the culture of teaching and learning is and how school can be monitored and challenges be remediated. A critical question is: "what are the challenges facing foundation phase learners in rural areas as far as reading is concerned?" My observation as a primary school teacher is that the manner in which teachers develop reading skills in learners is not effective in enhancing reading capacity. It is important to understand how teachers teach and experience reading in the classroom.

I have also observed that learners are not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop reading skills in the classroom. In the context of reading, opportunities to encourage and develop reading need to be created for learners to acquire these skills fully at every stage. Acquiring the skill of reading means that learners are able to access knowledge from different disciplines, for example literacy, numeracy, and life skills.

According to Haveworth, Tumer and Whiteley (2004:65, 67), reading can be adapted for a wider range of texts. Learners need to develop the necessary skills to cope with diversity, and

use reading skills to analyse or solve problems. Good reading skills are required to cope with other subjects such as Mathematics, Geography, and Computer Literacy, and to conduct experiments. The act of reading is a combination of many different individual skills and learners, especially in lower grades, have to be taught and prepared properly. Resources such as books and readers need to be available and teachers have to apply effective strategies to teaching reading. Snow, Griffin and Burns (2005:5) argue that learners must be able to read for information, enjoyment, pride and curiosity. In order for this to happen, learners must be fully prepared from the foundation phase. This study aims to investigate the kind of challenges foundation phase teachers face with regard to teaching reading in rural contexts. The study focused on the challenge in reading specifically in Sepedi Home Language.

### **1.3. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Reading is an important skill which needs to be nurtured at the beginning of the schooling experience, reading is the foundation of all the other subjects that a learner studies. To be able to read effectively in other subjects, a learner must be conversant with the skill of reading in a practical way. In my opinion, one of the reasons for a high failure rate in Grade 12 in Bolobedu is the lack of reading skills on the part of the learners, as they progress from one class to another without having the necessary reading skills to enable them to explore issues in a manner consistent with active readers. As a grade one teacher and Head of Department in the foundation phase, I have great interest in exploring some of the challenges that hinder learners from becoming efficient and effective readers. Roller (2009:12) identifies instilling a love of reading in a child as a priceless gift, but opportunities have to be provided for this to happen.

This study is significant in that it deals with one of the most important skills that learners need to be competent and proficient readers, as it is through reading that learners are able to understand ideas, concepts opinions and knowledge presented to them. Since the government is attempting to close the social and economic gap between urban and rural areas in a number of sectors, it is necessary that studies such as the present one be carried out. It is crucial that teachers possess the necessary techniques and strategies for teaching reading, instil a love of reading and help learners acquire relevant reading skills. This way the learners' love for reading will be properly nurtured, helping them to form concepts, increase their vocabulary, create positive attitudes and maintain an enduring interests in reading as a way to a wider acquisition of related reading skills (Hugo: 2008:36).



## **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main research question explored in this study is:

- What are the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase?

In order to address the main research question, the following sub-questions were also considered.

- How do reading challenges influence reading development?
- How do teachers address the challenges encountered?

## **1.5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The study aims to investigate the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase and explore how such challenges were addressed.

The objectives were:

- To determine the challenges that hamper learners' reading abilities and to address the challenges for effective teaching and learning.
- To understand how challenges in reading affect reading development.
- To explore strategies used by teachers in dealing with the challenges.

## **1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology can be summarised as follows and will be described in detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.6.1. Qualitative research**

The study employed a qualitative approach. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:315), qualitative research is enquiry in which researchers collect data through face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their setting. Denzin and Lincon (2011) define qualitative research as being multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study phenomena in their settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret these phenomena in terms

of the meanings people bring to them. It involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials, case study personal experiences, introspective life story interviews, and observational, historical, interactional and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives. This study involves the phenomenon in its natural setting, in this case, challenges affecting reading in rural schools. In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with foundation phase teachers.

Lichtman (2014) argues that the strength of a qualitative approach is an inductive thinking that allows the researcher to create a deeper and richer picture of what is going on in a particular setting. Qualitative research adopts a common view of generalizability, so that the reader is left to make up his or her own mind on how far the evidence collected can be used to offer information about the same topic in a similar setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Similarly, Neil (2006) posits that qualitative research is any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of qualification. Creswell (2014) affirms that qualitative research is the systematic process or tool of collecting information on what people say, do, and create in their natural settings to discover the world as they see and experience it. The information found from qualitative research methods not only helps to identify the needs of the target audience but also helps to obtain a more complete understanding of the objective of the study.

### **1.6.2. Case study**

A case study is defined as a research strategy, an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Creswell (2014) defines it as a detailed examination of certain systems based on wide-ranging data collection, whilst for Yin (2009) it is planned questions used to investigate the deepness of the study in a field. I chose to use a case study design within the qualitative approach to explore the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase because I wanted to acquire information from people with real-life experience in this field. I interviewed teachers who were going through teaching and learning challenges on a day-to-day basis. This helped to explain what they experienced in the classroom, what they went through daily during reading activities and how to address the situation.

### **1.6.3. Selection of participants**

Participants were purposively selected from primary schools situated in Mopani district, Limpopo Province in South Africa, that is, schools situated in the area of Bolobedu, which were convenient and accessible, and were ready to participate in this journey. School A had approximately 900 learners, and 17 educators in the foundation phase. School B had approximately 482 learners in the foundation phase and eight educators. From this population three educators in each school were requested to participate in the study. One teacher from each grade was selected.

This study used purposeful sampling to select teachers with particular skills, knowledge, experience and expertise, so as to achieve the research objectives. In the letter written to request permission to conduct research at the schools, I requested the principal to identify teachers with particular skills of teaching reading, who had the knowledge of how to approach reading in the classroom. They also needed to have at least five years teaching experience and expertise in the foundation phase. Participants who were accessible and willing to participate were those who had been attending curriculum workshops planned by the Department of Education (DoE) on the teaching of reading, and those who took part in reading competitions organised as part of the curriculum. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a purposive sample as one consisting of small groups of participants experienced with rich information about the phenomenon of interest and places, and who produce acceptable facts. It is chosen on the basis of what the researcher considers.

### **1.6.4. Data collection methods**

De Vos *et al.*, (2006:356) and Strickland (2006:260) state that the research design and data collection techniques are closely related. In this study, the data collection methods therefore needed to be in line with qualitative research. This research investigated the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase, with the focus on how these challenges influence reading development and how teachers teach reading on a daily basis. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews and observations were used to obtain information. According to Ellenwood (2007), data collection involves setting boundaries for the study, collecting information through observation, interviews, and documentary data collection such as diaries, photographs, official documents, newspaper articles and visual materials, and establishing the protocol for recording the information. Gall and Borg (2007), and Mouton (2003), maintain

that data collection is a process of capturing facts, information and figures based on the characteristics and the nature of the research problem.

Observations and interviews were used to elicit information from teachers. I obtained information about the methods used in different schools through in-depth semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. According to Hennick, Hutter and Bailey (2011), observation is viewed as a method that helps the researcher to methodically observe and record the behaviours, actions and interactions of participants. Classroom observations were conducted with teachers from each school to establish how teachers taught reading and they were interviewed to clarify what was observed and to obtain further information. Information provided by teachers during interviews was also verified through classroom observation.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) defined interviewing as one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings. Interviewing includes a wide variety of forms and a multiplicity of uses. The most common form of interviewing can also take place between individuals, face-to-face through verbal interchange. It can be semi-structured. The researcher decided to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interview with six foundation phase teachers from two different schools, one per grade. Open-ended questions were used in the investigation, thereby guiding the discussion. A diary and tape recorder were used to record dealings. The data was coded to facilitate analysis.

#### **1.6.5. Data Analysis and interpretation**

Content analysis is the process of making meaning and detailed examination of the text. Lichtman (2014) and Creswell (2014) refer to document analysis as the inspection of materials. It is a method of dividing and taking apart the data as well as bringing it back together (Creswell, 2014). One of the tools used was content analysis in order to get information with regard to challenges affecting reading. Language barrier was a challenge in reading among both the participants and the learners as they spoke Khelobedu dialect, which is not taught at schools in the province. Errors in some of the resources used in teaching was a problem. Photocopied workbooks, which were colourless were a barrier to reading because they did not display the correct article to the learners, and were given to lower achievers in the classroom, hence demoralising them. Beginning reading in the first grade commenced in the fourth week with difficult words, which was a problem to them as they were still fresh from the Reception class, in which formal teaching was not provided. Difficult words were used in the beginning rather

than in the middle or end of the term. Some vocabulary words used were in *Sesotho* and difficult to interpret by most teachers. Use of the letter *c* in some of the Sepedi words was also challenging for teachers. Documents such as policy documents, teacher's records, lesson plans, departmental circulars and minute's books were analysed for correspondence with regard to reading.

#### **1.6.6. Ethical considerations**

When conducting research in an academic or a professional setting one needs to be aware of ethics behind the research activity (Blackwell 2013). According to Blackwell (2013), ethical considerations recommended by any organisation or institutional review boards are necessary in any type of research. Apart from protecting the informants, following research ethics also enables the researcher to retain a good relationship with participants and increases the credibility of the study. In this study, the researcher gave adequate information to the participants regarding the aim of the investigation. It is of utmost importance that educational researchers respect the rights to privacy and dignity and the sensitivities of their participants, as well as the integrity of the institutions within which the research occurs.

Robson (2003:168) reminds researchers of the need to obtain the necessary permission from relevant authorities before a study is conducted. The researcher requested permission through letters to the DoE (head office) and principals of the two schools in order to conduct research into their schools. Ethical considerations were observed in this research and I was guided by the rules of the university regarding ethical conduct. The participants were assured that they would be protected in that their names would not appear in any section of the research.

As a researcher, I took certain safety measures. For instance, before collecting data, an approval letter in the form of ethical clearance form from the University of South Africa was requested and granted. An application was made to the DoE (head office) Limpopo Province for permission to conduct research work in their two schools. This was obtained with conditions that the researcher should liaise with the circuit office and schools concerned. The permission letter was to be produced on arrival, with a proviso that the research should not interrupt the academic programmes or examinations, and that when it was completed the final product would be shared with the DoE. Participants were given consent letters to sign, anonymity was guaranteed, confidentiality and the freedom to withdraw at any time. They were informed that their participation was voluntary.

Christensen (2006) warns that access alone is not all that the researcher needs for successfully interacting with participants and collecting data. A working relationship based on respect and trust needs to be established before the researcher embarks upon data collection. As a researcher, I was open to my participants, listened actively and encouraged them to engage with me, all in order to establish a healthy conversational relationship.

## **1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION**

Chapter 1 has introduced the investigation and addressed the statement of the problem, rationale, research questions, aim and objectives of the study, research methodology, data collection, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 2 presents the review of literature, providing the theoretical background of the investigation.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed outline of the research design and methodology.

Chapter 4 provides presentation and discussion of the findings.

Chapter 5 highlights interpretation of the findings and gives a summary of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter the background as well as the research question that seeks to explore the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase in rural areas was provided. The aim of this study is to determine the challenges that affect learners' progress in reading as well as to investigate the problem experienced by foundation phase teachers in the area of reading. The main research question: What are the challenges that affect the learners reading skills? required that an extensive literature review be conducted on teachers' challenges in the teaching of reading globally, as they are key to the successful teaching of reading. This chapter gives an account of the literature review of earlier work in this area. It covers aspects such as factors inhibiting the acquisition of reading skills, promotion of reading culture, strategies to enhance the teaching and development of reading skills.

People develop and grow through reading so it is essential for learning (Hugo, 2012). If learners have not accurately acquired or are not well acquainted with the prerequisite skill in reading the possibility for achievement in the learning environment is hampered. This implies that children need reading skills to become academically successful. Reading is therefore a key skill to learners in the foundation phase and also in other phases of schooling (Rajchert, Zultak & Smulczyk, 2014). Many educators in South Africa believe that learners do not have well developed reading abilities (Spaull 2013; Msila, 2014). Zuze and Reddy (2014) argue that proficiency in reading is critical for personal development, and that there is a powerful connection between reading literacy and educational opportunities and wellbeing. According to Adeniji and Omale (2010), it is important for learners to have access to appropriate reading materials, and for teachers to be guided towards using correct methods of teaching reading in a conducive environment, with adequate educational qualifications and good reading skills in order to help produce learners who perform well in all subjects. Government, teachers, parents and all stakeholders in education have a major role to play in learner performance, especially in the English subject, which is important for international communication and has influence on other subjects. In most South African schools, English is the language of teaching and learning from grade four, the intermediate phase and in tertiary levels in all fields of academia.

## **2.2 IMPORTANCE OF READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

Due to the high rate of reading difficulties among learners worldwide, necessary measures have been taken to improve reading skills and literacy both on the international and national levels because it is the cornerstone to children's educational successes (Bharuthram, 2012 & Hlaithwa, 2013). The National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for the foundation phase in South Africa divides the requirements for reading into shared reading, group guided reading, paired reading, independent reading and phonics, including phonic awareness (DoE, 2011:11-12). Shared reading usually takes the first 15 minutes of the reading, with the teacher reading with the whole class using a big book. Shared reading takes two to four days a week for a learning focus, for example, concepts of print, text features, phonics, language patterns, hard identification strategies and comprehension at a range of levels. According to CAPS (DoE, 2011:11), the first session may focus on the enjoyment and on the text, then on vocabulary, comprehension, decoding skill and text structure.

The CAPS document (DoE, 2011) highlights that group-guided reading is an ability group reading strategy in which all members in the group read the same text, graded according to level of difficulty, under the guidance of the teacher. In grade one the teacher can take two groups of six to eight children for half an hour each day. The purpose of guided reading is for the teacher to give learners individual attention in order to develop their comprehension. Grades two and three learners can also be grouped according to their levels of ability with groups comprising six to ten learners. Group-guided reading may take place once a week for one group, while the other group could be doing paired reading or independent reading, or any activity given by the teacher to keep them busy while with the teaching group for fifteen minutes. The teacher needs to choose books that the learners would be able to read, but which need not be too easy for the learners. If the learners are able to read fluently and with understanding then the book could be regarded as being at the level of the learners. If the learners struggle the teacher can select an easier one until the learner is at the right level. Groups need to consist of strong readers, average readers, below average readers and very slow readers in a group-guided reading activity. CAPS encourages paired reading and if pairing is properly constituted, very slow and below average readers in each group are likely to benefit (DoE, 2011).



Reading is a crucial form of communication through which we get most of the information required in teaching and learning situations and in everyday life. Also, the importance of reading highlights the ability to read as an important skill to find or search for information (Adeniji & Omale, 2010). Reading is one of the language skills that assist an individual's full attainment of potential and other developments, hence, it is significant. According to Frieda (2008), reading is the key that opens all gates to fulfilling ambitions and happiness, and is a lifelong activity. It equips learners with knowledge to understand properly the entirety of a text and helps them organise their thoughts and be able to present their ideas.

Morara (2013) argues that reading involves the use of the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and social domains and all these influence a learner's reading skill and development as well as the rate of reading attainment. The role of the teacher is key in children's reading skill development, despite some learners already having some level of phonological awareness as English first language speakers. Teachers need to employ the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and social domains in a reading instruction and in so doing appropriate reading competencies or skills will be effectively developed in early grade readers through the instructional practices chosen during instruction. One of the primary objectives of reading instruction in the classroom is enjoyment of it. This objective sets to promote individual self-awareness, a societal awareness, and the courage to interact freely, creatively and critically in one's own environment.

Teaching reading needs to begin at an early age and continue throughout both secondary and higher education. The ability to read effectively is key. Reading is regarded as a service skill, so if one is able to read provision for other talents is easy. Reading with understanding provides the reader with in-depth information about and the ability to execute a particular task or engage with an issue around the world. In teaching reading in the foundation phase it is vital that the teacher provides much more attention to instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics and the development of fluency (rapid reading of the exact words on the page) than to vocabulary development or the use of strategies for comprehension (Parlindungan, 2010). As Parlindungan (2010) posits fluent readers have the ability to group words together to gain meaning when reading silently, in the sense that words comes automatically, accurately and quickly.

Several useful techniques and strategies assist readers in translating symbols into sounds or visual representations of speech, and this is referred to as decoding. Phye and Thida (2013)

argue that readers often make use of context clues, morphemes, semantics and syntax to identify and extract the meaning of unknown words. Therefore, such words read by readers are amalgamated into their original knowledge or schema framework (Phyue & Thida, 2013). According to Weaver (2009), reading is considered as a process, which is mostly determined by the brain, as well as emotions and beliefs, exhibited when reading. As Weaver (2009) posits, these encompass the knowledge and information, misinformation or absence of information, techniques for processing text, moods, fears and joys. Mittal, Lior Pachter, Nelson, Kaergaard, Kiel Smed, Virginia, Gildengorin and Jawaheer (2015) argue that reading is meant to generate knowledge, irrespective of whether it is new or common knowledge. Reading skills are likely to improve learners' vocabulary, language, and communication and recollection skills.

The comprehension objective of reading shows the parents and learners how to better retain and utilise the information. Comprehension is achieved when learners read a book and then retell the story properly, taking large amounts of information and condensing it into key points and ideas. Manguel (2013) contends that even though reading is categorically a personal activity, sometimes one would read aloud for the advantage of other listeners. Reading aloud for one's own use and for good understanding is a form of intrapersonal interaction. Reading to young learners is a way to instil language and expression, and to promote comprehension of text.

Reading requires mastery of a set of skills, such as, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Weaver, 2009). Adeniji and Omale (2010) also see reading as an acknowledgement of printed or written symbols, which serve as stimuli for the remembrance of meaning built up through the learner's experience. Thus, it is the process of transforming alphabetical symbols into a form of language from which the reader has already derived the meaning. Ability to read is a unique and authentic skill of information retrieval and it describes a critical skill, which calls for the learner to read, explore, and appreciate literary text in an effective and efficient manner (Adenji & Omale, 2010).

Word recognition is vital in reading and its concept examines how people read individual words (Cornelissen, Kringelbach, Ellis, Whitney, Holiday, & Hansen, 2009; Wheat, Cornelissen, Frost, & Hansen, 2010; Nation, 2009). These authors are also of the view that one of the major tool in observing how a person reads text is the eye-tracking method. In most instances, readers

seem not to pay attention to every word in a text but rather focus on some words in order to fill the vacuum of the appropriate missing information with the help of the context. The motive behind this is that human languages exhibit some kind of linguistic principles (Cornelissen *et al.*, 2009; Wheat, Cornelissen, Frost, & Hansen, 2010; Nation, 2009).

### **2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study utilised cognitive theory which helps one to understand the way people of all ages think, learn and develop (Slavin, 2012). In this study the focus was on the foundation phase which includes grade one, grade two and grade three. According to Slavin (2012), for the child to be able to read the mind has to first of all perceive the information and interpret it and then deduce meaning through letter formation. The space in between the letters plays a vital role to give shape to it. For example, the shape of dig is different from the shape of man; the child must first see that the two words have three letters. The mind needs to be ready to be able to decode and encode the print or picture because what I see I remember and what I hear I forget and what I do I understand. That is a fundamental rule for cognitive theory (Vaillancourt, 2009). Above all, for reading to be enhanced the mind has to be ready to read according to stages of development.

### **2.4 FACTORS INHIBITING THE ACQUISITION OF READING SKILL**

Reading requires a skill but there are various factors that inhibit the acquisition of reading skill. Hlalethwa (2013) identified various barriers affecting reading, such as language proficiency, achievement and cognitive factors. The National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008) and Geske and Ozola (2008) identify teacher competency, libraries, teaching conditions, illiteracy of parents, language issues, and inclusive education as possible challenges to reading.

#### **2.4.1 Socio-economic environment**

Socio-economic background plays an important role in the acquisition of reading skills. As Buac and Kaushanskaya (2014) posit, children from a disadvantaged socio-economic background face general linguistic deprivation. It often leads to unsuccessful influence of effective learning, due to lack of availability of educational resources in the society, such as books, magazines and newspapers, educational radio and television. Socio-economic status (SES) is considered as a strong determinant of children's reading success because the higher it is the higher the levels of reading skills acquisition by children (Geske & Ozola, 2008).

As Jednoró'g, Altarelli, Monzalvo, Fluss, Dubois, Billard, Dehaene-Lambertz and Ramus (2012) posit, SES is a multidimensional facet, which includes both measures of material wealth and education and social prestige. Parental SES has an effect on a child's life, beginning from the early stage of development. Stress, nutrition, parental care and cognitive stimulation have been identified by these researchers as factors in the child's psychological and physiological development (Tomalski & Johnson, 2010 and Hackman, Farah & Meaney, 2010).

Research indicates that children from low-SES households and communities develop academic skill more slowly, as in the case of reading skills, than children from higher SES groups. Low literacy environments and chronic stress in a family affect a child's pre-academic skills negatively (Morgan, Fakes, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009). According to Aikens and Barbarin's (2008) study on socioeconomic differences in reading trajectories, the contribution of family, neighbourhood, and school contexts, students' academic progress is negatively affected by school systems in low-SES communities often being under-resourced.

Families with a low SES often lack the financial, social, and educational supports that characterise those with a high one. Poor families also may have inadequate or limited access to community resources that promote and support children's development and school readiness. Literature revealed that families from low-SES communities are less likely to have the financial resources, assistance or time availability to provide children with academic support (Okioga, 2013). Parental involvement is also emphasised by Geske and Ozola (2008) in arguing that learners achieve better when parents are involved in their education, including reading. Parents and educators need to work together to help learners acquire the love of books and assess their pace of reading. Okioga (2013) explored the impact of students' socio-economic background on academic performance in universities and used a case study of students in Kisii University College. The results revealed that middle class parents took an active role in their children's education and development through well-organised and controlled activities. Families with lower income, from low SES, did not take an active role in their children's education and development, causing a sense of constraint. Distinctively, children from lower income families do not succeed to the levels of the middle income children who have a greater sense of entitlement, are more argumentative, or are better prepared for adult life.

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2012) describes the relationship of family SES to children's readiness for school, across all groups in which parents face major challenges

to providing optimal care and education for their children. The APA (2012) report revealed that families in poverty-stricken households find it difficult to face these challenges. In addition, when necessities are lacking, parents must place top priority on such necessities as housing, food, clothing, and health care. Educational materials such as toys, games, and books may appear to be luxuries, and parents may not have the time, energy, or knowledge to find innovative and less-expensive ways to foster young children's development.

Aikens and Barbarin (2008) revealed that children's initial reading competence and skills are related to the home literacy environment, number of books owned, and parent distress. Other scholars argue that there is a strong relationship between SES and language abilities, including vocabulary, literacy, phonological awareness and syntax (Fluss, Ziegler & Warszawski, 2009). Aikens and Barbarin (2008) posit that children in low SES environments acquire language skills more slowly, exhibit delayed letter recognition and phonological awareness, and are at risk of reading difficulties. Research also indicates that they perform worse than their counterparts from high and middle SES on probing selective attention, inhibition, cognitive control and working memory (Kishiyama, Boyce, Jimenez, Perry & Knight, 2008 and Stevens, Lauinger & Neville, 2009).

According to Joan (2009), higher SES and high levels of education may enhance parents' facility at becoming involved in their children's education, and also enable parents to acquire and model social skills and problem-solving strategies conducive to children's school success. Thus, students whose parents have higher SES and higher levels of education may have an enhanced regard for learning, more positive ability beliefs, and a stronger work orientation. They may use more effective learning strategies than children of parents with lower SES and lower levels of education (Joan, 2009). Research shows that pupils from families where parents have less education tend to systematically perform worse in schools than those whose parents have more education (Kainuwa & Yussuf, 2013). Similarly, Onzima (2011) emphasised that high academic attainment of the parents significantly reduces chances of primary school drop out for both boys and girls in rural and urban areas. Results further indicated that educated parents are more concerned and more effective in helping their children in academic work. In doing so, they are also able to supervise and monitor their children's academic progress. This can in no small measure contribute to the academic progress of children. Parents with low educational attainment mostly do not care to supervise their children performance due to lack

of sufficient knowledge to face the challenge. This often discourages the children and may lead to their dropping out of school.

According to Kainuwa and Yussuf (2013), the most significant contributory factors affecting learning are poverty, underdevelopment and lack of basic services due to unemployment. Dysfunctional families witness poor achievement amongst children, as a result of variety of types of abuse, for example, emotional, physical or sexual. According to the researchers, these occur in most areas of South Africa, warranting joint effort from both the community and the government. If parents are illiterate, poor and unemployed they value less the education of their children and as such cannot assist them financially in purchasing necessary resources such as books and hiring a tutor for extra classes. Families being torn apart impact on children's psychological and physiological wellbeing, in turn resulting in poor academic performance (Kainuwa & Yussuf, 2013).

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (2011) states that learners should be taught in their home language in the foundation phase, because reading and language are inseparable and interconnected. Their lack of vocabulary hampers their reading skills. The School Governing Body (SGB) as representative of parents can take that initiative to create a library and supply books to the learners. Generally, private and public schools situated in towns do not have as many challenges as community libraries are mostly available. Availability of resources, for instance books, leads to the teachers' and parents' success in teaching reading. In the case of Bolobedu in Limpopo Province, learners are disadvantaged because the requisite books are inadequate. Fleisch (2008) argues that, if there is no correlation between the home and the family, learners will experience problems in reading. If parents have storybooks to read to their children learning to read will be easier.

It is important for the school to appreciate and respect parents with low SES, which will influence parental involvement at school and parents will not feel inferior when visiting the school. Such low SES parents will see themselves equal to other parents. Children from these families need to be valued and supported with the knowledge they bring from their home (Williams: 2011). Gibbs (2009) and Vega (2010) argue that it is difficult for teachers in public schools to meet with parents to discuss social and academic performance of learners. Some academic obstacles outlined in literature were school programmes that failed to address linguistic and cultural diversity; negative teacher expectations; excessive placement in special

education; unjustified discipline referrals; biased and inaccurate assessments; and nonexistence of or weak relationships (Darder, 2011). The situation is similar among some parents in the Bolobedu Area, perhaps because some are students themselves and others travel long distances to seek jobs in the cities.

Generally, parents are not educated and as such see their children's education as not being important. Some parents do not take part in the education of their children, as they do not have time to supervise reading. During parents' meeting teachers meet them to discuss learners' performance in reading and related activities, but due to financial constraints and availability, some parents cannot attend. According to the study conducted by Williams (2011), ways need to be developed to encourage parents to contribute to their children's education, irrespective of their challenges. Williams (2011) further emphasised that parents can be motivated to value and take full responsibilities for their children's education by educating them during programmes, such as on speech days and prize giving, and parent-teacher and SGB end-of-year assessment days to monitor and assist their children at home. Public speeches on awareness of children's education by persons from the education sector, and role models' interaction with parents can also be used to encourage them (William, 2011).

#### **2.4.2 Parental involvement**

Parental attitudes and behaviour, most importantly involvement in home learning activities, can be vital to children's achievement and can help eradicate or minimise the influences of other factors that hinder reading skills among learners (Bonci, 2008). For Prin and Toso (2008), parenting practices and styles are influenced to a large extent by race, ethnicity, generational status, and socio-cultural setting. The scholars further argue that most African learners come from disadvantaged families and it becomes challenging for parents to help them in their school work, in particular with reading. The Bolobedu area is an area in which most learners are orphaned, some parents are illiterate, and other young parents are still at school because of teenage pregnancies. These parents who assume roles of students and parents often struggle with their own studies.

Parents are seen first as educators and involvement in their children's education is important. It appears that many parents in rural areas have not recognised the vital function they play in their children's education and as such have inadequate knowledge with regard to their responsibilities towards learning (Department for Children, Schools and Families, DCSF),

2009). According to Hartas (2008), parental involvement in the education of their children has positive outcomes on schooling and children's wellbeing as they participate fully in terms of working together with a range of professionals, exchanging knowledge and information regarding Special Educational Needs (SEN) and negotiating its provision. Therefore, parents and other stakeholders, especially educators, need to work together to help learners acquire a love of reading books and assess their pace of reading.

Parents are expected to participate actively in the schooling of their children, as highlighted in research conducted on teaching and learning methods in inclusive classrooms in the foundation phase. As Motitswe (2013) found, if parents are not involved in their children's education they will perform poorly in their school activities. Engelbrecht and Green (2007) argue that it is vital to train and develop parents on what is required from them, to improve learner's performance, in particular reading. Singh (2009) argued that parents should give themselves time to read stories to their children and give them time to find difficult words and explain meanings. Parents have a role to encourage their children to watch educational television to improve their phonetic and vocabulary development. Parents are also expected to encourage their children to read for pleasure, by buying story books and encouraging them to borrow from and visit the library regularly.

A number of strategies have been suggested by various researchers to help parents in the teaching of reading. In a study conducted by Lefevre (2012), one of the strategies outlined in addressing reading difficulties was that parents could help if children have difficulty in reading a difficult word. They read out the word after five seconds and then continue to read. Children need to be encouraged to read alone, while parents follow the story with silent reading. The parent could intervene when the child makes a mistake and say the word or phrase correctly. Repetition of words, phrases and sentences needs to be encouraged, leading to later independent reading and discussion of the content of the book with parents.

According to Al-Matalka (2014), children's lives are greatly influenced by their parents, as they have the power and ability to shape, sustain and develop their children's reading skills by being interested, creative and tolerant, through their positive involvement in the learning process and educational activities. On the other hand, parents who are not involved in their children's education are also considered capable of lowering and destroying the motivation and ability of their children through neglect and indifference to their achievements (Al-Matalka,



2014). The success of a child in school depends on the state of upbringing by the parents. The home serves as an environment for children to acquire skills, attitudes and behaviour which can make them better citizens. However, not every child from a home is provided with the necessary educational materials for academic achievement (Vellymalay, 2012a).

Research indicates the benefit of parental involvement in schooling activities. Research findings from Bonci's (2008) study shows a positive association between parental involvement in children's literacy practices and academic performance. This is a more powerful force for academic achievement than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education. Early parental interventions are also crucial because the earlier parents become involved in children's education the better the results and prolonged nature of the effects. Hence, active parents' involvement will make it easier for them to master what the teacher is teaching, in particular reading.

Van Staden and Bosker (2014) explored factors that affect South African reading literacy achievement, finding statistical significance of engaged reading and cultivating motivation for reading among learners from an early age, but specifically through parental involvement in introducing early literacy activities as foundation of reading literacy by school-going age. Similarly, Sathiapama, Wolhuter and Wyk (2012) investigated the management of parental involvement in multicultural schools in South Africa and revealed a low level of meaningful contact between school and parents, hence low performance of learners. The study also revealed that apathy existed on the side of parents, low expectations on the part of principals and teachers, and a lack of organisational structure facilitating parent-school interaction.

Research indicates that types of parental involvement that result in greater time investment, such as communicating and reading with the child, as well as parenting style. Parental expectations, have more significant influence on academic attainment of children than some other forms of parental involvement, such as attendance and participation at school. Important facets of parental involvement are considered to be reading and communication. There are some benefits the parents obtained, including greater skill acquisition, greater confidence and self-esteem, a better parent-child relationship, and increased engagement with learning (Kainuwa & Yussuf, 2013).

Active involvement of parents in the teaching and learning process is central to effective learning in general and in particular reading development. If parents have negative attitudes

towards their children's education concerning reading, this will negatively affect their role. South African policies and legislation support the involvement of parents in the education of their children. According to Section 20 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) the SGB has a responsibility to make efforts to help parents with the professional development in the education of their children in order to improve the quality of learning and teaching in their schools. According to Education Law and Policy (1999), parents are obliged to support their children with their schoolwork for example, reading. A Guide for Quality Learning and Teaching (DoE, 2012) further encourages parents to assist teachers by helping their children with homework and reading activities or any work given to them. The same applies to reading, and in order to improving children's reading, parents should take part in their children's reading activities. Similarly, Chindanya (2011) argues that children perform better if parents take part in their children's education, hence parents are recognised as partners in education. Education is a societal issue therefore parents as primary educators can help improve the education system.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) survey conducted in 2007 found changes in levels of parental involvement among different ethnic groups, including evidence that Black parents' involvement in their children's education was more than twice that of their white counterparts. Parents from non-white backgrounds were also less likely to conclude that a child's education was the school's responsibility rather than that of the parents, and views of parents indicated that black and Asian parents from different ethnic groups placed high value on their children's education in the present and future (DCSF, 2009).

### **2.4.3 Family Configuration**

According to Kainuwa and Yusuf (2013), family status variables such as socio-economic status and parents' level of education have been considered as determinants of children's academic performance. Children's language and literacy development and educational success are strongly impacted by their family and home environment (Bonci, 2008). Children from dysfunctional families are bound to be affected by their background. Many families experience instabilities, whether due to divorce, family mobility, lack of a permanent home, drug abuse, health, violence, parents who are at work most of the time, and parent illiteracy, but some changes in these circumstances can be hazardous to students' emotional and physical wellbeing and to their progress in school (DoE, 2008). Consequently, parents often neglect their

children's education, resulting in lack of commitment and participation in the affairs of their children. Learners from these environmental backgrounds who do not receive sufficient support and guidance from parents, who are not exposed to books and are not motivated to read, sometimes develop negative attitude towards reading.

Williams (2011) states that some learners come from-families whose dynamics are not supportive to their education. In his research on African American parent involvement, an examination of the characteristics that determine the most successful relationships between lower socioeconomic African American parents and highly effective schools, it is argued that for the teacher to be successful in teaching reading, parents need to take part and be supportive to assist children in an effective manner. The school is obliged to know the economic status of the learners for them to be able to assist if necessary. This can be in the form of resources such as reading books and nutrition. It is vital for teachers to make home visits as they will thus be able to share performance and behaviour of learners with parents, and this will help the teachers to find strategies to help learners. Hannon (2010) shared the same sentiments that parents need to be assessed and evaluated to increase their children's literacy skills in reading and knowledge. According to Williams (2011), most parents have a normal desire to provide better education to their children, but the burdens of poverty and unemployment make it too difficult.

Families whose children are performing well in school create daily activities to be followed and regard that as a norm. These are activities such as studying time, bedtime and having dinner together. Some parents sometimes organise after-care for their children, as extra support to help with school activities, and to assist learners in self-discipline, perseverance and acquisition of hardworking skills and attitudes. Hannon (2010) argues that parents need to be assisted to increase their children's literacy skills. Schools can introduce parents' education, programme planning and operating activities, which could motivate parents and equip them with skills to promote reading at home. Encouraging parents to visits teachers in the classroom, attending workshops on child development, motivating teachers to make home visits and parents to volunteer in the classroom, can improve this. As Williams (2011) posits, if parents check and teach their children what is taught at school, academic performance should improve.

#### **2.4.4 Poverty, literacy and school performance**

Background and environment play an important role in the learner's development. Pretorius and Currin (2010) argue that poverty and poor schooling are linked, but emphasise that poverty

does not cause poor schooling. Singh (2009) supports the argument presented, that is, for learners to be able to read the environment must be conducive and motivating. Two key resources are identified, namely, a teacher who is competent in teaching reading, and availability of reading materials appropriate to the level of the child. Singh (2009) strongly recommends that for learners to be able to read the teacher needs to be flexible and available to tell stories in teaching reading and writing, have pictures and words for matching, and create a reading corner or some form of library in the classroom. Absence of these creates challenges as schools in poor areas tend to be under-resourced, poorly managed and have fewer qualified teachers. Children from high poverty background perform poorly in schools, and tend to come from homes where adult literacy levels are low and where expectations of children's progress may not be high. Poor children often perform below average, and it is imperative for schools to understand their learners and conduct research in order to know their status (Pretorius & Currin, 2010). This implies that if the learner's background is known the school will provide reading materials for learners to read at home, and the teacher will be able to make time to assist learners in reading.

According to Berg (2008), education is considered as a tool to help reduce poverty in a number of ways. It is easier for educated people to find employment with better salaries and wages and better and quality-adjusted education improves economic growth, economic opportunities and incomes. Poverty identifies the level to which an individual lives without resources (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). These resources can be financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical, as well as support systems, relationships, role models, and knowledge of hidden rules. Due to lack of resources, many students struggle to reach the same academic achievement levels of students from rich homes. Lacour and Tissington (2011) recommend that although many poor students perform below average on assessment measures due to poverty prone background, instructional techniques and strategies implemented at the classroom, school, district, and government levels can help close the achievement gap by providing students with necessary assistance in order to achieve high performance in academic work.

According to Naidoo, Reddy and Dorasamy (2014), South Africa is faced with challenges in the area of education, which have a direct impact on the literacy level of learners. For instance, they are taught in a language (English) which is not their home language. The socio-economic challenges that contribute to low literacy in South Africa are indicated as having little or no parental support, as well as the challenges of educators who are not proficient in English as a

medium of instruction, and large class sizes. This problem of reading illiteracy is confirmed, as is the seriousness of it is a result of the nation's performance in terms of the international reading tests, as well as the national literacy tests (Naidoo, Reddy & Dorasamy, 2014). Literacy is simply defined as the ability to read and write at an adequate level of proficiency that is necessary for communication. Broadly, literacy encompasses the basic learning skills of listening, reading and writing. Literacy, specifically reading literacy, forms the foundation of scholastic success at primary, secondary and tertiary level (Naidoo, Reddy & Dorasamy, 2014). Literacy theory has also become deictic since there are rapidly changing communication and information technologies, each of which requires new literacies (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013). Thus, the concept of new literacy implies that literacy is not just new today but becomes so every day.

According to the Foundations for Learning (FFL) (DoE, 2008b), an initiative of the national DoE to enhance literacy and numeracy in South Africa, reading aloud, shared reading and guided reading by the educator and learner, form the components of a reading programme. In terms of this approach, the guided reading constitutes a significant segment of the reading process in the intermediate phase. During guided reading, learners of similar reading requirements are grouped and instructed under the guidance of an educator. The educator selects the text that is at the learners' instructional reading level and will reinforce or introduce appropriate reading strategies and concepts. Reading literacy is viewed as an important aspect of learners' functionality as developing individuals, both within and outside schools. It benefits the selected privileged class and marginalises the majority in the country (Spaull, 2013).

Bonci (2008) identified some key factors influencing children's literacy development, notably, parental attitudes and aspirations, parental education, home learning environment, family SES and other family features, child and parent's literacy practices and activities, child's features and personal qualities, pre-school and school influences, including home-school links, and school and community influences. There is a link between parents' and children's literacy levels and several recent studies indicate that parents with low literacy levels are less likely to help their children with reading and writing as they feel inferior in doing so and are more likely to have children with lower cognitive and language development levels (De Coulon, Meschi & Vignoles, 2008). Research by Geske and Ozola (2008) investigated Factors Influencing Reading Literacy at the Primary School Level and revealed that the socio-economic situation of the family has a huge influence on students' reading literacy as well as parents' education

and reading aloud to a child at the pre-school age. Children's high attainment in reading literacy, usually reading for own enjoyment, was also highlighted by Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, Trong and Sainsbury (2009). Collaboration between parents and children in reading story books and visiting a library together at a pre-school age already positively influences their reading levels (Geske & Ozola, 2008).

Joan and Smrekar (2009) concur that SES and parents' level of education is part of a larger collection of psychological and sociological factors influencing children's school outcomes. The study argues further that the resultant higher levels of education may be due to resources such as income, time, energy, and community contacts. Thus, the influence of SES and parents' level of education on student outcomes might best be regarded as a relationship mediated by interactions among status and process variables (Joan & Smrekar, 2009).

#### **2.4.5 Teacher competency**

The National Reading Strategy (Department of Education; 2008) highlights that many teachers in South Africa have under-developed understanding of teaching literacy, in particular reading and writing. Research conducted by Phajane (2012) revealed that lack of teachers' understanding of the curriculum leads them to resort to one method of teaching reading, which may not necessarily suit the learning style of all learners. The National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008) emphasises that some foundation phase teachers have not been explicitly trained to teach reading and as a result find it difficult to help learners who experience reading barriers. This is attributed to employment of underqualified teachers in the past, in particular the foundation phase in rural schools. Some unqualified teachers, who were formally employed and who are still in the system in the foundation phase in rural schools, could be the main cause of the problem. This has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and also contributes to poor learner performance.

Research conducted by the DoE (2008) on the National Reading Strategy of Reading highlights that the majority of South African teachers are either underqualified or unqualified to teach and sometimes frequently absent, thus reducing essential teaching and learning time. Many educators simply possess a modest understanding of teaching reading. According to Spaul (2013), educators are not familiar with methods of teaching reading which may be suitable to the learning approach of all learners. The Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008a) emphasises that educators are not acquainted with how to motivate reading inside and outside the classroom.

This is because teacher training fails to meet the required standard of teaching reading (Malda, Nel, & van der Vijver, 2014), and educators are not reasonably knowledgeable in the principles that underpin bilingual and multi-lingual education. Therefore, unqualified educators have been identified as one of the factors responsible for the poor performance of learners (Uwatt & Egbe, 2011).

Teachers need to be appropriately qualified in order to employ accurate reading skills, teach confidently, transfer knowledge, techniques, and strategies of reading effectively and efficiently, and using the appropriate teaching and learning materials (DoE, 2008). The DoE (1999) specified the minimum entry level requirements for employment of teachers as a diploma, which is a three-year course and Relative Education Qualification Value thirteen (REQV13) that includes suitable training as a teacher, unlike in the past when teachers were employed with only standard ten qualification and without appropriate training.

Junias's (2009) study on factors affecting the teaching of English reading skills in a second language of grade three learners revealed that inadequate teacher training workshops on English reading, poor teaching methods, inadequate teachers and learner's interactions and overcrowded classrooms were some of the inhibiting factors. The study finally recommended that teachers be equipped with the necessary training and workshops to improve their skills and knowledge in teaching English reading (Junias 2009).

#### **2.4.6. Availability of resources**

Schools need to provide a library for the promotion of reading among learners. Lack of libraries in school negatively affects teaching of reading and learning in general, since effective lesson planning and presentation depend on the availability of resources. Nalusiba (2010) highlighted that Ugandan public schools adapted a Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme after a series of reforms and these schools were characterised by overcrowding, unqualified teachers, lack of resources and instructional materials, and reading materials which were few and of low levels. Nalusiba (2010) further indicated that most learners in UPE Ugandan schools hardly read outside school since reading was not part of the curriculum and this impacted negatively on performances in and out of school, both in the language taught and other academic subjects. Van Staden and Howie (2012) and Howie (2010) revealed that one of the factors that contributed to continued normalisation of literacy underperformance in poor schools was lack of resources. If the school has a library it will benefit learners, particularly those whose parents

are unable to buy books. N' Namdi (2008) defines reading material as a solution to the problem of reading. Effective learning is fundamentally influenced by the availability of educational resources. Phajane (2012) argued that if learners have access to reading material they will acquire skills to interpret pictures and recognise words, and this could assist them in emergent reading.

The most commonly used materials for teaching reading are books, picture books, nursery rhymes, fiction rhyme books, story books with pictures, information books, magazine and newspapers, advertisements, colouring books, menus, recipes and timetables (Hugo, 2010). Adequate subject knowledge is required for the teacher to be able to assist learners with the use of books and how to access them in the library (Howie, 2010). For Phajane (2012), subject knowledge is important for the teacher to help learners. The South African Council for Educators (SACE, 2014) introduced Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) in all schools for all employed educators to improve their qualifications. According to Howie (2010), teachers lack skills in classroom management required to assist them effectively in teaching and learning. Research conducted by the DoE (2008) on the National Reading Strategy, which looked at the assessment of challenges affecting reading, emphasised that if the teacher lacks content knowledge this will lead to problems in communication. Overcrowded classrooms also contribute to lack of proper reading activities in certain schools. Teachers in these kinds of settings often find themselves with disciplinary challenges as they strive to ensure that reading materials become available to all learners.

Research indicates that children's experience at home is crucial to early learning and language growth. Tamis-Lemonda and Rodriguez (2009) found three aspects of home literacy environment that promote children's learning and language, namely, learning activities such as daily book reading, parenting quality and responsiveness, and learning materials such as age-appropriate toys and books. Also, parents with more and adequate resources such as education and income are better able to provide learning experiences for their young children.

#### **2.4.7 Language of learning and teaching**

One of the most precursory achievements of early child development is formal language as it enables children to share meanings with others, and to participate in cultural learning in antecedent ways (Tamis-Lemonda & Rodriguez, 2009). Language learning is fundamental to children's school readiness and success. The CAPS (2011) requires that children from the age



of five to seven learn to read the language they already know and understand. As Lefevre (2012) argues, reading is a language-related process. Developing literacy in the mother tongue is different from learning to read a foreign language. CAPS (DoE, 2011) highlights that learners learn to read easily with the language they already know. The curriculum stipulates that Grade 1 learners be taught to read first in the language they know best, and be taught sounds in the language they know and master before they can be taught any additional one.

According to CAPS (DoE; 2011), mother tongue is offered as a medium of instruction in the foundation phase and English as the learner's first additional language from learner's first year of schooling. If the mother tongue is English, any of the 11 official languages will be selected as the first additional one. Language is a vehicle of communication, and is therefore important for academic mastery in the curriculum at large. A learner will not be able to perform well in any subject if language is not involved, and proficiency in reading is an important vehicle of language communication. It is of paramount importance that spoken language be augmented by proficient reading because it helps in understanding the medium of instruction accurately, with reading and comprehension being linked. Monyai (2010) argues that if learners lack vocabulary and grammar to make sense of what they read they would not be able to comprehend a text. Asking questions relating to a text is an important way of developing reading comprehension.

According to section 29 of the Constitution of South Africa (1996), all citizens have the right to receive education in the official language or language of their choice in public educational institutions when practicable. All reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, must be considered by the state as keeping with the principles of equity, practicability and the need to redress the laws and practices. This implies that learners must be taught in the language of their choice, which is not the case in other public schools, where they are to be taught in a language which is not their home language. According to the researcher's experience, due to lack of teachers in languages such as Xitsonga, Tshivenda and Shona, learners in rural areas of Bolobedu are taught Sepedi as their home language. The CAPS (2011) specifies that all official languages can be used as the learner's first additional language in the foundation phase, a view supported by the Language in Education Policy (LIEP) (Education Law and Policy, 1999), which states that learners must be taught in their home language(s). As stipulated by the Constitution, all the 11 official languages must be treated equally. When dealing with language issues, with regard to reading in the foundation phase, the mother tongue

is the home language for children in public schools. On the other hand, in most of the private schools, English is seen as the language of learning and teaching and the learner's home language as first additional language.

#### **2.4.8. Learners with barriers to reading**

Personality factors, such as motivation, persistence, sense of personal competence, ability to work in groups, and willingness to ask for help from other learners, are crucial to learning achievement. A highly motivated learner develops positive self-esteem which in turn improves academic performance (Patil, Saraswathi & Padakannaya, 2009). According to Hlaithwa (2013), learners bring different levels of motivation to learning and the strength level of this motivation is a critical determinant of learning. Among others values, attitudes, and emotions, the ability to tolerate and overcome frustrations and the willingness to take risks must be developed by learners towards reading. Learners' inability to read may lead to fear, anxiety and low self-esteem (Hlaithwa, 2013). Also, factors identified as emotional factors that constitute barriers to effective reading by learners were a lack of prior knowledge, lack of confidence, poor motivation, bad reading habits and an unstable environment (Ghanaguru, Liang & Kit, 2010). Children play a vital role in their own learning experiences because there is a positive spill-off link between child features and parenting behaviours. Learners with barriers to reading experience difficulty in reading at various levels, notably alphabet, syllable, word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and the whole text. Vargo and Young (2012) argue that learners need to master the alphabets for them to be able to read effectively, and the mastery of sounds enables learners to combine sounds to make syllables, syllables to make words, words to make sentences, sentences to make paragraphs and paragraphs to make a text.

A successful reader also applies a complex combination of skills and knowledge when reading. These skills include various aspects like visual and auditory perception, visual and auditory memory, linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge and knowledge about print (Hugo, 2012). A reading problem may arise as a result of a deficit in any of the knowledge components skills. It is important that barriers to reading be identified at an early stage so that the learner can receive the necessary support in an attempt to overcome the barriers. Some of the barriers identified by Hugo (2012) are fear, shame and motivation. As Hugo (2012) posits, most learners fear to read, thinking that they will not be able to read the words correctly, and that other learners will criticise, laugh or judge them. According to Motitswe (2013), failure may

become success if a learner learns from the mistakes committed. If children feel they cannot read they feel ashamed of what they are reading. It is advisable for teachers to motivate learners when reading, and as Hugo (2012) argues, no reading goal can be achieved without motivation. Most teachers perceive that without required skills and knowledge in the field of any subject it is difficult to teach such subjects (Florian & Rouse, 2010). This is because teacher's ability, knowledge and experience serve as an effective tool which is crucial in the learners reading. Teachers are the people who make reading possible, so their beliefs and feelings are important if the learners are to succeed (Florian & Rouse, 2010).

Reading is a socio-cultural issue and as such the home background and culture of young readers influence their reading performance. Fleisch (2008) argues that if the relationship between the home and family does not exist learners would experience problems in reading. Availability of resources such as story books can enhance the acquisition of reading skills in children. It is important for parents to ensure that learners reach their highest potential in reading. Teachers need to understand their learners' background, as this could help them identify those that experience barriers. According to Hugo (2010), reading is a socially constructed form of human behaviour with learning occurring through interaction with the social environment and the guidance of a more experienced person. Lyons, Swart and Nathanson (2011) argue that knowledge is not passively received but rather is actively constructed by the learner. Social meaning activities influence human consciousness.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reviewed local and international literature on factors inhibiting the acquisition of reading skills, with focus on the importance of reading in the foundation phase and the challenges affecting learner's reading skills. The next chapter addresses the research methods and designs used to investigate the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study investigated the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase. The main question explored is: What are the challenges that affect the reading skills in the foundation phase? The study also explored the following sub-questions:

- (1) How do reading challenges influence reading development?
- (2) How do teachers address the challenges encountered?

It followed a qualitative approach, which Creswell (2014) defines as a method which is used to understand key features or aspects in a specific organisational structure and/or event from the participants' perspectives through narrative descriptions and direct data collection. Thus, it allows the researcher to create a deeper and richer picture of what is going on in a particular setting. Teachers with particular skills of teaching reading, who had the knowledge of how to approach reading in the classroom with at least five year's teaching experience and expertise in the foundation phase, teachers attending curriculum workshops that are focusing on the teaching of reading, who takes part in reading competitions, and who were accessible and willing to participate, were interviewed and observed. This chapter highlights the research approach and methods, as well as the tools used in this research. A description of the research site is also provided. The researcher highlights how the participants were selected and how data was collected through observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Data analysis and interpretation as well as ethical considerations are discussed in this chapter.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology entails collecting information from the participants, through the use of various instruments and analysing and interpreting the data in preparation for discussion and presentation of the findings. Research methodology also highlights the stages in the research procedure to be used. Qualitative methods and a case study were used to achieve the target objective set.

### **3.2.1 Qualitative research**

The qualitative approach was considered appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to explore, interpret and describe the important views of the participants. Hennink, Hutter & Bailey (2011) define qualitative research as a broad umbrella term for a wide range of techniques. Qualitative research studies human experiences in detail by the use of specific tools such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, observation, content analysis, visual approaches, and life histories (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Thus, qualitative researchers' critically examine participants in their natural settings to identify whether or not socio-economic and cultural issues influence their experiences and behaviours where they live. The key characteristic of qualitative research is to permit the researcher to recognise issues from participants' perspectives, understanding the meanings and interpretations they ascribe to behaviour, events or objects. The researcher in qualitative research needs to be open-minded, curious and emphatic, flexible and attentive, and to listen carefully to what participants are saying.

Creswell (2014) further maintained that the qualitative approach is an analytical procedure whereby the researcher obtains data from participants in a face-to-face interaction by asking a wide range of questions, gathering data comprising mostly of words or text from the participants, then defining appropriate tools to evaluate them in a more unprejudiced form over a stipulated period. Thus, people's separable and collective social actions, beliefs, and the meaning they assign to them are investigated in their natural settings.

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010), qualitative research focuses on comprehending the social occurrences from the participants' perspectives with information collected in a setting that is delicate to the people and sites under study. The information is then described, analysed and interpreted, mostly including the voices of participants and interpretations of the researcher. The main features are natural setting, context sensitivity, direct data collection, rich narrative description, process orientation, inductive data analysis, participant perspectives, emergent design and complexity of understanding, and limited explanation of human behaviour and even the world at large. Natural setting in this study refers to the schools and classrooms visited, and in which reading challenges occurred. Context sensitivity refers to understanding the effect of the close and wider framework of the issue under study. This is based on a belief that human behaviours are strongly controlled by the settings in which they occur. Describing

human behaviour therefore becomes incomplete without taking into consideration the context. In this study, information from participants and documents to be analysed were collected directly from teachers whereby full narratives that provide in-depth understanding of participants' behaviour were described. The research focused on why and how behaviour occurred and explained in a well-structured process. This study investigated challenges affecting learners' reading skills and how teachers supported learners in reading, and also how they promoted reading activities.

In a qualitative research approach, participants express their views with focus on the meaning of events and actions as verbally presented by them. The researcher studied participants' feelings, thoughts, beliefs, ideas and actions in natural settings, obtaining the views and perspectives of educators, as key participants, in the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase in their schools, while learners were observed in their classroom during reading lessons. Again, a qualitative research approach employs an emergent design in the sense that it evolves during the study and if the research questions and goals change the sites to be observed and the documents need to be reviewed.

According to Dahlia and Gregg (2011), qualitative research can be defined in terms of the kind of data it generates and in terms of the kind of analysis it employs. Qualitative research constitutes interviews (verbal communication), written texts or documents, visual images, observations of behaviour, and case studies. Myers (2011) is also of the opinion that qualitative data obtained from interviews, documents analysis and participant observation aims to describe social occurrences. Also, qualitative research in terms of analysis depends on several methods of interpreting information collected from the objects of investigation, which comes in the form of written language and images that have symbolic content (Myers, 2011). Dahlia and Gregg (2011) also note that qualitative data can be obtained from interviews, focus groups, or other methods of original data generation such as written texts or documents related to the study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define qualitative research as taking place in natural settings, and to interpreting meaning people bring to them. Lichtman (2014,1) proposed a working definition of qualitative research as "a way to study the social interactions of humans in naturally occurring situations". The researcher plays a critical role in the process by gathering data and making sense of or interpreting the phenomena that are observed and revealed. The role of the researcher is seen as crucial because it is through his or her perspective that information is

collected and analysed, and the researcher takes a reflective stance. Reality is constructed by the researcher in the sense that there are multiple interpretations. Qualitative research employs an in-depth study of a small setting or group of people, and details issues relating to them. There is a search for themes or a narrative story in which data is outlined as words and/or pictures. The researcher's voice is encouraged and outcomes can be presented in various forms. Qualitative researchers ask questions that consist of *what* and *why* of human behaviour, with the methods used being dynamic and fluid. As such, details of the data collection and analysis evolve as the research advances. It is also about inductive thinking, thus a movement from the specific to the general, and it looks at the whole rather than parts. May (2011) also defines qualitative research as the method used by people to construct, interpret and analyse meaning.

In this study, a qualitative research approach was followed to gather information concerning the challenges of teaching reading in the foundation phase. The researcher obtained the views and perspectives of educators, as key participants, on what they understood and thought about the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase in the two schools. The researcher observed the methods these teachers used to teach reading and observed learners during reading lessons. The use of teaching and learning materials during reading lessons were also observed. The researcher was therefore not only concerned with the teaching and learning methods the educators used to teach reading in the schools, but also observed the interaction and the relationship between the teacher and the learners, the classroom environment and how educators delivered the concepts and skills in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase. The researcher interviewed educators in the two schools using a face-to-face approach in order to gather information concerning the challenges affecting reading skills among learners. A video recorder was used to record the conversations during the interviews (Creswell, 2014).

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Creswell (2014), research design is a unique characteristic which is a comprehensible course of events used to, gather, locate, examine and interpret research sites and participants, and to collect data and make inferences about a research problem. For data to be accumulated, analysed and interpreted to meet the objectives of this study, a certain plan of action needed to be specified clearly.

McMillan & Schumacher (2010:20) define research design as a process for conducting the study, including when, from whom and under what conditions the data will be obtained. It is

the overall plan of how the research is set up, what happens to the participants and what methods of data collection are employed. The main purpose of a research design is to ascertain a specific plan to generate realistic evidence to explore the research questions and also to provide results that are judged to be credible.

### 3.3.1 Case study

A case study was used to explore the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase. Creswell (2014) defines a case study as a full inspection of certain arrangements based on a broader data collection. This is supported by McMillan & Schumacher (2010), for whom it is an in-depth investigation of a single entity employing multiple sources of data obtained in the setting. Such data includes observations, interviews, documents, past records and audio-visual materials. Lichtman (2014) also defined a case study as a research approach that involves a detailed examination of a particular case. It is aimed at providing detailed and specific explanations of particular situations rather than making generalised findings. An individual activity or event is considered in a case study rather than the group. A case study is therefore used to explain that entity, issue or theme. The case design in this research work originated from the need to describe an understanding of the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase in the two schools. The process investigated the practices of reading lessons as well as the methods used to teach reading.

This research work is described as a natural case study, because it helped the researcher to understand the challenges teachers face with regard to teaching reading, as well as the appropriate methods and relevant materials used. Hence, the proficiency and challenges of participants were discovered as well as reading abilities and difficulties of learners. Also, the researcher analysed the educators and learners' documents, such as lesson plans, assessment records, and workbooks. In the lesson plan the researcher looked at how reading was taught, assessed and promoted and how such methods accommodated learners with barriers to reading. The researcher verified the relevance of assessment methods in reading lessons, which helped to ascertain whether learners were able to read with understanding. In the learners' work, the researcher checked whether the learners read the books used in teaching reading and their ability to answer questions asked from the books or stories read.

Yin (2012) outlines six common sources of evidence of case study data, namely, direct observations, interviews, archival records, documents, participant observation and physical



artefacts. Almost all of these sources could be employed in any combination because the researcher directly observed educators in two schools in the foundation phase in their reading lessons to ascertain the challenges affecting reading. Open-ended conversations with participants through semi-structured interviews were employed to elicit information about the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase. The researcher analysed both learners and teachers' records such as portfolios, workbooks, profiles, learning programmes, work schedules and lesson plans. McMillan & Schumacher (2010) identified three main types of case studies, namely, an intrinsic case (a case-focused study), an instrumental case (theme-based study) and collective, multiple or multisite case studies (two or more cases).

An instrumental case study was employed because it provides insight into challenges affecting reading among learners in the foundation phase. It is also ideal in this instance as it helps to study a particular phenomenon in its natural context as a result of its flexible form. McMillan & Schumacher (2010) posits that since an instrumental case study is a theme-based study it helped position participants' experiences, perceptions and decisions in relation to the challenges affecting reading in their schools. A case study allowed the researcher to use narrative descriptions showing the participants' views, perceptions and decisions to compile rich representations for different participants in as far as the teaching of reading is concerned. The researcher spent four weeks with the participants at the sites gathering and collating information aimed at addressing the research questions.

### **3.4 SITE SELECTION AND BACKGROUND**

This research took place in two primary schools in the Rakwadu Circuit in Mopani district of Limpopo Province in South Africa. Selected due to their accessibility to the researcher, these were government schools situated about 13 kilometres from Modjadjiskloof, and within three kilometres from each other. Some learners from both schools travel 28 kilometres every day to school. The two schools belong to the same cluster and are supervised by the same Early Childhood development curriculum advisor. They both differed according to learner enrolment. At the time of the research, school A had 1,635 learners and 43 educators whilst school B had 820 learners and 24 educators.

School A was popular, also regarded as the best primary school in the Rakwadu Circuit, based on learner performance, and other activities such as reading competitions, choral verses, poetry, drama and spelling contests in which learners are asked to spell words. School A was a feeder

school for the neighbouring secondary school, which produced good results for grade twelve learners in the local education district and province. National, provincial, monitoring and evaluation programmes for the district and circuit were conducted in this school. School B, meanwhile, was a rural primary school in the Rakwadu circuit, in which poverty and unemployment were high. This primary school was a feeder school to one underperforming secondary school.

### **3.5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

Participants comprised educators from the two schools, selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the study. Dahlia and Gregg (2011) define convenience sampling as a situation in which the researcher takes advantage of a natural gathering and finds it easy to contact participants targeted for the study. Convenience samples sometimes suffers coverage bias, in the sense that the participants who are available to the researcher may not represent much of the target population of interest (Dahlia & Gregg, 2011). Therefore, it must be noted that much is dependent on the tendency that inclusion of more participants in the sampling frame may not change the substantive outcome of interest. Participants were selected based on their accessibility (Gordor, Akar & Howard, 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The nature of data collection limits the generalizability of the results to the schools selected. Purposive sampling requires researchers to approach cases that are known to provide information required for a particular study (Gordor, Akar & Howard, 2006). Three educators from each school in the foundation phase were selected. Factors such as availability, accessibility and willingness to participate were among the criteria for participant's selection.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION**

The following methods of data collection were employed:

#### **3.6.1 Observation**

Creswell (2014) defines observation as the way of gathering data by studying behaviour, supervising events, or noticing physical characteristics in their natural setting, which gives open-ended first-hand information to the researcher. In observations, the observer records what he or she sees and hears as it occurs naturally in the research site (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011), observation as a method helps the researcher to methodically observe and record the behaviours, actions and interactions of

participants. Observation enabled the researcher to obtain a detailed description of events as they happen naturally in order to position people's behaviour within their own socio-cultural context. Therefore, the act of observing involves thorough and systematic watching, listening, questioning, and recording peoples' behaviours, actions, expressions and interaction, as well as observing the social settings or locations of the population. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) note that the nature of observation is broad in the sense that it is continuous and opens to whatever is important for the collection of a complete set of data to reflect the importance of the effect of the context. Based on the above descriptions, the researcher employed the observation method to ensure that events were recorded and reported as they appeared.

Observations can be overt or covert (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Overt is when all participants know they are being examined and covert when none know they are being examined and the observer is disguised. The participants in my research knew that they were being observed and were encouraged to feel free during the process. The advantage of covert observation is that people are more likely to act naturally if they do not know they are being examined. However, one specifically needs to conduct overt observations because of ethical considerations related to obscuring one's observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) also explained that observation can be direct or indirect, direct requiring the presence of the observer while indirect may require recording devices such as video cameras. The researcher used both observations to record what the researcher saw and video-taped the observations to assist during the transcription process and ensure that the researcher did not miss important information.

The researcher observed the participants, their actions, interactions and non-verbal gestures during lesson presentations. The researcher also observed the environments or classrooms in which lessons took place in order to gain deeper insight into the challenges of reading among learners in the foundation phase in the two schools. Thus, the researcher watched and listened to what the educators said and how they presented reading lessons based on the lesson plans and notes prepared. The researcher also observed how teaching and learning materials and visual aids were displayed and used during reading lessons. Learner participation and interaction during lessons were observed. During interviews the researcher observed teachers behaviours towards the teaching of reading and how such behaviours influenced learners in reading.

### **3.6.2 Semi-structured interview**

Dahlia and Gregg (2011) define the semi-structured interview as a method of interviewing participants using an interview guide, including a planned set of open-ended questions. The researcher employed open-ended, face-to-face and detailed semi-structured interviews in order to collect data from participants. This granted the participants the chance to express their opinions about questions and answers clearly and freely on the issue under investigation. Participants gave accurate information about the subject matter being studied and their views were recorded. Semi-structured interviews are considered to be direct communication between the interviewer and the interviewees with discussions of interest concerning the issue under study being dealt with (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide, as recommended by Dahlia and Gregg (2011), and a set of open-ended questions accompanied by probes, thereby guiding the discussion. Face- to- face interviews were conducted to get information from the participants.

The researcher asked questions one by one as written on the interview schedule and recorded the teachers' responses. Questions were clarified when participants did not understand. Follow-up and probing questions were asked to ensure that participants' views were correctly captured. The interviews were held in the two schools that were selected as research sites. Data collected was audio and video recorded and handwritten notes were also taken. The researcher visited the schools to negotiate access to the principals, heads of department (HODs) and teachers. The researcher kept a diary to record events and incidents that unfolded during the interview period.

Semi-structured questions were posed to participants on issues such as how reading was taught using appropriate and relevant methods, how teachers promoted reading, the support teachers provided in encouraging reading and the strategies used to motivate reading. In this research work, interviewing participants helped identify the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase in the two selected schools at Bolobedu in Mopani District, in Limpopo Province. The researcher solely depended on the information obtained from participants and what was observed and interpreted, and provided conclusions based on the findings.

### **3.6.3 Document analysis**

According to Creswell (2014), document analysis refers to analysis of public documents such as newspapers, minutes of meetings, official reports or private documents, for example, personal journals, diaries, letters, and emails. McMillan & Schumacher (2010) also defined document analysis as a study of records of past events, whether written or printed, such as letters, diaries, journals, newspapers and regulations. Documents serve as proof to support the findings gained through the use of observation and interviews.

The researcher analysed the policy document on CAPS to ascertain whether the tools, content areas, and time allocations outlined for teaching reading were correctly followed and covered by the educators. Learners and teachers records, such as portfolios, workbooks, profiles, learning programmes, work schedules and lesson plans were analysed, to determine how they contribute towards the teaching of reading. Departmental circulars were examined for correspondence with regard to reading, to ascertain the kind of support teachers received from curriculum advisors. The researcher went through the foundation phase minutes of previous meetings to understand how educators shared views on curriculum matters. Reflection on what had been done was followed to provide support to teachers and to the learners. Document analysis helped the researcher to ascertain whether the lesson plans had provision for shared reading, group guided reading, and/or independent reading.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Data analysis refers to the method of dividing and taking apart the data as well as bringing it back together (Creswell, 2014). According to Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011), data analysis is the process of following analytic procedures to identify, understand and interpret the experiences of the participants in a study. This implies that the researcher needs to understand, explain and interpret human experience, which demands uncovering certain personal, social, and cultural meanings attached to people's behaviour. In this research, the researcher used content analysis to make meaning of the data collected. Litchman (2014) identified three concepts related to data analysis, namely, coding, categorising and conceptualising. In content analysis, as Lichtman (2014) argues, researchers begin by coding categories which are obtained directly from the text, and this forms part of what is called conventional content analysis. In concluding the analysis process, researchers perform a summative analysis in which interpretations about the categories are made. Data analysis brings order, structure and meaning

to the volume of data collected (Lichtman, 2014). Furthermore, Guest, MacQueen & Namey (2012) emphasise that researchers need to select relevant data and discard what is less important. The aim of this process is to group data into a small number of themes (Creswell, 2013). The researcher followed the above steps in content analysis as coded categories.

The researcher organised the data into file folders and developed a table of sources to help organise the materials by type, site, location and participant. The researcher kept supplementary copies of all forms of data, and in order to facilitate analysis labelled all audiotapes, finding quiet places for note-taking. The researcher then wrote down the data that was obtained through interviewing and observations, changing audio-tape recordings and field notes into text data. The researcher read and reread all transcriptions and field-notes carefully, writing down important ideas as the researcher read through. The researcher thereafter went through one document at a time, asking questions such as whether teachers used the correct methods of teaching reading; whether the learners could read with understanding, how teachers played a role in promoting reading, how teachers used the relevant and appropriate teaching and learning materials in teaching reading, and whether learners positively participated in the lessons. The researcher considered the underlying meaning then wrote it down in the margin in two to three words, circling it with a pen. The researcher then divided the text into parts of information and labelled them with code-words or phrases that accurately described the meaning of the text segment. As Creswell (2014) posits, codes can address many different topics, such as the setting and the context, perspectives held by participants, processes, activities, strategies, relationships and social structure.

### **3.8 QUALITY CRITERIA OF THE STUDY**

Quality criteria are an important aspect of research and have to be adhered to. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), the term is defined as a way of safeguarding the truthfulness and worthiness of the study in order to achieve the set objective of the research. Throughout this study, the researcher followed all the principles of quality criteria. Components of truthfulness and worthiness, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability and authenticity, as highlighted by Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011), were adhered to.

Qualitative research is credible when the researcher spends adequate time of engagement with respondents in order to obtain facts of reliable observation (Creswell, 2014). For Moen (2006), the credibility of a qualitative study is shown when vivid pictures about human experience of

those concerned can easily be recognised. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010), credibility is the degree to which the results of a study approximate reality and are thus judged to be accurate, trustworthy and reasonable. In complying with credibility, the researcher engaged with educators of the two schools to observe and interview them for two weeks in the school. The researcher ensured that my interaction with the teachers was based on transparency, consistency and communicability. Patton (2002) emphasises that it is important to build a strong relationship of trust and confidence during the data collection process, so the researcher returned to participants to communicate the interpretations, share the findings of the study and verify the report in order to determine its precision (Creswell, 2014).

Transferability as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1994) refers to the degree to which results or conclusions can be applied to different people at other sites and environments. The researcher anticipated that some experiences shared by the participants could be transferred to other teachers in that they could relate to challenges that affect teaching reading in the foundation phase.

Dependability of data is the degree to which the same results can be obtained if the same research methods and tools are applied on similar people under the same conditions (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used a case study approach and employed interviews, observations and document analysis to understand the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase among learners in two schools at Bolobedu in Mopani District, in Limpopo Province, in an attempt to achieve dependability.

Conformability is the degree to which the end results of the study are not biased towards the researcher (Creswell, 2014). For conformability to be ensured peer proof reading and examination of reports of the study were instituted by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). A peer assessor who was not an actively participant of this research was consulted. The researcher appealed to the peer assessor to scrutinise the procedures of the research with the aid of audio-tape recorders, records and briefs. The findings of the researcher and the peer assessor are anticipated to conform.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Adequate information in line with the aim of this research needs to be given. The right to privacy and dignity of participants needs to be ensured, as stated by Neuman (2011). The research participants were made aware of the purpose of the study, the detailed description of the procedures and the length of time needed. Also, any change in the procedures that might be of advantage was described to participants. Each of the six educators was briefed regarding the process of classroom observations and interviews. All reading lessons observations took place at the stipulated time and were scheduled during the school days. Interviews were conducted at scheduled and agreed times. The extent of privacy through anonymity, confidentiality and appropriate storing of data was guaranteed, with pseudonyms used for the schools and participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, Creswell, 2014 & Lichtman, 2014). Participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw their participation at any given time without penalty if they felt discomfort, as stated in their letter of informed consent.

There were no risks or dangers anticipated with this study, but participants were encouraged to raise any dissatisfaction relating to the way the study was conducted whenever they saw the need. The letter of informed consent clearly explained what they needed to know about the study. Participants were assured that safety and security measures would be taken to manage the risks (Lichtman, 2014). A statement of confidentiality was assured to participants as pledged in their letters of free and informed consent, thus, they were informed that classroom lessons would not be recorded as evidence against them or as information obtained from interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Lichtman, 2014), but only used for the purpose of the study. The researcher also complied with ethical clearance procedures as stipulated by the University of South Africa and obtained ethical clearance before conducting the study.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

The above chapter covered the research design of the study, research methodology, selection of site and participants, discussion of the research site, the data collection methods and analysis, quality criteria for the study as well as the ethical considerations.



The next chapter presents the findings, discussion and interpretation of the findings in relation to the research questions outlined.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed based on the data collected from the six selected teachers and learners from two different selected schools during the research through semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis. The aim of the study was to investigate the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase and to explore approaches used to promote reading. The chapter addresses the following research questions:

- How do reading challenges influence reading development?
- How do teachers address the challenges encountered?

#### **4.2 BACKGROUND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOLS**

The two schools were labelled School A and School B, as follows.

##### **4.2.1 School A**

School A is a popular primary school around Rakwadu Circuit in Mopani District in Limpopo Province. The school originated in 1985, situated under a tree with one teacher teaching sub A with sixty learners. In 1986, it admitted learners from grades one to four with three teachers, operating in a local church. The first teacher who was appointed principal taught standards three, four and five in 1987, when the government built a school. In 1988, it moved from the local church to a new building and at that time had seven teachers. The founder, the first principal, retired in 2005 by which time it had 19 teachers. The HOD then became the principal. School A had 1,635 learners and 43 black teachers (17 males and 27 females) at the time of this research. It started from grades R to seven. The language of learning and teaching in the foundation phase was Sepedi, which was sometimes seen as challenging for learners because most spoke *Khelobedu* dialect at home.

In 2004, the school won the national championship in drama in Cape Town. The principal was selected to visit the United Kingdom to learn about school management matters and to benchmark, comparing the education system of Britain and South Africa. In 2005, the grade one teacher was selected by the provincial department to demonstrate a breakthrough in literacy

lessons for visitors from the Republic of Ireland. In 2014, the government extended the classes from 28 classes to 47, including main hall, tuck shop and an additional administration block.

Due to popularity of the school, most learners did not object to travelling 28 kilometres every day, despite other schools nearer. There were four primary schools around School A, but it was the only one with more than a thousand learners. The others' enrolments ranged from 800, 500, 300 and 250 learners. School A organised fundraising monthly, which included fun activities such as a jumping castle and hotdogs for the day, educational tours, sports, music, cultural activities such as *khekhapa*, a traditional dance for Balobedu, beauty contest, and athletics. These co-curricular activities attracted parents and the community at large and as such, the enrolment increased each year.

My observation revealed that in School A discipline, safety and security were a priority. The principal of the school was a strict disciplinarian, with teachers reporting to duty 15 minutes before the starting time and failure to do so resulting in signing a late-coming register, stating reasons. Learners were encouraged to come to school early and assembled at an identified location. School A is popularly used by university students for teaching practice, with the management team comprising the principal, two deputy principals and five HODs. There were 16 teachers in the foundation phase, including a student who was on an internship for 18 months from one of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges in Limpopo Province. The school had 28 classes, 16 for foundation phase, nine for intermediate phase, and three for senior phase, with an enrolment of 1,716 learners.

#### **4.2.2 School B**

School B was a rural primary school in Rakwadu Circuit in Mopani District in Limpopo Province. The school was situated in a village, 13 kilometres from Modjadjiskloof. At the time of this study it had an enrolment of 820 learners from grade R to grade seven, with 27 teachers. The school management team consisted of the principal, deputy principal and four HODs responsible for Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences and Languages. The intermediate phase grades four to six had two classes each and the senior phase grade seven also had two classes. Overall, the intermediate and senior phases had 17 teachers, including the principal. Most of the parents in the school were unemployed. The school used one small room as an office for the principal and deputy principal but the HODs did not have offices. The school fell under a group of schools in the province which were poor, that is, quintile one for the Norms and

Standards for School Funding, and received funding from government based on learner enrolment. The school had a vegetable garden coordinated by a staff member responsible for nutrition in the school. The vegetables grown benefited the schools and were also sold to members of the community. The language of teaching in the foundation phase was Sepedi for Home language, Mathematics and Life Skills, though the learners spoke *Khelobedu* dialect at home.

#### **4.3 CASE STUDY ONE: TEACHER 1**

Teacher 1 was a 44 years old black female teacher at School A situated in Rakwadu Circuit in Mopani district. Her home language was Sepedi but she spoke *Khelobedu* dialect. She held a Primary Teachers' Diploma obtained at Modjadji College of Education, an Advanced Certificate in Education Management obtained at University of South Africa and B.Ed Honours in Education Management obtained from the University of Pretoria. She started teaching in 2000 and taught for five years as a temporary teacher. In 2005, she was appointed as a permanent teacher. From her date of appointment she was allocated to teach grade one. As part of her senior primary teachers' diploma she completed subjects such as Sepedi, English, Biology, History, Education, Teaching Science and Teaching Practice. Her teacher training did not focus on how to teach reading in the foundation phase or how to teach in the foundation phase, but rather she was taught to teach from grades four to seven. Teacher 1 had 15 years of experience in teaching at School A. She appeared to be a dedicated, committed and a hardworking teacher. The school and the circuit had reading competitions in 2015, and the learners who took part were from her class. The two learners took part in reading and creative writing, where they were given pictures to interpret. They displayed what the teacher taught them and both obtained position one at circuit level.

Teacher 1's classroom was situated in the first block of the main entrance of the school, a new block built by the Department as a standard classroom with 56 learners. It created a challenge of resources such as furniture. It had 22 desks which were meant to accommodate two learners each but in her case learners sat in threes or fours. There was one large table and one chair for the teacher, a large chalkboard in front of the class and a steel cabinet for the teacher to store documents such as policy statements, workbooks, assessment records, class register, big books, and portfolio files for both the teacher and learners. The classroom was aesthetically pleasing and inviting, with colourful and relevant teaching posters in all learning areas. It had a large

timetable displayed in front of the class on the wall. Next to the teacher's table were two small tables on which the teacher put learners' classwork books for all learning areas in all the school terms. The teacher was responsible for teaching the subjects in the grade, such as Sepedi home language, First Additional Language (English), Mathematics and Life Skills. The periods ranged for an average of 30 minutes per subject. Home language was allocated seven hours per week, First Additional Language three hours per week, Mathematics seven hours per week and six hours per week for Life Skills. The total hours for all subjects per week was 23. The workload appeared to be a challenge in the early grades, for example, teacher 1 had to do remedial work and assessment of learners with barriers, and this appeared to be a challenge. This remedial work was allocated 90 minutes per week.

#### **4.3.1 Workshops on reading**

Teacher 1 mentioned that she attended a training workshop organised by the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) in 2015, organised through a non-governmental organisation (NGO), the Curtis Nkondo Professional Development Institute and conducted by teachers from SADTU. It was scheduled for four hours. The teacher also mentioned that she attended another workshop organised by the Department in 2016, in the second term to discuss the preparation it gave to teachers. The first workshop was conducted by an early childhood curriculum advisor, but none of the above workshops covered reading. Teacher 1 highlighted that the school management team (SMT) supported her with regard to the teaching of reading. The HOD conducted weekly workshops at the school for an hour and discussed problems encountered in class on the teaching of reading, and how to address them. The HOD often demonstrated lessons on how to teach reading using the methods prescribed in the policy document. Teachers in the foundation phase discussed preparation of lessons in working towards a common approach to reading, displaying teaching aids appropriately, and assessing learners. The HOD conducted monitoring at the school and lesson preparations were submitted weekly. Attendance registers were submitted every Friday for inspection, and tasks and memoranda submitted for moderation before learners wrote the task. Learners' scripts were moderated by the HOD before marks were recorded.

The HOD visited classes quarterly to observe how reading lessons were presented. Learners' workbooks were submitted quarterly for the HOD to check whether or not the required classwork had been completed and whether the books were marked. The SMT supplied

teachers with the necessary resources required in the teaching of reading, for example, charts, marking pens, scissors, card boxes and crayons.

Teacher 1 shared the following:

*“The departmental officials visited my school sometimes back last year to monitor activities of teaching reading in grade three. These officials came from the province in the second quarter. They requested my workbook to check the lesson preparations of reading, workbooks for the learners, and assessment records.”*

According to the reflections above, it is clear that some kind of support was provided to the teacher. However, the teacher felt that this support was not enough. The teacher also said that the curriculum advisor seemed not to be supportive of or knowledgeable about certain areas of content.

#### **4.3.2 Promotion of reading**

In response to the question on how reading was promoted, Teacher 1’s responses were:

*“I promote reading in my classroom by encouraging learners to read regularly. When they are done with their classwork at school or assignment at home they must read to develop reading and fluency skills. During lessons in other learning areas, I motivate them to read and I give them rewards if sentences are read correctly. I give them stars and words of encouragement if sentences are read correctly and fluently. I give them books to read at home, and the following day they read to me.”*

The teacher indicated that as a phase they had reading competitions which were held every Friday in each grade. The school also organised reading competitions which took place monthly. Learners took part in a circuit reading competition which motivated teachers to identify good and fluent readers.

#### **4.3.3 Teaching reading**

Teachers often experience lack of resources for reading, as Teacher 1 expressed in frustration:

*“I do have reading materials that I use to teach reading but they are insufficient. The reading materials I use are the big books supplied by the department for shared reading. The challenge*

*that I experience is that, big books for shared reading are there but they are not enough to cater for all learners. It becomes a challenge when I have to do group reading. The books are really not enough....”*

The teacher also mentioned that she did not have enough readers. One of the challenges identified was that the vocabulary used in some of the materials was difficult for learners to understand.

#### **4.3.4 Addressing barriers to reading**

Barriers to reading affected the teaching of reading, as said by Teacher 1:

*“I am reading shared reading and I realise that learners cannot read or pronounce a word in a sentence, then I stop pursuing the teaching of shared reading but teach the sounds and pronunciation of such words. Firstly, I divide the words into syllables and then into words and thereafter help the learners to consistently follow as they repeat after me. I encourage the learners to read on their own as I monitor and guide them.”*

With regard to the issue of addressing barriers to reading, Teacher 1 mentioned that she first taught vocabulary words that were in the book before the teaching of reading. Then short sentences were read. Spelling of words was also carried out during the teaching of reading. Learners were similarly taught to interpret pictures in the story and to read fluently with understanding.

#### **4.3.5 Challenges regarding reading**

Teaching reading can be very challenging, as reflected by Teacher 1:

*“Learners are unable to recognise the sounds, syllables, word and then sentence in reading lessons. Learners are unable to build sentences using the words given. Some learners are unable to spell words. Others have a problem of sequencing events in the story.”*

Teacher 1 reflected that it was difficult for her and the learners to teach learners who could not read because she had to stop in the middle of the teaching to accommodate those learners with barriers, and this was frustrating. The above illustration suggests that the target objective set for the lesson plan were not well because 60 percent of the learners could not read and these learners needed to pass at the end of the year due to the departmental promotional policies. The

policy of the government on the issue of promotion requirements stipulates that learners may be retained once in a phase. As a result, learners are promoted even though they cannot read or write. Sometimes parents of such learners are advised to retain their learners but refuse, hoping their children will improve in the next grade.

#### **4.3.6 Parental involvement**

With regard to parental involvement, the teacher shared that some parents were not involved in the education of their children, as reflected in the quote below:

*“Parents were often requested to come to the school to discuss their children’s performance but they failed to attend. It is because some parents work too far from the school, and others do not want to come for the fear that they would be accused for not helping their children at home. Some of the parents are not supportive because they are illiterate.”*

The challenge, however, was that some parents did not respond even when proper procedures had been followed to make them aware of their responsibilities. Overall, Teacher 1 was not very happy about parents’ involvement in her class activities.

#### **4.3.7 Socio-economic environment**

In the sphere of socio-economic environment, Teacher 1 highlighted:

*“Most of the parents are unemployed and depend on the social grant given by government monthly. Other parents are labourers and some are domestic workers receiving stipends, and very few are educated and earn better salaries.”*

The expression above suggests that socio-economic environment contributes to challenges of reading among some learners in Teacher 1’s classroom because parents lack adequate funds to acquire the necessary books and other reading materials for their children to read at home. Learners are unable to visit the local library as some live far away it and transport remains a challenge. Some learners staying within the vicinity of the local library do not use these facilities because of a lack of parental support towards reading.

#### **4.3.8 Home language**

On the issue of home language, Teacher 1 expressed her sentiments as follow:



*“Home language is a problem to my learners, in as far as reading is concerned. I am obliged to correct the learners frequently in the classroom when they spoke because at home they speak Khelobedu.”*

This has strong influence on learners because at school they are confronted with Sepedi as home language. From my observation when Teacher 1 was teaching reading I noticed that they pronounced some of the words in Khelobedu, for example, a cow which is *kgomo* in Sepedi and is pronounced as *khomo*. This has implications for spelling because lack of vocabulary and pronunciation forces learners to perform badly in spelling.

#### **4.3.9 Poverty**

Poverty was also noted as a challenge that affects reading in the school. Teacher 1 shared the following sentiment:

*“Some learners live in poverty- stricken families and come to school without eating, and this affects their performance negatively.”*

It is evident from the reflection above that some learners struggle to pay attention in class due to not having had a good breakfast at home. The school nutrition programme is a relief to some learners, however, there is still a challenge that with some learners, the school 1 is the only place at which learners eat a proper meal.

#### **4.3.10 Overcrowding**

On the question of overcrowding Teacher 1 said the following:

*“I divide learners into groups, even though it is time-consuming. If I don’t group them they don’t listen carefully and attentively because they are many and sometimes it is difficult to recognise non-attentive learners. I group learners when I deal with lessons that need adequate and more attention. I do not cope, I put learners with barriers to reading at one side and group them according to their abilities. The gifted once help me when they are doing group work, they report at the end of group work to the whole class.”*

It is clear from the above reflection that it was burdensome to teach learners with the barriers of reading in an overcrowded classroom because Teacher 1 was not trained to do so. It was additionally difficult because some learners did not have prior knowledge of sounds.

#### **4.3.11 Support from the Department of Education**

When asked to comment on the kind of support she received in dealing with learners with barriers to reading, Teacher 1 said that:

*“The Department of Education has not given me any support concerning the barriers and challenges that my learners are facing in the classroom. Maybe it is because I did not inform them, but little support was given by the curriculum advisor and the only support I received from the Department of Education was the reading strategies supplied to us as teachers.”*

Teacher 1 highlighted with concern that the curriculum advisor had not visited or supervised her classroom since the previous year and the inception of school in the current year. The only thing that the curriculum advisor did was to organise a workshop for foundation phase teachers concerning the teaching of reading. The workshop was conducted by lead teachers of SADTU. The curriculum advisor was not part of the workshop presentations, but was of the opinion that some of the officials did not know what was expected of them.

Teacher 1 further emphasised that the only person from the DoE who supported the workshop was the circuit inspector from the nearby circuit, who was not her circuit manager. She mentioned that the circuit inspector had confidence, and one could see that she knew what she was doing by participating actively, giving meaningful contributions and making some suggestions about teaching reading during the operational discussions in the workshop. This circuit inspector shared with the teachers the Diagnostic Report from the Annual National Assessment (ANA, 2014) and encouraged teachers intrinsically to do their best to promote and enhance reading among learners in their respective schools because of the abysmal poor performance of the ANA 2014 results. Peer teaching focussed on teaching reading in the foundation phase until the closure of the workshop.

#### **4.3.12 Classroom management and control**

Teacher 1 responded that some learners had problems and difficulties in handling teaching. Some of the example from her comments are the following:

*“Learners lack concentration, they disturb other learners when you teach. They also play, talk, look outside, or do anything that distract others. They have short retention memory and attention span. I don’t like distorted and disruptive attitudes of some learners, I immediately*

*call them in order to bring order in the classroom and affect my teachings. I therefore call their names, ask such inattentive learners questions, and ask them to read the sounds on a particular word given to them.”*

The teacher admitted that it was hard to teach learners with the barriers to reading, especially if one did not have knowledge of inclusive education. Her frustrations also suggests that she had no information about the policy introduced by the DoE for teachers to understand and support learners with barriers to learning.

#### **4.3.13 Methods of teaching reading**

When asked on how reading was taught, Teacher 1 commented:

*“Yes, I am mandated to follow the methods of teaching reading as prescribed by the policy.”*

Teacher 1 highlighted that in the first three months of the year in grade one she was obliged to teach shared reading using a big book, which was not a good idea according to her. She preferred to start with school readiness in which she would introduce the sounds, after learners had mastered those sounds, introduce them into words and break the words into syllables and sentences before introducing shared reading. In the second quarter of the year, until the fourth quarter, learners built their own sentences and during the seventh month they took part in shared reading. After learners had mastered six to eight books they took part in group reading.

#### **4.3.14 Lesson observations**

I observed the lesson of Teacher 1’s class. In her lesson plan notes she wrote in Sepedi the class, date and term. All the learners gathered in the teaching corner. Teacher 1 asked the learners to say the days of the week and they recited them appropriately as expected by the teacher. She further asked them: “What day is today? How many days do we come to school? What is today’s weather?” Learners answered well and then the teacher together with the learners sang a song. After the song, the teacher took out a big book, put it on the table and introduced vocabulary words to the learners. The following words were written on the flash cards: ‘Shells,’ ‘Orphans,’ ‘Holidays,’ and ‘Happy. They were introduced one by one to the learners. The teacher asked the learners to read the words and she helped them to read.

In shared reading the teacher displayed the book on the table and asked learners to interpret the pictures. The teacher asked questions relating to the book after showing learners every page.

The learners answered all the questions instead of answering them one by one. The teacher read the book and finally read the name of the book twice, which was “*Letšatši la mafelelo sekolong*” (*Last day at school*). The teacher read the book and explained page by page to the learners. The learners listened attentively to the teacher, who was not reading together with them. This might have been due to limited time, fifteen minutes, for shared reading. After reading the book, the teacher asked the learners’ questions related to the book read and the learners responded adequately with accuracy.

According to my observation, learners were actively involved in the lesson. Due to overcrowding, some learners were playing when the teacher was busily teaching reading. She tried to bring them back to the lesson by calling their names and asking them questions to check if they were listening.

#### **4.3.15 Synthesis**

Overcrowding was identified by Teacher 1 as a challenge to reading thereby leading to inattentiveness among learners during lessons. Language was also one of the challenges of reading among learners as the teacher was using Khelobedu dialect instead of using the home language Sepedi to teach the learners.

In my observation with regard to the big book for shared reading I realised that the font size was too small for an overcrowded classroom in which learners at the back were unable to see clearly from far. There were some errors in the book, for example on page two “Last day at school,” the word *maikhutšong* was written as *maikhutšo ng*, with *ng* incorrectly separated from *maikhutšo*. Teacher 1 did not have readers relating to the big books for group reading.

I went through the learners’ Sepedi workbooks and discovered the following issues. Teacher 1 has 56 learners in her classroom but the learners’ Sepedi work books were 50, meaning six were without books. She improvised by photocopying seven books for these six learners, and one for herself as the teacher’s copy. According to my observation, the lower achievers were the ones given photocopied books, which were not colourful. This suggested that the teacher was not paying full attention to some learners. Going through Book 1, I discovered that learners started reading sentences in week four. They were requested to match names of things or persons or objects with pictures or objects by cutting the words in the back pages and pasting them appropriately as expected.

In week five learners are supposed to read the sentence and cut and paste it. In week seven they are to read the sentence. These must be simple familiar vocabulary. Words such as *mmogo* (together) seemed difficult and unfamiliar. In the sentence “My brother is eating a small apple”, the word *ncencane* was used, which was also difficult and strange for the learners. The letter C is not used in Sepedi home language unless it is the name of a person. These were pieces of evidence that the workbooks needed to be reviewed and written in proper Sepedi language.

With regard to lesson plans, the teacher taught phonics for 15 minutes, introducing the sounds by using the phonic freeze poster. Learners were asked to write the sound in the air and on the floor. According to her plan, shared reading took 15 minutes with the whole class for a day. Group guided reading takes 30 minutes for two groups. The teacher selected the vocabulary using phonics for the day and from the vocabulary words the teacher elicited the key sentences. She treated syllables and sounds of the key words. The teacher was with the teaching groups while other groups were also doing group reading outside. The learners were grouped according to how they performed in class. They were placed in groups of six.

The group leader read the book while others listened. After reading a sentence they followed reading the sentences one by one until they completed the book. They summarised the story and the group leader reported on behalf of other group members after they had finished the book. They also read in pairs, when a learner read to his/her partner. Independent reading was also carried out, when a learner read on his/her own. Learners were given Vula Bula books to read independently. I observed that they were able to hold and turn pages of the book the correct way. All knew that when reading they must start from left to right. Most were able to read most of the words and answer questions relating to the book read.

Teacher 1 indicated that she attended weekly meetings during which they discussed planning of lessons, how to teach reading, and the challenges with regard to reading, and how to overcome them. In the meetings, the rubric was discussed as well as the number of tasks required in each subject. Promotion of reading was also Teacher 1's concern. A reading competition was held every Friday for reading, and this focused on creative writing and counting.

#### **4.4 CASE STUDY TWO: TEACHER 2**

Teacher 2 was a 48 year old grade two teacher at School A. She had a Senior Primary Teachers' Diploma professional qualification, obtained at Modjadji College of Education in the Limpopo Province. Her training had focused on teaching grades four to nine and her major subjects were Sepedi, English, Biology and History. She had furthered her studies and obtained the Adult Basic Education Certificate, a Diploma in Adult Basic Education, and an Advanced Certificate in Life Orientation and a Bachelor of Education Honours Degree in Inclusive Education. She had been teaching for 15 years, with five years as a temporary teacher. Teacher 2 was Khelobedu speaking, even though her home language was Sepedi. She started teaching grade seven at the same school, then moved to grade two. As HOD in the foundation phase and a senior teacher in her grade, she had 60 learners in her classroom. She was a member of the Touring, Catering, Foundation Phase, and Bereavement Committees in the school.

Teacher 2's classroom was situated in a new block of the school on the right hand side of the administration block. It was the fourth classroom adjacent to the small gate. Learners were seated in four groups, each consisting of 15 learners. Furniture was a challenge in the classroom, which had a teacher's table and chair, and a book cabinet. The classroom was aesthetically decorated with colourful teaching aids.

##### **4.4.1: Workshops on reading**

Workshops are important to assist teachers in acquiring skills in the teaching of reading. Teacher 2 attended a workshop organised by SADTU and further indicated that the HOD played an important role in monitoring and supporting the teaching of reading.

Teacher 2 stated:

*"I attended the workshop on the teaching of reading sometimes last year. This was the only workshop, I wish we could have more of these and be able to acquire more skills and learn strategies on how we can be able to teach reading effectively."*

It is clear from the above reflection that there was little support in terms of provision of training to teachers with regard to the teaching of reading.

#### **4.4.2 Promotion of reading**

Promotion of reading should be a priority to ensure that all learners are able to read. Teacher 2 highlighted that learners were given books to read in the classroom after completing assessment tasks. They also received books to read at home. When asked about how reading was promoted in their school, Teacher 2 replied:

*“The Department of Education in the province organise reading competition every year, where we compete as circuits, district and as a province.”*

The above shows that an attempt was being made to promote reading at different schooling levels. Learners were encouraged to read at home with the help of their parents and to read to the teacher.

#### **4.4.3 Teaching reading**

In response to the question on what kinds of resources were available to teach reading, Teacher 2's responses were:

*“I have materials to teach reading but they are not enough, I have big books for shared reading but I do not have readers for these big books for group reading, I also have the problem of furniture. Learners need to sit outside for group reading, and there is not enough furniture.”*

The reflection confirmed that the school had a challenge of resources. During my visits to the classrooms I noticed that learners sat in threes and fours at a desk which was supposed to accommodate two, due to the shortage of chairs.

#### **4.4.4 Addressing barriers to reading**

Barriers to reading affected her teaching of reading as stated by Teacher 2. Her response was:

*“I do not have progress at all, I go back to where I started previously and this delays my progress.”*

On reflection, one could deduce that barriers to reading constituted a problem in the classroom as learners were often disturbed during the lesson. The teacher mentioned that there was a lack of concentration among learners. She added that time was given to help learners to catch up and those who could read helped those who could not. Remedial work was also provided.

Learners were grouped according to abilities and group reading was monitored to check if it was successful.

#### **4.4.5 Challenges regarding reading;**

Books supplied by the DoE were a challenge, as Teacher 2 pointed out:

*“Books delivered in schools for teaching reading are not based on our choice, the content is not up to standard and not edited.”*

I went through the books and noticed some had errors, which suggested that they had not been properly edited. Some of the words were not written properly, making them difficult to understand, for example, *bohlahlakga* in *Dikanegelo tše bohlahlakga*, a short story collection. Also, some of the English words were difficult and required the teacher to simplify for learners to comprehend. Some font sizes on the books were too small for learners to read, as highlighted by Teacher 2.

#### **4.4.6 Parental involvement**

Teacher 2 experienced lack of parental support, indicating:

*“I struggle to get parents to be involved and assist their children. I try to send messages to parents but do not get the necessary responses.”*

Learners did not receive support from parents with their reading, which caused problems for the teacher and slowed down her progress. Most parents did not take part in helping their children.

#### **4.4.7 Socio- economic environment**

Socio-economic environments also affected learner school performance.

Teacher 2 stated:

*“Some learners do not have extra reading materials at home. I always make a plan to acquire more books in order to expose learners to enough reading materials.”*

Teachers have to improvise in order to deal with challenges relating to lack of reading resources. Teacher 2 mentioned that she often visited the community library to check materials



that could be used in her class, and had to resort to using copies of stories from the books in the library to ensure that learners had expanded opportunities to read.

#### **4.4.8 Home language**

Language was a challenge as most learners spoke Khelobedu as home language, which affected their reading and spelling. Teacher 2 expressed her frustration as follows:

*“Spelling is affected because most learners want to write words in their home language. Because they think “Khelobedu” they write words in their own understanding.”*

The inability to spell leads to challenges in pronunciation and spelling. Teacher 2 indicated that she resorted to using flash cards to teach proper vocabulary and to allow learners to learn how words are pronounced.

#### **4.4.9 Poverty**

Poverty was a problem to some of the learners and this affected them because they lacked concentration in the classroom. When asked how poverty affected learners, Teacher 2 said the following:

*“Poverty is a problem, some learners come to school without eating.”*

Teacher 2 appreciated that the school nutrition programme was a relief, even though learners only ate at school. She even thought it could be better if the nutrition programme could be extended to learners’ homes.

#### **4.4.10 Overcrowding**

Another challenge that Teacher 2 identified was overcrowding, which hampered the progress of learners in the classroom.

*“I have resorted to grouping learners. I give each group activities to do as well as teaching them in groups.”*

Overcrowding affected completion of tasks in the classroom. Because the teacher could not reach all learners some did not finish their tasks. Overcrowding led to disciplinary issues in the classroom.

#### **4.4.11 Support from the Department of Education**

According to Teacher 2, support was not received from curriculum implementers. Teacher 2 presented a background to her frustration:

*“I have a problem of workbooks in my classroom, and I reported to the principal of which the matter was reported to the circuit office by the principal but nothing has been done.”*

The teacher expressed concern that curriculum advisors were not supportive towards teaching and learning at their school:

*“I do not remember the last time the curriculum advisor visited my grade at school, or even other officials from the district or the province. They are not doing their job. This is injustice... I want them to come and give me support and to check if I am at the right level or not.”*

Teacher 2 said that curriculum advisors in her area did not organise workshops to assist them with strategies on the teaching of reading. The only support from the curriculum advisor was the supply of timetable and lesson plans for the first quarter in the previous years. According to Teacher 2, in the second and the third quarters only Sepedi home language trial lesson plans and the rubric for assessing reading in the foundation phase were supplied.

#### **4.4.12 Classroom management and control**

Classroom management and control is a challenge to learners who experience barriers to reading. On this matter, Teacher 2 said:

*“Learners who are unable to read often disrupt the classroom organisation, making it difficult for the teacher to manage and control the class. Some do not pay attention in class, they interrupt activities by making noise while teaching and learning is in progress.”*

The teacher evidently required guidance and support in order to make her class a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

#### **4.4.13 Methods of teaching reading**

Teacher 2 described her teaching strategies as follows:

*“Sometimes I do not follow the prescribed method as requested by the policy, because some of the activities are time-consuming and as such do not allow me to cover the work as prescribed in the timetable.”*

The above quote reflects that methods prescribed were not followed because of allocations for various activities in the timetable. Teacher 2 specified that she resorted to mixing up methods in teaching reading as a solution to solve the problem of reading, even though they had been advised to follow the guidelines of teaching reading as prescribed in the policy document.

#### **4.4.14 Lesson observation**

Observing the lesson presented by Teacher 2, I noted that she first wrote the following on the chalkboard: date, learning area: Sepedi, topic: *“Khuse ya go makatša ya Benjamin”* (*Benjamin’s surprising hat*). Language focus: shared reading. All learners gathered around the teaching area. The teacher asked this question: *“What is the weather like today?”* To which one learner responded: *“The sun is shining.”* The teacher asked learners to say something similar, but to phrase it differently. Some said: *“It is sunny.”* Another said *“It is hot.”*

Before reading the book, the teacher introduced the story by asking the following questions: *“What do you see in the picture?”* Learners responded by saying *“picture of a person,”* and *“hat.”* The teacher asked learners to say their words in the story in their home language. Some expressed the words in Sepedi and others in Khelobedu dialect. The teacher continued with other stories, asking learners to explain what they see in the pictures and correcting language usage in the class.

The teacher read what was written on the cover page then from page one until the last page, while the learners were listening. For the second time, she read and asked learners to read after her. While they were reading the book the teacher stopped and asked questions such as: *“What is this sign (!)?”* after which she wrote it on the chalkboard. One learner said *leswao la tlabego*, meaning ‘an exclamation mark.’

The teacher asked learners to read individually and then they answered questions asked whilst reading. After finishing reading the book, the teacher asked learners the following questions: *“What is the story about?”* to which one learner answered *“surprising hat.”* The learners were asked to give words that began with certain sounds and practice certain sounds. She also asked

them to spell the words without looking at them. Some of the learners were able to spell the words correctly and some not. The teacher guided them to build sentences given in their books.

#### **4.4.15 Synthesis**

The use of language was a challenge to reading, which led to poor pronunciation and spelling of words. Teacher 2 also used code switching during her teaching. She used Khelobedu dialect in some of the words while teaching, presumably because she spoke it herself. This could have a negative influence on learners' progress to the next class as the home language was Sepedi. The teacher had a challenge with regard to certain words and this negatively affected her teaching and learners' learning. During an independent reading period, learners were given readers to read, and were able to hold and turn pages correctly, start from left to right when reading and be familiar with some of the words. They were also able to answer questions correctly after reading. Learners were able to read vocabulary words without any assistance because they recognised sounds and letters.

### **4.5 CASE STUDY THREE: TEACHER 3**

Teacher 3 was a 42 year old female teacher. She obtained her Secondary Teacher's Diploma at Tivumbeni College of Education, which was in the homeland of Gazankulu before South Africa became a democratic nation in 1994. Teacher 3 worked as a temporary teacher for five years then was appointed as a permanent teacher in the same school. She had been teaching in School A for 15 years. She furthered her studies and obtained an Advanced Certificate in Education Management. Her major studies were Economics and Business Economics. Teacher 3 training was for secondary level teaching and not the foundation phase. She was allocated to teach grade three from her date of appointment because of shortage of posts at the secondary schools. She received training from her HOD and senior teacher in grade three on how to teach reading and writing in the foundation phase. She was a dedicated teacher, eager to learn the methods of how to teach in the foundation phase. Her home language was Sepedi, but she was also speaking Khelobedu at home. Teacher 3 taught an overcrowded class of 50 learners. Based on my observation, she was a hard worker who wanted her teaching practice to improve every day.

Teacher 3 taught in the last class next to the main hall of the school. The classroom was situated in the last block of the school, next to the football field. All the foundation phase classes were

allocated to the new buildings. The classroom was also standardised with seven windows and a door, one steel cabinet and a chalkboard, one large table for the teacher and 21 desks for the learners. This teacher also had a challenge of furniture as learners sat in threes on a desk instead of sitting in twos, which posed challenges when learners were writing and reading in groups. Her classroom displayed relevant teaching and learning aids. The atmosphere of the classroom was conducive to learning. It was well organised with classroom rules and procedures. Teacher 3 had 50 learners, 21 boys and 29 girls. Documents such as the policy documents, workbooks, register, learners' workbooks, big books and readers were stored in the steel cabinet. She taught four learning areas, Sepedi, Mathematics, First Additional Language (English) and Life Skills. Home language was scheduled for six and a half hours per week, group reading took two and a half hours per week, shared reading took one hour per week, and phonics took one hour per week, whereas writing took one hour per week, handwriting 45 minutes per week and listening and speaking also 45 minutes per week. In her classroom, vocabulary words and phonics freeze posters were displayed to encourage learners to read and assist with spelling. The timetable made no provision for remedial work due. The teacher had no time to do remedial work because learners left school immediately due to transport-related challenges. The teacher improvised by grouping learners and giving them work to do, while doing remedial work with those learners who could not read.

#### **4.5.1 Workshops on reading**

Teacher 3 shared sentiments with Teachers 1 and 2 with regard to workshops in the teaching of reading. She attended a workshop organized by an NGO through SADTU, and another workshop but not about the teaching of reading. Teacher 3 attended a workshop on the teaching of reading at her school and this was organised by the SMT. The head of department for foundation phase conducted this workshop, and it focused on organising reading lessons, assessing learners, organising a conducive reading classroom, improvisation and displaying relevant teaching aids in the classroom, outlining problems encountered and designing immediate intervention strategies as well as the number of class activities required per subject in a quarter.

When asked if monitoring was practiced in the school, Teacher 3 said the following:

*“Yes, monitoring is done in my class by the HOD. The HOD checks the lesson plan and the attendance register once a week. She checks the timetable in the beginning of the first term that*

*is first day of schooling before learners re-opens. The HOD moderates the tasks before I assess learners. She moderates learners' scripts to check if we mark according to the memorandum and rubrics recorded in the record sheet. She checks if learners' workbooks are marked, and whether the number of class works correlate with the number agreed upon during the meeting. The HOD also visits classes in the foundation phase."*

The teacher also mentioned that provincial officials visited the school and requested learners' workbooks for Sepedi, Mathematics, and First Additional Language (English). They checked if the workbooks were used and marked correctly, with appropriate remedial activities. Lesson preparations for all the learning areas were also checked. In the lesson plan, they checked whether the HOD controlled them, and whether they were up to date. The mark recording sheets were also checked to verify if they had the total number of prescribed tasks for the term. The officials checked if the tasks showed the targeted learning outcomes and assessment standards.

#### **4.5.2 Promotion of reading**

Teacher 3 mentioned the following with regard to the promotion of reading at her school:

*"Learners read Bible verses during morning devotions twice in a week."*

It appeared that reading was promoted because there were reading competitions each week of the term. Learners also took part in reading competitions organised by the Department of Education and other NGOs. Learners were given books to read at home and encouraged to read in the classroom after they had completed their class activities. They were also provided with opportunities to read willingly every day before returning home.

#### **4.5.3 Teaching reading**

Big books were used to teach reading during shared reading time and *Vula vula* readers for independent reading but they were insufficient to cover all learners, and the readers for big books were not available for group reading.

On teaching reading, Teacher 3 said the following:

*"Group reading is a problem because I do not have readers for big books to use during shared reading."*

Teacher 3 indicated that shared reading took place in the classroom, but the challenge of insufficient materials hindered the smooth running of reading activities. Learners needed to have sufficient materials to use as homework.

#### **4.5.4 Addressing barriers to reading**

Barriers to reading were encountered in Teacher 3's class. Some learners were incapable of interpreting or deducing meanings of pictures and spelling of words. They could not recognise sounds and lacked the ability to match words with pictures because they could not read. These learners had a short concentration span with some unable to divide the words into syllables, which proved spelling to be a challenge. When asked how she addressed learners with barriers to reading she responded:

*“When I teach reading and discover that a learner is not paying attention I usually stop in the middle of the lesson. I would try to bring them back to the lesson by asking question based on what was read and then ask them to read further”.*

Based on the above I posit that teachers must be equipped with strategies and skills to accommodate learners experiencing barriers to learning in order to address such barriers effectively.

#### **4.5.5 Challenges regarding reading**

Teacher 3 highlighted that learners did not focus on any extra reading at home because learners were not given materials from the school for such an activity. This negatively affected their ability to read and hampered their spelling abilities.

When asked how the challenges of reading affected the teaching of reading, Teacher 3 reflected:

*“These barriers affect me negatively because if learners are unable to read as well as lacking concentration during reading lessons this disturb me. Some of the learners play when learning is in progress while some also would be sleeping, this is frustrating really.”*

Teacher 3 felt extremely frustrated, as evident in her expression above. She indicated that the challenges with reading demotivated her and she felt that she could do little to change the situation.

#### **4.5.6 Parental involvement**

With regard to parental involvement, Teacher 3 indicated that parents were not involved with the education of their children:

*“Most parents do not bother to come to the school when invited. This is a challenge because parents then do not get the opportunity to discuss their children’s performance, parents who attend to school invitations are mostly the ones that are supportive towards their children.”*

Some of the parents complied, even though the teacher was not happy about how they were involved in assisting their children. Most learners would go home with reading activities but the teacher complained that they would return without completing the activities. The teacher also highlighted that it appeared most parents had shifted their responsibilities to the teachers and as such felt it was the responsibility of the teachers to teach and not the parents.

#### **4.5.7 Socio-economic environment**

It appears that the socio-economic environment plays a key role in the way learners are supported in schools. Some parents could not afford to buy their children extra reading materials. Teacher 3 highlighted that:

*“Parents are unable to buy books for their children to read at home as supplementary materials to what they were given at school to read. Visiting the library appears to be a challenge to some learners as they have to travel to where the library is.”*

It is evident that learners depended on the Provincial Department of Education for additional resources. Parents were unable to buy supplementary workbooks for their children and the workbooks supplied by the Department were insufficient for all the learners.

#### **4.5.8 Home language**

The language spoken by learners at home influenced learners’ reading, as Teacher 3 explained:

*“The language spoken by learners at home always confuse learners at school. Most learners spell words the way they speak at home, and this hampers effective teaching and learning.”*

Teacher 3 gave an example of Sepedi words that are pronounced differently in *Khelobedu* dialects, for example’ *nde* used as *ntle* in Sepedi, meaning outside in English. The use of the



different languages creates challenges for the teacher and affects pronunciations, sounds, correct vocabulary and spelling.

#### **4.5.9 Poverty**

Teacher 3 was also teaching in area in which some learners came from poverty-stricken backgrounds. She expressed her sentiments as follows:

*“Most learners are not adequately fed with the needed nutritious food at home, as a result of this they lack concentration for the first few hours before meal is served, and this negatively affect teaching and learning.”*

The teacher acknowledged that some of the learners in her class received social grants, but she felt that most did not use them for the purposes intended. She expected the parents to cater for their children’s needs but this was not always the case.

#### **4.5.10 Overcrowding**

Overcrowding was a problem in School A. When asked how she taught in such a situation she responded:

*“I try to save time by putting learners in manageable groups, then give them activities and allow them to choose their own group representatives. This works as most of the activities are done in a short space of time. Of course not all learners would be active in the groups, but I know which ones need special attention.”*

A number of schools in the rural villages were affected by overcrowding, therefore teachers were unable to provide individualised teaching and attend to barriers to teaching and learning.

#### **4.5.11 Support from the curriculum implementers**

Support from curriculum implementers was inadequate, and not seen as a solution to learners with reading problems. Teacher 3 stated the following:

*“The support received from the curriculum implementers is not enough at all, some of them we do not even know. Some only come at the beginning of the year and that’s it. We need people who understand what we are going through and who are able to support us throughout.”*

As Teacher 3 mentioned, support is critical for effective teaching and learning to occur. Curriculum implementers are expected to provide teachers with relevant strategies to address teaching and learning challenges. They are required to organise workshops and invite experts in matters in which they feel they do not have the required capacity.

#### **4.5.12 Classroom management and control**

Classroom management contributes to effective teaching and learning. Teacher 3 highlighted:

*“I feel we need to have assistant teachers to ensure that we focus on exactly what is required. Remedial work takes much of my time. Assessment also requires that I spend time on different activities.”*

Classroom management and control is challenging, especially with overcrowded classes. Learners often take advantage when they notice that the teacher’s work is excessive, or she seems not to be paying attention to what they are doing. The challenge of overcrowding then becomes a system issue because in certain areas the available school is the only one, and parents do not have the freedom to choose which one their children can attend.

#### **4.5.13 Method of teaching reading**

With regard to the teaching of reading, the following was stated by Teacher 3:

*“I do not teach as indicated in the lesson plan. I do switch to do spelling activities while doing shared reading when I realise that learners cannot read. I prepare a lesson plan to cater for all groups of learners and integrate my lessons to all other existing subjects.”*

During one observation session of the reading lesson the teacher introduced the lesson through a song. She then asked questions about the book and mentioned that these were her pre-reading activities. The aim was to capture learners’ interest and to set the scene for the lesson. She showed learners the cover page and asked questions such as: *“What do you think the story is about?”* and *“What do you see on the cover?”* Learners vividly predicted the story after reading the title only. The teacher selected key vocabulary and introduced them to the learners. She then explained them to the learners, who practiced the spelling of identified words.

Teacher 3 used the big book for shared reading, using a story from the book twice while learners were listening. She went through the story page by page and often stopped to ask questions and

then completed the reading lesson with a post-reading activity in which she asked learners to tell the story in a sequence of activities by giving words that began with the sounds selected. These were words from the text and learners tried to construct sentences with them before dramatizing the story after reading, and creating their own dictionaries in preparation for a spelling test.

#### **4.5.14 Lesson observation**

The teacher wrote the date, learning area and the topic of the story on the chalkboard. The story was titled “*Kanegelo ya Nelson Mandela*” (*The story of Nelson Mandela*), and language focus was *Phonics - shared reading*. Learners sang a song “*This is the time to read, let’s all sit down*” as part of the introduction to the lesson. The teacher asked them questions based on their prior knowledge. Before reading, the teacher introduced the big book to the learners. She pointed at the cover page and asked them this question: “*What do we call this page?*” Learners’ responded by saying “*cover page.*” “*What do you find on the cover page?*” to which their response was “*The name of the story.*” She also asked them what they saw on the cover page and what they thought the book and the story were about. One learner said “*Nelson Mandela story.*” Key vocabulary such as *champion, young age, tribes, opportunity, released and vote* were identified. The teacher discussed pictures in the book, going through each page with the learners before doing shared reading, and asking them questions as she proceeded. For example, she asked “*What do you see on page 2?*” to which one learner responded, “*Nelson Mandela.*” On page 3 another learner said “*ocean*”, and on page 5 one said “*Nelson Mandela is having a paper.*” Another learner said “*voting box.*” The teacher further asked the learners, “*What tells you that, this is a voting box?*” and one learner responded “*IEC.*” The teacher explained the meaning of the abbreviation IEC.

With regard to shared reading, the teacher read the cover page and then read from page one until the last page alone, while the learners were listening. She then re-read the story and for the third time read with all the learners until the story was completed. The last activity was when the teacher asked one learner to read while others were listening. After reading the book the teacher asked questions to check learners’ understanding.

#### **4.5.15 Synthesis**

The observed lessons provided evidence that teachers were teaching reading. The challenge identified was that the writing on the big book used in shared reading was small and a few learners struggled to see the words. This is a challenge, given that the class was overcrowded. With regard to independent reading, the learners were able to hold and turn the pages correctly. All learners knew that they should start from left to right when reading, and understood rules pertaining to the caring of books. Most words were familiar to learners, as they were able to respond to questions asked after reading the book.

#### **4.6 CASE STUDY FOUR: TEACHER 4**

Teacher 4 was a 42 year old black female teacher at School B, situated in Rakwadu Circuit, under Mopani District in the Limpopo Province. She possessed a Senior Primary Teachers' Diploma (SPTD), an Adult Basic Education Certificate, a Diploma in Adult Basic Education, an Advance Certificate in Education, and Advance Certificate in Education Management (ACE) and a Bachelor in Education Honours Degree in Inclusive Education. She was busy with a Master's Degree in Curriculum Studies at the time of this study. Teacher 4 had 13 years teaching experience at the school having started as a temporary teacher in another village before moving to School B. She taught grade three for six years and in grade one for seven years. She spoke Khelobedu but her home language was Sepedi. She obtained her SPTD at Modjadji College of Education with other qualifications from the University of South Africa (UNISA). She was trained to teach in the intermediate phase and had an enrolment of 50 learners in her classroom. She served in the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) committee as the secretary.

Teacher 4's classroom was the second class on the right side closer to the entrance of the school, situated next to the school kitchen. It was a standard classroom with 50 learners. The classroom had a challenge of resources such as carpets for learners to sit on during shared reading. There was no easel on which to place the big book when teaching shared reading. The classroom also needed shelves on which to place the learners' books and other important documents. Learners were arranged in groups, seated in rows. The classroom was divided into three rows. The learners sat on chairs, and used tables which accommodated two learners each. The teacher used the same size of table used by learners and one chair. The classroom had a standard chalkboard. Teacher 4's classroom was colourful and inviting, and looked like an ideal

foundation phase classroom. There were relevant teaching posters, vocabulary words, birthday charts, and classroom rules, duty roster of learners, numbers, counting charts, and a poster with days of the week and months of the year. The timetable was displayed in front of the classroom for visitors and officials to notice when entering the classroom. The learners' classwork books and workbooks were placed on the table next to the wall by the teacher's table. Teacher 4 taught Sepedi home language which was allocated seven hours per week, Mathematics which also took seven hours per week, Life Skills which took six hours per week and First Additional Language (English) which took three hours per week. The remedial work was one and a half hours per week. The periods took 30 minutes each. The workload of the teacher was 24 hours 30 minutes per week.

#### **4.6.1 Workshops on reading**

Teacher 4 highlighted the following:

*“I attended training workshop on the teaching of reading the previous years, the workshop was organised by an NGO through SADTU, and it was scheduled for only two hours in one day. Another workshop was conducted by the department, but did not focus on the teaching of reading”*

It is evident in the teachers' response that there was not much done to equip teachers with skills required for effective teaching and learning and that workshops on the teaching of reading were not taken seriously.

#### **4.6.2 Promotion of reading**

Responding to the question on promotion of reading Teacher 4 said:

*“Learners are encouraged to read Bible verses during morning devotions. On some Fridays, they gather in an open area and read in front of other learners in the school.”*

The above quote provides evidence that a certain level of reading was promoted. This happened despite the schools' shortage of resources. The teacher utilised available resources to facilitate the teaching of reading even if they were inadequate. She mentioned that she had big books for shared reading, learners' workbooks and readers but the readers were insufficient in comparison to the big books.

### **4.6.3 Teaching reading**

When asked how she taught reading, Teacher 4's response was:

*“All learners gather at the teaching corner. I first do a preparatory activity. Learners go outside and predict of the weather for the day. Learners then talk about the weather and remind each other on the weather for the previous day. Learners recite the days of the week and the months of the year every day before reading. I introduce the phonic freeze poster for the day as well as vocabulary words. During reading, that is shared reading, I introduce the book to the learners. I ask questions relating to the book and read the book twice alone. Thereafter, I read with the learners.”*

The methods adopted by teacher 4 were acceptable. She followed the necessary steps in preparation of a reading lesson. This teacher, like all others, was affected by lack of reading books at the school, and could not effectively teach reading in the way it should be done.

### **4.6.4 Addressing barriers to reading**

In addressing barriers to reading, Teacher 4 explained that some learners experienced physical, conceptual and social barriers. On the physical barriers, she highlighted that some were having hearing problems and as a result could not differentiate sounds. Some had sight problems and this created challenges with word recognition. Others stuttered and so lost concentration in class. Moreover, some had medical problems such as asthma and allergies, which affected ability to concentrate and focus in class. When asked how she assisted learners with physical barriers, Teacher 4 stated:

*“Learners with physical challenges sit in front, very close to me. When I teach I look directly at the learner when I give instructions. In certain instances, I use gestures and non-verbal cues to explain some concepts to them. I encourage parents to seek help from specialists regarding some of the barriers.”*

Social barriers, on the other hand, create challenges for teachers, for example, absenteeism, poor nutrition and child neglect and abuse. These contribute towards low concentration in class. Conceptual barriers include performing below average and finding it difficult to understand certain activities and tasks. Lack of exposure to print-rich classrooms also contribute to learners' inability to read.

I noted in the classroom observations that the teacher did not put any pressure on learners who were unable to read, preferring individual assessment, with learners answering questions based on what was read. It is evident that the teacher did her best to make learners with barriers feel accommodated. She also encouraged large group interaction with the aim of building their confidence. She said that she created time for learners who missed school for medical reasons and encouraged parents to support and supervise their homework.

#### **4.6.5 Challenges regarding reading**

Teacher 4 said that planning, preparation and development of lesson plans were often affected by reading challenges among learners:

*“I make sure that planning, preparation and development of lesson plans cater for all learners, especially those with challenges in reading. Oral activities were the first most important aspect of all learning and learners who struggle with oral activities also struggled with all other school work.”*

Special attention was provided to learners with challenges to reading and she noticed improvement in their emotional development, social skills, and ability to acquire other scholastic skills.

#### **4.6.6 Parental involvement**

Teacher 4 saw poor parental involvement as a serious challenge. On the issue of parental support, she indicated that:

*“Some parents seem to care less about their children’s education. This is shown when they do not help them with schoolwork, when they do not respond to calls from the school and do not participate in other school activities.”*

The above could imply that there were no support structures in place to assist parents to understand their role, and though some parents were supportive, they were in a minority. This implied that parents did not know that their role was important in their children’s education.

#### **4.6.7 Socio-economic environment**

Teacher 4 mentioned socio-economic environment as one of the challenges affecting teaching and learning in her school. She indicated that the unemployment rate of parents was high, and that a few who were employed were either domestic workers or labourers on local farms. It was only a small percentage of parents who had stable jobs, and these were working away from home, leaving their children in the care of grandparents and relatives. She further noted:

*“Most parents earn very little monthly, and some depend on the government social grants. This affects learners in reading because they are unable to buy books for their children to read at home in order to add on the school supply. The library is situated in town, and most learners cannot visit the library because they cannot afford to pay for transport to the library.”*

The above challenge could be addressed if the schools were to provide sufficient materials to cater for disadvantaged learners. It does not help if learners only read at school, but rather they need to reinforce what they learnt at home, and this can be achieved through creating appropriate opportunities.

#### **4.6.8 Home language**

With regard to home language, the teacher emphasised the following:

*“Most learners speak Khelobedu dialect at home. In the classroom, we all speak Khelobedu, and were supposed to use Sepedi as an official language but we do not do so because we are used to it. This has a very huge and negative influence in as far as reading and writing are concerned. We pronounce words in Khelobedu instead of Sepedi.”*

Mother tongue plays an important role in reading and the way one speaks may hinder or promote pronunciation and spelling. It is important that teachers enforce the language of learning and teaching and ensure that learners acquire the necessary vocabulary to be able to read in it.

#### **4.6.9 Poverty**

Teacher 4 mentioned poverty as one of the challenges affecting effective teaching and learning in her school:



*“Our school community is faced by some level of poverty. Parents struggle to make ends meet to cater for their children’s school needs. Children often come to school being very hungry and they are keen because we have a nutrition programme at school. In winter it is worse, some learners do not have warm school uniform and this affects their concentration abilities.”*

The above supports the argument that for effective teaching and learning to take place, basic provision of needs is essential. It is then the responsibility of the home and the school to ensure these needs are met.

#### **4.6.10 Overcrowding**

As stated by Teacher 4, overcrowding in the classroom was a problem to her even though she was trying to come up with strategies to solve the problem:

*“I group learners and teach them in groups, this is time-consuming. I give more activities to the groups to do while busy teaching other groups. Overcrowding is a challenge; I often deal with learners’ concentration levels, some of which are very low. Discipline also becomes an issue because learners feel they are not being attended to.”*

Overcrowded classroom with learners who cannot read was a challenge. The teacher complained that learners made a noise and moved around in the classroom because it was not large enough, making discipline became a challenge.

#### **4.6.11 Support from the Department of Education**

When asked to comment on the kind of support Teacher 4 received, she replied:

*“The Department does not provide enough support to address reading challenges. My personal experience of teaching learners with barriers to reading is that if learners can have the opportunity of mastering reading, they will enjoy reading and even read fluently than those who were able to read before. The subject advisors do not assist us at all. We need to be equipped with skills on how to help learners and how to use appropriate teaching and learning strategies.”*

It appears that Departmental support is critical for teachers to be able to handle reading challenges. Teachers require additional workshops to assist them in exploring and

implementing effective strategies to deal with reading challenges, and all other teaching, learning and assessment activities.

#### **4.6.12 Classroom management and control**

When asked how she assisted learners who could not read, Teacher 4 responded:

*“I find it difficult to cope because these learners are often playful and make unnecessary noise in their groups, especially when they see me attending to other learners in a different group. They sometimes do not concentrate and even distract others.”*

It is evident from the above that she struggled with classroom management and control. This could be in part because the class was overcrowded, and learners with barriers to reading needed special attention. Teaching and learning are negatively affected if teachers are not able to control and manage activities in their classrooms.

#### **4.6.13 Methods of teaching reading**

Teachers are expected to use different activities in teaching reading. Teacher 4 said:

*“I use different methods to all learners with different levels of abilities, I cater for other learners rather than sticking to only one method which will make some learners be disadvantaged. The method of teaching affects my competence and efficiency in that I do not sometimes finish my work on time and set objectives for the day. I do work extra mile to help those learners with barriers by remaining with them after school.”*

Teacher 4 only referred to methods, but did not explain what they were or how they helped her to teach reading. In my observation of her class I noted that she simply introduced a story and read it for learners, only asking them what different words meant. This could imply that Teacher 4 had not been exposed to other methods of teaching reading.

#### **4.6.14 Lesson observation**

I noticed that some learners were actively involved in the lessons, whilst others were playing during reading activities. She tried to control and ensure discipline but it was challenging due to overcrowding in the classroom. The big book that was used for shared reading was titled

*Lesibana wa hlapi (Game of fish)*. The cover page displayed pictures of different kinds of fish and an ocean, with the name of the grade and the subject Sepedi.

The font size of the book was too small for an overcrowded classroom because learners who were sitting at the back could not see clearly. I also discovered that the workbooks used in School A were the same as those used in School B, which meant that the challenges teachers experienced with the books were similar.

During independent reading, I observed that learners were able to read from left to right and held the book in the correct way. They were able to answer questions relating to the book. Some had trouble when reading because they could not recognise sounds. During my visits to the school, I went through the circulars and discovered that the dates for workshops for Teachers 1 and 4 were the same. With regard to the minutes taken during meetings, I observed that they were discussing the problem of learners who were unable to read and they tried to offer solutions.

#### **4.6.15 Synthesis**

Teacher 4, like the other teachers, experienced challenges with the teaching of reading. She attributed this to most parents in communities being illiterate, and some learners living in child-headed households in which there was no guidance from the elders. The teacher-pupil ratio was one is to 50. Most learners spoke *Khelobedu*. The socio-economic background of learners contributed to a lack of effective teaching and learning, as highlighted by the teachers' responses. Teacher 4 was unable to attend to learners individually because of the large numbers.

#### **4.7 CASE STUDY FIVE: TEACHER 5**

Teacher 5 was 55 years old, a female teacher of School B's grade two. She had her professional qualifications in the forms of a Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) plus Further Diploma in Education (FDE). This teacher spoke Sepedi as her home language because she was not born and bred at Bolobedu. She had obtained her PTC at Kwena Moloto College of Education and her FDE at Vista University. Teacher 5 was trained to teach from sub-A to standard five. Her major subjects were Mathematics, English, Afrikaans, Sepedi and Methodology. She had 33 years of teaching experience at the same school and had an enrolment of 54 learners in her class.

Teacher 5's classroom was located at the right side next to the entrance of the school. Her classroom was in the same block as Teacher 4's classroom though closer to the main office. The classroom had a shortage of resources such as mats, shelves, and an easel, but was welcoming, with bright colours of relevant teaching aids. There was a chalkboard which was used by both the learners and the teacher. Teacher 5 taught Sepedi as home language and Mathematics, which were allocated seven hours each per week, First Additional Language (English) which was allocated three hours per week and Life Skills allocated six hours per week. The teacher had 23 teaching hours per week and 90 minutes for remedial work per week. The teacher had no free periods from Monday to Friday, which meant that she had no time to mark books or make corrections with the learners. In Teacher 5's classroom, the timetable, birthday charts, numbers, days of the week, months of the year, and list of the learners were displayed appropriately. The classroom was divided into three rows. The teacher used a small table and a chair, and the learners used small tables in which they sat in pairs around each table.

#### **4.7.1 Workshop on reading**

With regard to workshops on the teaching of reading Teacher 5 expressed her sentiments as follows:

*"I attended workshop on the teaching of reading, the workshop was organized by an NGO through SADTU. SADTU lead teachers conducted the workshop. It was conducted in two thousand and fourteen for two hours in one day"*

She indicated that foundation phase teachers had regular meetings in school organised by the SMT in which they discussed problems faced with regard to the teaching of reading. In the meeting, they helped each other with the planning and preparation of reading lessons, and how to deliver the lesson. From the above, one can conclude that the school was passionate about reading, and that opportunities were created, although not enough, to expose teachers to strategies and different methods of teaching reading through workshops.

#### **4.7.2 Promotion of reading**

Teacher 5 reported that reading was promoted in the school. She reflected as follows:

*"The school encourages learners to read Bible lessons during morning devotions. I promote reading in my classroom by encouraging learners to take a book and read silently after they*

*have completed their class activity given. Sometimes, I borrow learners' books to read at home."*

Teacher 5 said that reading competitions were organised by the circuit office. Although reading was promoted in the school, it appeared that this was not enough. Group reading was not encouraged, nor rewards for learners.

#### **4.7.3 Teaching reading**

Resources such as readers are seen as the most important tools for eradicating the problem of teaching reading. The issue of inadequate resources was one of the problems with which Teacher 5 was faced:

*"I have big books for teaching shared reading but I do not have readers for the big books, I improvise by photocopying those big books to make readers, which is time consuming, and these readers are in black and white."*

Replication of readers was a challenge in the classroom, as the teacher did not have sufficient readers to cater for all the learners. The photocopies might be seen as the government's failure to maximally support the teaching of reading in schools. It meant that if copies were not made by the teacher then individual and group reading were going to be a problem.

#### **4.7.4 Addressing barriers to reading**

According to Teacher 5, learners could not concentrate in class during lessons because of lack of original readers. Original ones were colourful and attractive whilst photocopies were in black and white and generally less attractive. The teacher emphasised that she did not achieve her goals, as some learners could not concentrate. She further mentioned that she finished the lesson plan for the sake of those who could read, and did remedial work after school with those who could not. She indicated that the books supplied by the DoE did not cater for the level ability of all the learners with reading problems, in particular those with special needs.

On the question asked with regard to her personal experiences of teaching learners with barriers to reading, her response was:

*"These learners need remedial teacher. The school should have a remedial teacher who will only do the remedial work for the school. The learners who cannot read delays those who can*

*read. I encourage group learning, especially reading, when I am busy with those who cannot read.”*

Evident from the above statement there is need for remedial teachers in every school to help those learners with reading problems.

#### **4.7.5 Challenges regarding reading**

Teacher 5 said that there were other barriers that learners faced in her classroom, such as poor recognition of consonants, vowels and inability to combine them to form syllables and words and to build sentences:

*“Learners have the problem of differentiation of words. They do not know the difference between “thaba” (rejoice) and “taba” (matter) because of the language they speak at home. Also, learners are having the problem of pictures interpretation. Combination of sounds like “th” is a challenge.”*

All above stated challenges delay the reading progress in the classroom because learners are not on the same level. Advancement of the fast learner was also delayed because the teacher often left them to read in groups on their own while she attended to those with reading problems.

#### **4.7.6 Parental involvement**

Parental involvement in children’s education was poor, as indicated by Teacher 5. Parents were seen as not supportive because often she would give learners books to read at home, and they returned without having read anything. She shared the following:

*“When I inquired from the learners some said their parents do not have time to help them because of overload of household routines. Some parents said they are not teachers to help learners and even if they help their children, they would not be paid. Other learners responded that their parents acknowledged that they are illiterate and therefore cannot be of much help.”*

The reflection above is evident that parental support was a challenge, according to Teacher 5. She also said that most parents did not attend teacher and parent meetings in order to discuss their children’s school performance. This is discouraging for teachers and makes their workload even heavier.

#### **4.7.7 Socio-economic conditions**

With regard to the socio-economic status, the teacher said:

*“Most parents are labourers, some are unemployed and others are also domestic workers who earn very little and therefore cannot meet the needs of their households. Some depend on the government social grants in order to ensure their families survival.”*

The comments above suggests that parents could not buy books to supplement the ones children receive from school. The available local library could not alleviate reading challenges because some learners still had to travel to the library. This makes schools more reliant upon government supply of stationery.

#### **4.7.8 Home language**

Teacher 5 indicated that an unofficial home language also affected reading among learners because those in her classroom were speaking Khelobedu dialect at home, and this had a huge negative influence on the official home language (Sepedi) speaking:

*“The Khelobedu dialect affects learners in reading because learners write what they speak and pronunciation is also a problem since they pronounce Sepedi words in Khelobedu dialect.”*

The language learners speak at home have a great influence on pronunciation and spelling. The above indicates that language spoken at home could be one aspect that creates problems in reading.

#### **4.7.9 Poverty**

Poverty was also noted as one of the challenges experienced by Teacher 5:

*“Some learners come to school hungry because their parents are poor and cannot afford to pack lunch boxes for them.”*

The understanding above contends that learners only relied on the food nutrition programme at school. The challenge then was the question of what sustained children at home.

#### **4.7.10 Overcrowding**

Overcrowding among learners was a significant challenge to her. She reflected as follows:

*“The learners are many in the classroom and sometimes it becomes difficult to move from one place to another. Some learners can be disturbing at one end of the classroom while I will be helping other learners at one end.”*

Overcrowding poses challenges that hinder effective teaching and learning. It also causes challenges of discipline, classroom management and control. Individualised learner support cannot effectively take place when classrooms are overcrowded.

#### **4.7.11 Support from the Department of Education**

Teacher 5 indicated that the DoE did not provide sufficient support to address reading challenges. She said:

*“The curriculum advisor came to the school and demonstrated how to teach reading but he generalised it without demonstrating how to teach learners who cannot read.”*

According to Teacher 5, the SMT supported her sometimes and visited her classroom. The acting HOD of her school monitored her lesson preparation weekly and checked whether the lesson planning and preparation had provision for all the skills to be acquired by learners. However, the curriculum advisor generalised when training teachers on the teaching of reading, as he did not concentrate on specific skills such as how to assist learners who could not read. As Teacher 5 highlighted, the training seemed to assume that all learners were at the same level of reading ability.

#### **4.7.12 Classroom management and control**

As stated by Teacher 5, learners who could not read were difficult to manage because they did not concentrate and some tended to be overly active:

*“Learners with barriers create problem when I teach because they make unnecessary noise, they sometimes sleep, their concentration span is too low, and sometimes they play while I am busy teaching.”*



She said some lessons were not completed in the expected time because of classroom management and control and learners' concentration levels. She gave an example of when she realized that a learner could not read so she stopped and did remedial work. This affected the planned lesson.

#### **4.7.13 Method of teaching reading**

With regard to the methods used for teaching reading, her response was:

*“A group of learners selected gather at the teaching area with a song. I introduce the vocabulary words to the learners. I drill the vocabulary words with the learners as they are asked to spell them. I therefore introduce the book for shared reading. I ask the learners questions relating to the book. I ask the learners to predict the story. In addition, I introduce to learners the cover page, the spine of the book, and the title page of the book. I share the books with the learners. I read the book twice while the learners are listening until all the pages are read.”*

Teacher 5 mentioned that the way she taught reading affected her competence and efficiency because progress was delayed. She said she often deviated by switching to other methods in teaching vowels, such as by rhyming vowels “ma-me-mi-mo-mu,” but this consumed time.

#### **4.7.14 Lesson observation**

I observed the lesson in Teacher 5's classroom. In her lesson plan, she wrote, subject: Sepedi, grade, week, quarter and date on the chalkboard. Before she presented the lesson, all the learners gathered in the teaching area. She asked them questions with regard to the weather for the day, and one learner responded by saying “*It is hot.*” The teacher then asked them the season for the month. Another learner said “*It is autumn.*” The teacher asked learners what day it was and another responded “*It is Tuesday.*” The teacher introduced the big book by asking them to look at the cover page and to relate what they saw. A learner said “*The uncle is walking*” and another “*The uncle is playing a guitar.*” The teacher further asked the learners to read the name of the book. Teacher 5 again asked the learners to look for sounds such as “th”, “kg” and “k” while reading the book.

During shared reading, the teacher read each page of the book while learners were listening. She read the story of “*Malome, motho wa tša bokgabo*” (*Uncle, a man of art*) twice and by the

third time she read while learners repeated after her. The teacher then asked one learner to read the book while others were listening. She often stopped and asked questions based on what had been read.

#### **.4.7.15 Synthesis**

Some learners actively participated in the lesson while others were not even concentrating. The teacher's disciplinary methods seemed not to be effective. She would ask disruptive learners to stand aside but they continuously made others laugh while the teachers was trying to discipline them. The big book appeared interesting to some as it had many pictures, though the size of the text font was too small for an overcrowded classroom. The teacher did not know where to put the book while she engaged learners in shared reading, and resorted to putting it on a chair. During independent reading the teacher realised that learners knew how to hold and turn the pages of the book, read from left to right, and answer questions after reading. Some were still experiencing problems when reading. The correspondence that I reviewed, that communicated workshops, showed that similar information was provided to all participants in this research as they belonged to the same circuit.

#### **4.8 CASE STUDY SIX: TEACHER 6**

Teacher 6 was a female teacher aged 53. She obtained her Senior Primary Teachers' Diploma (SPTD) at Modjadji College of Education and a Bachelor of Arts in Education at UNISA. Her major subjects at the college were Sepedi, English, Mathematics and Afrikaans. Trained to teach from grades four to nine at the college she had started at a local school and taught grade four for 20 years. The enrolment had dropped so she was placed in School B through Rationalization and Redeployment (R & R), where she taught grade three for eight years. In total she had 28 years of experience as a teacher. She was also speaking the Khelobedu dialect, although her official home language was Sepedi. There were 56 learners in her classroom. She served on a committee of lead teachers of SADTU, and was chairperson of the IQMS in School B. She was part of the SMT, serving as a senior teacher.

Teacher 6's classroom was situated in the fourth block of the school, at the far end. It was a standard classroom with 56 learners, but with many tables and chairs and a teaching area too small to accommodate all the learners. Consequently, the teacher taught small groups of 16 learners. Her table had many books, including readers, and the class register, scattered. She

also had a chair, whilst learners used small chairs and small tables for two each. There were nine groups of six and two of seven. The teacher used a chalkboard during teaching. The classroom was brightened with colours on the wall. The teacher displayed relevant teaching aids but the classroom was not well arranged. She was teaching grade three. The learners' class books and workbooks were placed in their groups. She taught Sepedi home language for six and a half hours per week, Mathematics for seven, Life Skills also for seven and English for four hours per week. This totalled 24 and half hours per week. Her grade made no provision for remedial work on the timetable. She had practiced improvisation of remedial work after school with learners with problems in reading with the permission of their parents. Group reading was conducted in the classroom because of the timeframe, and it allowed her to monitor them. However, some learners disturbed others while she was busy teaching.

#### **4.8.1 Workshop on reading**

With regard to workshops on reading Teacher 6 said:

*"I attended workshop on the teaching of reading organized by NGO through SADTU. I attended another workshop organized by Via Africa through the circuit office. The workshop organized by SADTU was conducted by the lead teachers of SADTU, I was part of the lead teachers who conducted the workshop at the circuit level."*

Based on the workshops attended on the teaching of reading she had been selected lead teacher, and given the above it was clear that she was acquainted with knowledge and skills as far as the teaching of reading was concerned.

#### **4.8.2 Promotion of reading**

Reading was promoted in the school, as noted by Teacher 6:

*"I encourage teachers to give learners many tasks as possible with regard to reading. I group learners according to their abilities when doing group reading, until they master the books, then I mix the group for those who can read to assist those who cannot read."*

It was clear that reading was promoted, even though some of the strategies suggested failed. She practiced a system called "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR), but said it was dysfunctional, as it was only used on Fridays for 30 minutes, not throughout the week or for

the whole school. The intermediate phase, from grades four to six, and the senior phase grade seven teachers, were complaining that they had missed their periods when they operated the system DEAR so it was discontinued. She added that her grade participated in reading competitions organised by the Department from circuit to district level.

#### **4.8.3 Teaching reading**

On the question regarding the teaching of reading she stated. She said:

*“I have big books to teach reading but I do not have readers for those big books. I do not have big books to teach first additional language (English).”*

With such limited resources, group reading was a challenge for those who could not but benefit in reading as they were given different readers.

#### **4.8.4 Addressing barriers to reading**

With regard to addressing barriers to reading, she said:

*“Learners do not recognise sounds, they are unable to divide the word into syllables. Some of them are unable to build sentence using the word given. Other learners cannot give that starts with a given sound or interpret pictures... The learners are not on the same level and so they do not move on the same pace and this delays her progress.”*

She added that she used groups to teach them, grouping learners according to their abilities. Those who could not read slowed down the advancement of the gifted learners and the whole lesson. Learners with barriers to reading are difficult to control because they lack concentration, play, make a noise, and sleep while one is teaching. These learners do not cope with the work given, and this might hinder the progress of other learners.

#### **4.8.5 Challenges regarding reading**

Teacher 6 said she experienced certain problems with the teaching of reading:

*“Inadequate resources, overcrowding, and promotion of learners who cannot read from grade to grade. Some teachers in the foundation phase do not have the prerequisite skills and knowledge as far as teaching of reading is concerned notwithstanding the usage of the methods in teaching reading. I realized that some teachers think the clusters are for SADTU teachers*

*and they do not take it serious, listen attentively, or participate in the meetings, so they end up having content gap in the teaching of reading. Maybe their union told them not to attend”*

According to the teacher, learners with barriers to reading affected her overall teaching because 30 percent of the work was not done. She said she was attending to two groups at the same time, making it difficult to function efficiently and effectively.

#### **4.8.6 Parental involvement**

Poor parental involvement affects reading. Learners were given books to read at home but their parents did not help them to do so. She said:

*“I sometimes inquire from the learners and these are some of the answers learners give. Some learners say their parents said they do not have time and they are not teachers to assist, after all they will not be paid. Some learners say their parents are not around and they are living with their grandmothers and some of them are illiterate who cannot read and write.”*

Parental involvement was seen as a challenge based on her comment. She pleaded with parents to cooperate to make her work simpler, believing they were the first teachers of their children.

#### **4.8.7 Socio-economic environment**

Socio-economic status among parents had an influence on the learners’ reading. According to the Teacher 6:

*“Learners who are coming from affluent and educated family are likely to know how to read because, their parents do encourage them to read by buying extra books in addition to ones given by the school. Parents of these learners really invest thoroughly in their children’s education.”*

In her school, the opposite was the case, as almost all the parents had a low socio-economic background and did not have money to buy books for their children. They relied solely on the Departmental supply, as described by Teacher 6.

#### **4.8.8 Home language**

Teacher 6 mentioned that the unofficial home language spoken by learners was affecting their reading in the classroom.

*“Learners are not speaking the official home language, Sepedi, at home but they speak Khelobedu dialect and this negatively affects reading in particularly learners’ pronunciation of words and they write Sepedi words in the way they speak Khelobedu dialect at home.”*

This confirms the argument that if learners lack vocabulary and grammar they will not be able to understand a text during reading.

#### **4.8.9 Poverty**

Poverty also affects learners’ reading in the classroom as, noted by Teacher 6:

*“Most of the learners’ parents are poor, they cannot afford to provide food and they depend on the school food nutrition. Our school is rated quintile one meaning learners coming from rural areas where most of their parents are unemployed.”*

Background played a vital role in the development of learners, who could not concentrate in the morning periods because of hunger. The school food nutrition addressed the problem, but breakfast was only served in the morning.

#### **4.8.10 Overcrowding**

Overcrowding was seen as another challenge:

*“I am overloaded with the work because some of the intermediate and the senior phases are not willing to assist teaching in the foundation phase upon all the issue of overcrowding among the foundation phase classes.”*

Teacher 6 indicated that overcrowding was a problem in the school, hence group learning was the answer to solve this difficulty in the classroom. Although she lacked time it was the only way.

#### **4.8.11 Support from the Department of Education**

Teacher 6 said the following:

*“The DoE does not provide enough support to address reading challenges. The DoE must invite us to come and share with us on how to address this challenge. The curriculum advisor only made generalization when demonstrating the lesson. Even if you inform the school that you have learners who cannot read, they will not help you.”*

It was evident here that support was not being given to teachers with regard to learners with barriers to reading. According to her, in the previous year and the first term, the school employed a remedial teacher but she had retired. She was a members of the SMT but she was not however performing her obligation to organise remedial classes for learners with reading challenges. She did not know whether this remedial teacher was overloaded with office work:

*“I do not go to the principal specifically to inform him that I have learners who have reading problems because I believe that he exactly knows that we have learners with such challenges, and he must inform the remedial teacher and the circuit office to assist.”*

#### **.4.8.12 Classroom management and control**

Classroom management and control was a challenge, as indicated by Teacher 6:

*“Learners with reading problems are difficult to handle because of overcrowding, they lack concentration and they are not coping when you teach or when given class work to do.”*

Preparation and development of lesson plans were affected by reading challenges and the timeframe of 30 minutes allotted for teaching reading was insufficient for an overcrowded classroom. She could not teach the whole groups and other learning areas suffered because she sometimes “stole” periods from other learning areas to do shared reading. The above indicates that time allocated to teach reading was not enough if there was overcrowding and learners who could not read.

#### **4.8.13 Methods of teaching reading**

She mentioned that her methods of teaching reading affected learners because she did not have enough time to attend to them individually:

*“It affects my competence and my reflection is not done every day. It is difficult to teach different groups with different abilities using the same methods because maybe such methods are not meeting the level of a group. It is burdensome to teach fifty six learners with the same methods and expect to achieve what you intended for.”*

She posited that the methods prescribed by the DoE in the CAPS policy document delayed her progress. Reflecting on the methods, she admitted not following those prescribed because it was difficult in an overcrowded classroom and they did not suit all the learners. CAPS methods were used at her own discretion because of overcrowding and time restraints.

#### **4.8.14 Lesson observation**

I observed a lesson in teacher 6’s classroom. In her lesson plan, she wrote the following: Subject: Sepedi, grade, week, quarter, and date. All the learners gathered in the teaching area. The teacher greeted them and asked introductory questions such as: *“What is the day today?”* to which one learner answered *“Wednesday”*, *“What is today’s weather and the season?”* Other learners answered, *“It is hot”* and *“autumn.”* *“What are the other seasons?”* One learner responded *“summer”* and other learners *“winter”* and *“spring.”*

The teacher divided the learners into two groups, the first a teaching group consisting of those who were able to read, the second of average readers. The latter was expected to do silent reading, using a book titled *“Language is power.”* The teacher asked them to go to page eight and read silently. The first group engaged in shared reading with the teacher, using a book for the purpose titled *“Theleskoupu” (Telescope)*. The teacher read the name of the book to the learners and told the teaching group the importance of the cover page, the spine and the title page. She asked them what they saw on the cover page, to which and one learner answered, *“The child is looking through the window.”* The teacher translated the word *“window”* to Sepedi home language. Other learners gave different responses, such as *“I see the church, stars, plants, grass, clouds and boy.”* The teacher asked the learners to predict the story using the pictures on the cover page. One learner said the book was about, *“the boy was looking at*



*the clouds and stars using his camera.*” The teacher asked learners questions in the book from pages one to 16.

During shared reading, the teacher read the story twice, going through each page and asking questions as she went along. The teacher read with the learners until the completion of the book. She asked one learner to read alone while others listened. After shared reading, the teacher asked the learners questions relating to the story read.

#### **4.8.15 Synthesis**

I noted during my observation that learners were actively involved in the lesson. They followed the steps as the teacher went through the lesson and answered all the questions correctly. The challenge was with the other group, which was doing silent reading. They concentrated for about ten to 15 minutes then were no longer doing what the teacher told them to do. They realised that the teacher was focusing on the teaching group so they could make a noise and play. The teacher tried to discipline them to ensure classroom discipline but failed because they were many and felt neglected and abandoned by the teacher. The big book was attractive and interesting with many pictures, but the font size was too small for a large classroom.

The teaching group was taught shared reading while standing because the teacher did not know where to place the book, and the space was too small for the group. During independent reading learners were conversant with holding and turning pages, starting from left to right and answering questions after reading. Some had difficulty because they did not recognise sounds.

#### **4.9 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have presented the narrative case studies of all six teachers with the aim of exploring the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase and how reading was promoted among learners. I presented the background of the two primary schools and research findings on the challenges the six foundation phase teachers faced when teaching reading in rural areas of Bolobedu. I reported on how the participating teachers promoted reading and how their challenges affected their competences and experiences. I also looked at the kind of support they received from the DoE concerning the challenges of teaching learners with barriers to reading, the kind of challenges learners experienced in the classrooms, how reading was taught and how overcrowding affected the teaching of reading.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the major themes that emanated from the research findings and provide a conclusion to the study, as well as making recommendations and acknowledging limitations.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 4, I presented the themes that emerged from the study. In this chapter I provide a synthesis of the findings, based on the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase and the various ways that teachers promoted reading. This chapter also highlights the significance of the findings as well as making suggestions for further research. The summary of the findings and recommendations are provided as evidence that the research questions of the study have been addressed.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

This study has presented case study scenarios and explored challenges affecting reading in rural school contexts. The researcher interviewed six teachers and analysed data collated and collected. The research questions guided the process and the researcher ensured that information provided by participants was related to the research question. The following pertinent challenges emerged as challenges affecting reading competencies: workshops on reading, promotion of reading, teaching reading, addressing barriers to reading, parental involvement, socio-economic environment, home language, poverty, overcrowding, support from the Department of Education, classroom management and control, and methods used for teaching and learning of reading.

##### **5.2.1 Findings about workshops on reading**

It is important for teachers to be well equipped with the necessary training and attend workshops to improve their skills and knowledge in teaching reading (Junias, 2009). Phajane (2012) also highlighted that subject knowledge is significant for the teacher, as this will help learners. Overall, teachers indicated that they had only attended workshops in the previous years and those were organized by their teachers' union.

It is evident from the interviews with teachers that little was done to equip them with the skills required for effective teaching of reading, and those workshops were not conducted continuously to support them.

### **5.2.2 Promotion of reading**

Appropriate reading competencies and skills are important in early grade readers, as happens through practice (Morara, 2013). Tamis-Lemonda and Rodriguez (2009) argued that reading in the early classes is a priority, requiring that learners engage in reading activities on a daily basis. Teachers' conversations revealed that reading was promoted in the classroom, even though not enough reading activities were provided. Learners were encouraged to read regularly, and this happened after completing classwork activities and as part of their homework. During the teaching of other learning areas, learners were encouraged to read sentences during lessons. They were given words every Monday to read at home and to practice those words for spelling tests, on a weekly basis. In some cases, rewards were used to encourage learners to read, in the form of stars, and words of encouragement were often given to encourage them to read. Reading competitions were held weekly, and in some cases monthly, to instil a reading culture among learners in the two schools. Learners were given books to read at home, even though teachers struggled with reading resources. Circuit competitions were also held once a year. Bible reading was encouraged during morning devotions.

### **5.2.3 The teaching of reading**

According to N'Namdi (2008), effective learning is primarily influenced by the availability or adequacy of educational resources. Lack of libraries, instructional materials and reading materials in school negatively affects the teaching of reading and learning, since effective teaching depends on the availability of resources (Nalusiba, 2010). The findings from my study reveal that reading resources are not enough. Teachers in this study mentioned that they did not have readers for the big books in order for group reading to be implemented. Teachers noted that vocabulary usage in some of the big books was difficult to understand and that the font size was too small for the young ones, especially in overcrowded classrooms. There was insufficient seating space for learners and this impeded effective teaching and learning. Literature has revealed that effective teaching and learning happens when learners are able to learn from concrete to abstract and when teachers use appropriate teaching and learning materials. Inadequate instructional and reading materials in some classrooms hampers the learning of reading, as revealed in this study. Lack of resources has an unconstructive impact on the learners' performance in both schools in the language taught and other academic subjects, confirming findings of Nalusiba (2010).

#### **5.2.4 Addressing barriers to reading**

It is important for teachers to identify barriers to reading at an early age so that learners can receive the necessary support in an effort to overcome them. Teachers are responsible for making reading possible, as found by Hugo (2012). The findings of my study reveal that remedial teaching is necessary at school to help learners who experience barriers in reading. Teachers told me that they did not have academic support from Departmental officials, especially the curriculum advisors, whose responsibilities were to ensure effective teaching and learning.

From the research findings, learners found it difficult to read alphabets, syllables, words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs or the whole text, supporting findings by Vargo and Young (2012). This was because they had not mastered sounds which were meant to help them to make syllables, combine syllables to make a word, combine words to make to make a sentence, combine sentences to make paragraphs, then paragraphs to make a text. Learners lacked self-confidence, motivation, persistence in reading, ability to work in groups and a sense of personal competence. Some learners were not able to apply and combine different components of skills and knowledge towards learning of reading.

The findings from this study reveal that some learners experienced physical impairments, such as hearing difficulties, and so could not differentiate sounds. Other learners had sight problems and difficulties with word recognition. Social barriers on the other hand, created challenges for the teacher, such as absenteeism, poor nutrition and abuse. These contributed to an inability to concentrate and read in class. Conceptual barriers referred to under-achievers who found it difficult to understand the activity or task. This could be because of a print-poor environment characterised by lack of access to texts, more specifically to books.

#### **5.2.5 Challenges regarding reading**

Participants reported that in some cases they did not follow the timetable because they wished to catch up on work that was behind schedule. They taught all the learners at once because their classes were overcrowded, and learners' levels of ability were not considered. Teachers also affirmed that learners with barriers to reading were difficult to handle because they lacked concentration, and continued to play during group reading. The findings revealed that some of the teachers in the foundation phase were semi-qualified others unqualified and lacking the

necessary prerequisite skills and knowledge of teaching reading. This resulted in the usage of mono-methodological approaches to the teaching of reading, which may not primarily cater for all the learners. This has contributed overwhelmingly to the dreadful performance of learners, and correlates affirmatively with the findings of Phajane's (2012) study. Inadequate teacher training and workshops, poor teaching methods, inadequate teachers and learners' interactions and overcrowded classrooms, as found in this research work, impede the teaching of reading among the two schools studied. These factors have manifested into low acquisition of skills and knowledge of learners in class on reading and affects learners in academia, confirming similar findings of Junias (2009).

### **5.2.6 Parental involvement**

Literature discussed above confirms that parental involvement is an important aspect in the education of children. Active involvement of parents in the teaching and learning process is central to effective teaching and learning. Children perform better if parents play a part in their children's education (Al-Matalka, 2014). According to Bonci (2008), parental involvement is vital to children's success and helps to minimise the influences of other factors that obstruct reading skills development among learners. Early parental involvement in children's education brings quality results and long-term effects, with positive results in schooling and general learners' wellbeing. The research findings indicated that some parents were not involved in the education of their children, did not attend meetings or come to school when called upon to discuss their children's performance. This confirms Williams' (2011) research findings. Some reasons for lack of parental involvement were that they worked far away from home and so could not assist their children with school work.

There is a strong positive relationship between these research findings on parental involvement and those of Okioga (2013) and Motitswe (2013), namely, that parents from a low socio-economic environment play a passive or inactive role in their children's education and development. This has caused their children to have a sense of constraint. The research findings on parental involvement by Al-Matalka (2014) and Vellymalay (2012) have linear association with those that indicated parents who do not involve themselves in their children's educational process lower and destroy the motivation and ability through neglect and indifference to their achievements. The attitudes and behaviours of parents of not spending quality time reading with their children and helping them with homework and reading activities contradicts the

Education Law and Policy (1999) of South Africa. This also contradicts the guidelines for Quality Learning and Teaching (DoE, 2012) which stipulates that parents should work cordially with teachers and other educational stakeholders in promoting children's reading life. From the findings, parents assume their children's education is the school's responsibility.

The findings from this study indicated that some parents were illiterate and so unable to assist their children in reading and other home activities. This corresponds with the results found by De Coulon, Meschi and Vignoles (2008) that parents with low literacy levels are less likely to help their children with reading and writing, as they feel inferior in doing so and are more likely to have children with lower cognitive and language development levels. If parents are illiterate, poor, and unemployed, as in the case of these research findings, they value less the education of their children and as such cannot support them financially. This leads to poor performance in class. In addition, due to illiteracy and poverty among some parents in this research work, parents failed to attend meetings with teachers or to discuss social and academic progress.

### **5.2.7 Socio-economic environment**

As revealed in this study, socio-economic background plays an important role in the achievement of reading skills, having a negative influence on learning due to lack of availability of educational resources such as books, magazines and newspapers, educational radio and television. From the findings, it is affirmed that most parents were unemployed and depended on a monthly social grant provided by government for survival. The findings confirm that some parents were domestic workers and labours, and earned little. Due to lack of funds, some were unable to buy books for their children to read at home, and were even unable to visit the local library because they had to pay for transport. Not every parent could afford to buy extra books for their children. Lack of books forced the teachers to photocopy them for all the learners, and this was a time-consuming exercise. Parents in this study depended solely on the Department to buy books for their children.

### **5.2.8 Home language**

Children learn to read easily with the language they already know, and it is important to teach them sounds in the language they know and master before they can be taught any additional language (CAPS, 2011). If vocabulary and grammar are poor or lacking, children will not be able to understand a text (Monyai, 2010). Based on the findings from this study, home language

was a challenge for both the teachers and the learners as far as reading was concerned. *Khelobedu* dialect had a strong influence on them because at school the home language was Sepedi. Learners pronounced some of the words in *Khelobedu* during the teaching of reading. Learners interpreted pictures in *Khelobedu*, and this was a challenge as they were expected to learn in Sepedi.

### **5.2.9 Poverty**

The background and environment of parents play an important role in a learner's development. Literature reveals that children from high poverty backgrounds perform poorly as their homes are characterised by low adult literacy levels and expectations about children's progress (Pretorius & Currin, 2010). The findings revealed that poverty is a challenge because some of the learners come to school hungry and this affects their concentration in the classroom. The morning periods were always affected, because meals at school were only available to children later in the morning. When food was distributed to children during break, it was evident that it was a first and last meal for some. Poverty is a socio-economic challenge that destroys the physical and mental domains of humans. Interviews with teachers revealed that some were not educated and as such could not get well-paid jobs with attractive and fair salaries and wages in order to improve their standard of living as well as a securing well-established background for their children's education.

Learners from poor families struggled to reach the same academic achievement levels of students from rich homes. They lacked resources, as supported by Lacour and Tissington (2011), which included financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical resources as well as support systems, relationships, role models and knowledge of hidden rules.

### **5.2.10 Overcrowding**

The National Reading Strategy (NRS) (DoE, 2008) research revealed that inadequate teacher training workshops, poor teaching methods, insufficient teacher and learner collaborations and overcrowded classrooms are some of the factors that hinder the teaching of reading. From the research, findings of this study it is clear that the methods for teaching reading were not followed because of overcrowded classrooms. It was a challenge for the teachers to move from one place to another in overcrowded classrooms. Some learners could not pay attention while the teacher was teaching because they were aware that the teacher could not see them. Teachers



were unable to provide individualised attention, especially to learners who experienced barriers to reading.

Overcrowded classrooms led to insignificant reading activities. Teachers teaching in overcrowded classroom also faced discipline challenges as they could not effectively manage and control the classes.

### **5.2.11 Support from the Department of Education**

Participants in this study indicated that the Department of Education was not supportive to the teaching of reading, as there were no workshops organised. As highlighted in my literature review (Bharuthram, 2012; Hlaithwa 2013), necessary measures must be taken to improve reading skills and literacy both at international and national level as it is the cornerstone to children's success in education. This study revealed that inadequate teacher training workshops is one of the factors that hinder teaching of reading. It is important that such workshops focus on specific skills, such as how to assist learners who cannot read or how to equip teachers with skills to differentiate the teaching of reading.

### **5.2.12 Classroom management and control**

Conversations with teachers revealed that they lacked skills in classroom management, notably those required to assist them effectively in teaching and learning (Howie, 2010). Lack of classroom management and control was a result of overcrowding, as teachers highlighted. Such overcrowding also led to poor attention from learners, and not completing work in a given time. Remedial teaching was also a challenge due to overcrowding.

### **5.2.13 Methods of teaching reading**

The findings reveal that poor teaching methods lead to inabilities in reading. Teachers acknowledged that the way they taught reading affected learners' competency and efficiency in reading, and delayed progress. Teachers used guidelines to teach reading as highlighted in the CAPS, but indicated that some of the methods specified were not easy for them to implement, given that they worked in overcrowded classes.

### **5.3 Significance of the findings and contribution of new knowledge**

This research work adds to the literature based on the challenges affecting reading skills of learners in the foundation phase and how reading is promoted. The study explored challenges inhibiting learners reading skills as experienced by primary school teachers in South Africa. The findings are relevant for policymakers and Departmental officials who ought to address the strains that exist because of policies that are not sufficiently accommodative of the needs of teachers and learners.

### **5.4 Suggestions for further research**

This study can be used as a basis for further studies in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase. These further studies could explore strategies which could be implemented to change the culture of teaching and learning reading in the foundation phase and some studies could focus on extending solutions to the teaching of reading in the foundation phase. Various other methodological suggestions can be explored, and such research could be conducted on how reading approaches may affect reading in the foundation phase. Investigations across multiple schools would also identify whether there are common challenges that affect learners' reading skills in all schools in South Africa.

### **5.5 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

- The Department of Education at district and circuit level could improve their support structures to schools.
- All relevant stakeholders need to be involved. The SMT, teachers and learners as well as parents need to work as a team.
- Parents can also be assisted in how to support their children in schooling activities. A parents' education programme and operating activities could be used to motivate parents and equip them with skills to promote reading at home.
- Teachers require more in-service training to identify and address reading challenges. Appropriate teaching and learning materials (TLMs) are needed to instil a culture of reading in the foundation phase.

- Sufficient reading materials and workbooks are needed in primary schools, and these need to be reviewed to ensure that the content is relevant.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The aim of the study was to explore the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase and investigate approaches used to promote reading. This chapter brought the research to its conclusion, in which the questions posed in Chapter 1 have been investigated and the goals met. By summarising the main findings from the data collected, the researcher was able to identify the challenges of reading in the classroom and also to link these challenges to the literature review.

## REFERENCES

1. Adeniji, M. A. and Omale, A. (2010). "Teaching Reading Comprehension in Selected Primary Schools in Oyo State, Nigeria". *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal). Paper 349.<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/349>. Retrieved 2013-March-05
2. Aikens, N. L., and Barbarin, O. (2008). Socioeconomic differences in reading trajectories: The contribution of family, neighbourhood, and school contexts. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100,235
3. Al-Matalaka, F. I. M. (2014).The Influence of Parental Socioeconomic Status on Their Involvement at Home. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*: 5;146
4. American Psychological Association (2012). Task Force on Socioeconomic Status. Report of the APA Task Force on Socioeconomic Status. Washington DC.
5. American Psychological Association. (2012). Socioeconomic status. <http://www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status/index.aspx> Retrieved 2013-July-10
6. Asian Societies, (2011). *The definition of qualitative research*. Retrieved from <http://saveunbusiness.blogspot.com/2011/04/definition-of-qualitative-research.html> Retrieved 2013-February-30.
7. Bharuthram S. (2012). Making a case for the teaching of reading across the curriculum in higher education. *South African Journal of Education*, 32: 205
8. Blackwell W. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods*, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
9. Bonci, A. (2008). A research review: the importance of families and the home environment. Revised by Mottram, E. and McCoy, E. (June 2010) and Cole, J. (March, 2011). National Literacy Trust.
10. Buac, M., and Kaushanskaya, M. (2014). The relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic cognitive control skills in bilingual children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Communication Sciences and Disorders, Waisman Centre, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Madison, WI, USA.
11. Chindanya, A. (2011). Parental involvement in primary schools: a case study of the Zaka district of Zimbabwe. [Online], Available from: <http://ddl.handle.net/10500/5798>. Retrieved 2013-July-10.
12. Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison K. (2011). *Research Methods in education* (7<sup>th</sup> Ed.). London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.  
Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 108 of 1996: Bill of Rights. Section 29.

13. Cornelissen, P.L., Kringelbach, M.L., Ellis, A.W., Whitney, C., Holiday, I. E. and Hansen P.C. (2009). "Activation of the left inferior frontal gyrus in the first 200 ms of reading: evidence from magnetoencephalography (MEG)". In Aleman, André. PLoS ONE 4 (4): e5359. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0005359. PMC 2671164. PMID 19396362. Retrieved 2013-April-13.
14. Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
15. Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design, Qualitative, and Quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4<sup>th</sup>. ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
16. Dahlia, K. R. and Gregg, G. Van R. (2011). *Research Methods in Practice: Strategies for Description and Causation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
17. Darder, A. (2011). *Culture and power in the classroom: Educational foundation for the schooling of bicultural students*. Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm.
18. De Coulon, A., Meschi, E., and Vignoles, A. (2008). Parents' basic skills and their children's test scores: Results from the BCS70, 2004 parents and children assessments. London: NRDC.
19. Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (2005). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative material*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) New Delhi: Sage.
20. Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds) (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
21. Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009). The Impact of Parental involvement on children's education. London: DCSF.
22. Department of Education, South Africa (1999). Education and Policy.
23. Department of Education, South Africa (1999). Personal Administration measures (PAM) Chapter 13, p. 2(2). Pretoria: Government Printers.
24. Department of Education, South Africa (2011). The National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for the Foundation Phase Grade R-3. Pretoria: Government Printers.
25. Department of Education, South Africa (2012). A guide for quality learning and teaching. Pretoria: Government Printers.
26. Department of Education, South Africa (DoE) 2008b. Foundations for Learning (FFLC). Government Gazette No. 30880, 14 March, 2008.

27. Department of Education, South Africa (2008) National reading strategy. Pretoria.
28. Department of Education, South Africa (2008b). National Reading Strategy. Pretoria.
29. Department of Education (2008). Draft National Reading Strategy. Pretoria: Government Printers.
30. De Vos, A.S, Strydom, H, Fouche, C. B. & Delpolt, C. S. L. and Strickland, 2006. *Research at grass roots*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
31. Education Law and Policy Handbook, 1999. Cape Town: Juta.
32. Ellenwood, S. (2007). Revisiting character Education: from Mc-Guffey to narratives. *Journal of Education*, 187 (2): 21-44.
33. Engelbrecht, P. & Green, L. (2007). *Responding to the challenges of inclusive education in Southern Africa*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
34. Fleisch, B. (2008). *Primary education in crisis. Why South African school children underachieve in reading and mathematics*. Cape Town: Juta.
35. Florian, L and Rouse, M. (2010). Teachers' professional learning and inclusive practice, in R Rose (ed). *Confronting obstacles to inclusion: international responses to developing inclusive education*. London: Routledge: 185-200.
36. Florian, L. and Rouse, M. (2009). The inclusive practice project in Scotland: teacher education for inclusive education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(4). 185
37. Fluss, J., Ziegler, J.C., Warszawski, J. (2009) Poor reading in French elementary school: the interplay of cognitive, behavioural and socioeconomic factors. *Journal of Developmental Behaviour*, 30: 206–216.
38. Frieda, J. (2008). *The Relationship of reading concepts and the techniques of teaching reading*. Poor reading in French elementary school: the interplay of cognitive, behavioral and socioeconomic factors. *Journal of Developmental Behaviour. Paediatric* 30: 206–216.
39. Frieda, J. (2008). *The relationship of Reading Concepts and the Techniques of Teaching Reading*. American Federation of Teachers, USA
40. Gall, M.D. Gall. J. P, & Borg, W. R. 2007. Collecting research data with questionnaires and interviews. In *Educational Research: an introduction* (8thEd, pp. 227-261). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
41. Geske, A. and Ozola, A. (2008). Problems of education in the 21st century: Factors influencing reading literacy at the primary school level. Vol. 6. 71

42. Ghanaguru, S, Liang, N. H. and Kit, N. L. (2010). An initial study of reading problems and strategies: a teacher's perspective. *IPBA Journal*, 3(1): 17-38. <http://apps.emoe.gov.my/ipba/rdipba/cd1/article56.pdf>. [15/09/2010]. Retrieved 2013-August-17.
43. Gibbs, L. B. (2009). Understanding Latino parental involvement in a racially changing school. Fairfax, VA: George Mason University.
44. Goodman, K.S (2010). A psycholinguistic guessing game. Published online 28 January 2010: Wayne State University.
45. Gordor, B. K., Akar, I. G., and Howard, N. K. (2006). *A guide to questionnaire surveys*. Ghana Mathematics Group, Department of Mathematics & Statistics. University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
46. Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M., and Namey, E.E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
47. Guion, L. A. & Flower, L. (2005). Using Qualitative research in planning and evaluating Extension Programs 1. [Online], Available from: <http://www.edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy392> Retrieved 25 June 2008.
48. Hannon, P. (2010, July). Cultivating the research-practice connection. Keynote paper presented at the Cultivating Connections: Global Perspectives and Practices Family Literacy Conference, Edmonton, AB.
49. Hartas, D. (2008). Practices of parental participation: A Case Study. Institute of Education, University of Warwick.
50. Haveworth, A. Tumer, C & Whiteley, M. (2004). *Secondary English and Literacy*. London: Paul Chapman.
51. Hennink, M. Hutter, I. and Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative Research methods*. Thousand Oaks. CA. Sage.
52. Hlalethwa, B. D. (2013). Reading Difficulties experienced by Learners in the Foundation Phase in Inclusive Schools in Makapanstad. Master of Education with Specialization in Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa.
53. Howie, S. (2010). The relationship between early childhood backgrounds and reading achievement in low and high achieving countries in PIRLS 2006. Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.
54. Hugo, A. J. (2008). *Reading, writing and spelling- Second language*: Pretoria: University of South Africa.

55. Hugo, A. J. (2012). Inaugural lecture: To read or not to read.
56. Hugo, A.J. (2010). Foundation Phase teachers: The “battle” to teach reading. *Journal for Language Teaching*, 44(2): 5
57. Jednoró'g, K., Altarelli<sup>1</sup>, I., Monzalvo, K., Fluss, J., Dubois, J., Billard, C., Dehaene-Lambertz, G., and Ramus, F. (August 3, 2012). The Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Children’s Brain Structure. Vol. 7 Issue 8. E42486. PLoS ONE. [www.plosone.org](http://www.plosone.org)
58. Joan M. T. Smrekar C W (2009) Influence of Parents' level of Education, Influence on Child's Educational Aspirations and Attainment. *Journal of Education Development*, 32.75
59. Junias, R. (November, 2009). Factors Affecting the Teaching of English Reading Skills in a Second Language of Grade 3 learners. Master of Education dissertation with Specialization in Early Childhood Development. University of South Africa.
60. Kainuwa, A., and Yusuf, M. B. N. (2013). Influence of Socio-Economic and Educational Background of Parents on their Children’s Education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 3 (10).
61. Kishiyama, M. M., Boyce, T., Jimenez, A. M., Perry, L. M., and Knight, R. T. (2008). Socioeconomic Disparities Affect Prefrontal Function in Children. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 21: 1106–1115.
62. Lacour, M., and Tissington, L. D. (2011). The effects of poverty on academic achievement. *Educational Research and Reviews*. 6 (7), July. Available online at <http://www.academicjournals.org/ERR>. Retrieved 2013-August-17.
63. Lefevre, C.A. (2012). Linguistic and the teaching of reading. USA: Hill.
64. Leu, D.J., Kinzer, C.K., Coiro, J., Castek, J., and Henry, L.A. (2013). New literacies: A dual level theory of the changing nature of literacy, instruction, and assessment. In: DE Alvermann, NJ Unrau, RB Ruddell (eds.): *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*. Newark DE: International Reading Association.
65. Lichtman, M. (2014). *Qualitative research for the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
66. Lincoln, Y.S., Lynham, S.A. and Guba, E.G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences revisited. In N.K Denzin and Lincoln, Y.S, (eds) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



67. Malda, M., Nel, C., and van der Vijver, F. J. R. (2014). The road to reading for South African learners: The role of orthographic depth. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 30: 34-45.
68. Manguel, A., (2013). "The Silent Readers". Chapter 2 of *A History of Reading*. (New York: Viking).
69. Martin, D. Martin, M. and Carvalho, K. (2008). Reading and learning-disabled children: understanding the problem. The Clearing House: Heldref.
70. Matlin, W, (2006). *Cognition*, (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) Fort Worth, TX: Hartcourt College.
71. May, T. (2011). *Qualitative Research in Action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
72. McMillan, J. H. and Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in education*. (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) A conceptual Introduction. Tokyo: Longman.
73. McMillan, J. H. and Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based enquiry*. Seventh edition. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
74. Mittal, A, Lior Pachter, J, Nelson, L, Kaergaard, H, Kiel Smed, M, Virginia, L, Gildengorin, Jawaheer, D. (2015). Pregnancy-induced Changes in Systemic Gene Expression among Healthy Women and Women with Rheumatoid Arthritis. PLOS journals, PLOS Blogs.
75. Moen, T. (2006). Reflection on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methodology*, 5 (4)1
76. Monyai, S.C. (2010). Meeting the challenges of Black English second- language South African learners in ex- model C primary school.
77. Morara, A. G. (2013). Teaching of reading to early grade readers: implications for the Kenyan primary school teacher. *Elixir Edu. Tech.* 55 (2013) 13073-13077. Educational Technology. Available online at [www.elixirpublishers.com](http://www.elixirpublishers.com) (*Elixir International Journal*). Retrieved date.
78. Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., and Maczuga, S. (2009). Risk factors for learning-related behavior problems at 24 months of age: Population-based estimates. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 37. 401
79. Motitswe, J. and Mokhele, M. L. (July, 2013). Teaching and Learning in the Inclusive Classroom: What Foundation Phase Teachers Do? *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 54 (6). Published by MCSER-CEMAS-Sapienza University of Rome

80. Motitswe, J. M. C. (2013). Teaching and Learning Methods in Inclusive Classrooms in the Foundation Phase. Master's in Education dissertation. Department of Inclusive Education, Faculty of Education. University Of South Africa
81. Mouton, J. (2003). *How to succeed in your masters and doctoral studies*. A South African guide and resources book. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
82. Msila, V. (2014). Transforming society through quality primary education in South Africa: Lessons from two decades after apartheid. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(6): 339
83. Mullis IVS, Martin MO, Kennedy AM, Trong KL & Sainsbury M. (2009). PIRLS 2011 Assessment framework. Boston College: TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center.
84. Myers, M. (2011). Qualitative research in information systems. <http://www.qual.auckland.ac.nz/> Retrieved 2015-February-28.
85. N'Namdi, K. A. (2008). Guide to Teaching Reading at the Primary School Level. Published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), France.
86. Naidoo, U., Reddy, K., and Dorasamy, N. (2014). Reading Literacy in Primary Schools in South Africa: Educator Perspectives on Factors Affecting Reading Literacy and Strategies for Improvement. *International Journal of Educational Science*, 7(1): 155
87. Nalusiba, P. (2010). Strategies for the development of a reading culture in Uganda Primary Schools: Case study of four selected Universal Primary schools in Kampala District. Makerere University.
88. Neill, J. 2006. Analysis of Professional Literature class 6: Qualitative Research 1. Www. Wilder Dom cor.
89. Neuman, W.L. (2011). *Social research methods. Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston. Allyn and Bacon.
90. Okioga, K. C. (March, 2013). The Impact of Students' Socio-economic Background on Academic Performance in Universities, a Case of Students in Kisii University College. *American International Journal of Social Science*, 2(2).
91. Onwuegbuzie, A.J. and Leech, N.L. (2007). A call for qualitative power analyses. *Quality & Quantity*, 41: 105
92. Onzima, R. (2011), Parents' Socio-economic status and pupil's educational attainment. Case study of St. Jude Primary School in Malaba town council - Uganda. New York 16 December 1966 international covenant on civil and political Rights.

93. Parlindungan, P. (2010). A review on reading theories and its implication to the teaching of reading. Universitas Kristen Indonesia.
94. Patil, M., Saraswathi, G., and Padakannaya, P. (2009). Self-esteem and Adjustment among children with Reading and Writing difficulties. *Journal of Department of Studies in Food*, 3 (2): 95.
95. Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage.
96. Phajane, M. H. (2012). Methods used for reading instruction at primary schools in the Bojanala Districts of North West Province, UNISA.
97. Phye, S. L. and Thida, A. (September, 2013). Unknown Word Detection via Syntax Analyzer. *IAES International Journal of Artificial Intelligence (IJ-AI)*. 2, (3), <http://iaesjournal.com/online/index.php/IJAI>. Retrieved 2013-March-13.
98. Pretorius, E.J. and Currin, S. (2010). Do the rich get richer and the poor poorer? The effects of an intervention programmes on reading in the home and school language in a high poverty multilingual context. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30: 67
99. Prin, E. and Toso, B.W. (2008). Defining and measuring parenting for educational success: A critical discourse analysis of the parent education profile. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(3), 555
100. Rajchert, J.M., Zultak, T., and Smulczyk, M. (2014). Predicting reading literacy and its improvement in the Polish national extension of the PISA study: The role of intelligence, trait- and state anxiety, socio-economic status and school type. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 33: 1-11
101. Rammala M.S. (2009) Factors contributing towards poor performance of grade 12 learners at Manoshi and Mokwatedi high schools, University of Limpopo.
102. Robson, C, 2003. *Real World Research: Resources for social Scientists and practitioners researchers*. Oxford: Blackwell.
103. Roller, P. J. 2009. *Best Practices for Teaching reading*, Randi Stone.
104. Sathiapama, M., Wolhuter, C. C. and Noleen van, W. (2012). The management of parental involvement in multicultural schools in South Africa: A case study. *CEPS Journal* 2 (1): 57
105. Singh, R. J. (2009). *Creating a foundation phase classroom that promote reading amongst children*, University of Limpopo.

106. Slavin, R.E. (2012). *Educational Psychology. Theory and Practice* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.) Pearson / Johns Hopkins University.
107. Snow, C. E, Griffen, P. & Burns, M. S. 2005. *Knowledge to Support the Teaching of Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
108. South African Educators Council (SACE) (2014). *The implementation of continuing professional teacher development (CPTD)*. Pretoria: Government Printers
109. Spaul, N. (2013). Poverty and privilege: Primary school inequality in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 33: 436
110. Srickland, D.S, (2006). *Beginning reading and writing*. (Eds.). New York: Teachers College Press and Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
111. Tamis-Lemonda, C. S., and Rodriguez, E. T. (2008-2009). Parent's Role in Fostering Young Children's Learning and Language Development. USA. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*, 1, 4.
112. Tomalski, P., Johnson, M. H. (2010). The effects of early adversity on the adult and developing brain. *Curriculum Opinion Psychiatry*, 23: 233
112. Uwatt, L.E., and Egbe, G. B. (2011). A literacy intervention for struggling readers in Nigeria. *Mousaion*, 29(1): 136
113. Van Staden, S., and Bosker, R. (2014). Factors that affect South African Reading Literacy Achievement: evidence from prePIRLS 2011. *South African Journal of Education*, 34, (3).
114. Vaillancourt, R. (2009). I hear and I forget, I see and I remember I do and I understand. *Can J Hospital Pharmacy*, volume. 62, No 4- juillet-aout.
115. Vargo, F. E. and Young, N. D. (2012). What are learning disabilities? <http://www.ldworldwide.org/what-are-learning-disabilities> Retrieved: 2012-07-02.
116. Vellymalay, S. (2012a). Parental Involvement at Home: Analyzing the Influence of Parents' Socioeconomic Status. *Studies in Sociology of Science*, 3, (1): DOI:10.3968/j.sss.1923018420120301.2048.
117. Weaver, C. (2009). *Reading Process: Brief Edition of Reading Process and Practice*. (3rd ed.) USA.
118. Williams, M. G. (2011). *African American Parent Involvement: An examination of the characteristics that determine the most successful school and parent relationships between lower socioeconomic, African American parents, and highly effective schools*. USA: ProQuest LLC.

119. Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
120. Yin, R.K. (2012). *Applications of Case Study Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
121. Zuze, T. L., and Reddy, V. (2014). School resources and the gender reading literacy gap in South African schools. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 36:

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

29 Rio Grande Street

Westenburg

0699

25 February 2016

Department of Education

Limpopo Province

Private bag x 9489

Polokwane

0700

Dear Sir

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN TWO SCHOOLS AT RAKWADU CIRCUIT IN MOPANI DISTRICT.**

I am a Masters student at the University of South Africa ( UNISA) interested in conducting research entitled “**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN RURAL AREAS OF BOLOBEDU, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.**”

**The aim of the research** is to investigate the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase and explore approaches used to promote reading.

The study will employ a qualitative approach and case study method will be used. I will use semi-structured interview, observation and document analysis to collect data. A video recorder will be used to collect data. I intend to conduct this study in two schools of Rakwadu Circuit. I will work with three foundation phase teachers in each of the two schools. A letter requesting permission from principals of the schools and teachers as participants in the study will be sent

to schools after your permission has been granted. I will conduct interviews which will be recorded. Observation of how teachers address the challenges of reading will be done and these will be recorded as descriptive and reflective notes. Data collected will be confidential and will only be used for the study.

**The benefits of the study are:** (1) it will make known the challenges affecting foundation phase reading. (2) And explore how teachers address these challenges.

**Potential risk:** No potential risk is being anticipated as this is a very low-risk study

**Feedback procedures:** I will submit a copy of my dissertation in your office which will provide procedures for the study, including findings and recommendations. Furthermore, I will share some of my observation during the study.

I promise that I will abide by the principles of anonymity and confidentiality.

Yours Faithfully

Mafokwane M.F (Mrs)

083 925 298 Email: [mafokwanem@premier.limpopo.gov.za](mailto:mafokwanem@premier.limpopo.gov.za)

## Appendix B

### Permission Letter from Limpopo Department of Education



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

---

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ref: 2/22      Enq: MC Mafokwa PhD      Tel No. 015 299 3448      E-mail: [MC.Mafokwa@eduproc.gov.za](mailto:MC.Mafokwa@eduproc.gov.za)

Mafokwane M.F  
23 Ric Grande Street  
Westenburg  
0399

---

#### RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

---

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: "AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN RURAL AREAS OF BOLOBEDU, LIMPOPO PROVINCE."
3. The following conditions should be considered:
  - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the schools concerned.
  - 3.3 The conduct of research should not anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
  - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.

*Request for permission to Conduct Research: Mafokwane M.F*

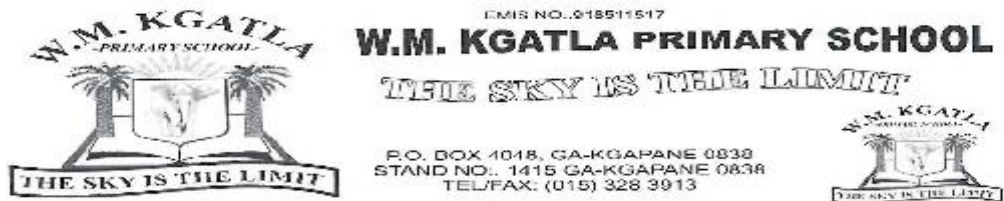
---

Cnr. 113 Giccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X8489, POLOKWANE, 0700  
Tel: 015 290 7800, Fax: 015 297 8920/4220/4494



## Appendix C

### Permission letter from School A



ENQ : Rasekgololo N.P

Date : 27 / 07 / 2016

Contact : 073 1818 944


Dear Mrs Mafokwane

#### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN OUR SCHOOL

This serves as confirmation that you have been granted permission to conduct Master's research in our school.

We wish you well in your studies.

Yours sincerely

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)





## Appendix E

### Letter to the participants

29 Rio Grande Street

Westenburg

0699

25 February 2016

Dear Participants.

I, Mafokwane Moore, am doing a research towards a Master's degree in education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Under the supervision of Dr M.J Sethusha, a senior lecturer in the College of Education, Department of Early Childhood Development.

You are kindly invite project entitled **“AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN RURAL AREAS OF BOLOBEDU, LIMPOPO PROVINCE”**. **The aim of the study:** is to investigate the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase and explore approaches used to promote reading. Your valuable experience and expertise in relation to the research topic are of utmost significance for this study.

Your participation will involve an interview of approximately 30 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. Your participation in this study is on voluntary and you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. All information you provide will be considered completely confidential, and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity of such information. Observation of how teachers you address with the challenges of reading will be conducted. Your permission for such observation is also being requested.

I will return to the field in order to provide interview feedback and also to inform you about the findings of the study. With your permission, I would like to use a video recorder and audio

recorder. Furthermore, I will also share information with you regarding my general observation during the study.

If you have questions about this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 083 925 2986 or [mafokwanem@premier.limpopo.gov.za](mailto:mafokwanem@premier.limpopo.gov.za).

If you are willing to participate in the research, I will request you to sign your consent letter which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Mafokwane M.F (Mrs)

**Appendix F**

**CONSENT**

I agree to participate in the research entitled, “**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN RURAL AREAS OF BOLOBEDU, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**” as outlined in the permission letter.

**Name.....**

**Signature.....**

**Date.....**

## Appendix G

29 Rio Grande Street

Westenburg

0699

25 February 2016

Dear Parent,

I, Mafokwane Moore, am doing a research towards a Master's degree in education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Under the supervision of Dr M.J Sethusha, a senior lecturer in the College of Education, Department of Early Childhood Development.

You are kindly invited to participate in a research project entitled **“AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN RURAL AREAS OF BOLOBEDU, LIMPOPO PROVINCE”**.

**The aim of the study:** is to investigate the challenges affecting reading in the foundation phase and explore approaches used to promote reading.

I am therefore asking for your permission to allow your child to participate in my research in the school. Your child's participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time without any negative consequences. All information provided by your child will be considered completely confidential. With your permission, I would like to use a video recorder and an audio recorder.

If you have questions about this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about your child's participation, please contact me at 0839252986 mafokwanem@premier.limpopo.gov.za.

If you are willing to allow your child to participate in the research, I will request you to sign your consent letter which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Mafokwane M.F ( Mrs)

**Appendix H**

29 Rio Grande Street

Westenburg

0699

25 February 2016

**PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH: CONSENT FORM OF PARENTS AND ASSENT OF LEARNERS**

I..... (Name and surname)

Parent of ..... (Name and surname)

In grade ..... have read and understand the contents of your letter requesting me and my child to participate in your research study on **“AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN RURAL AREAS OF BOLOBEDU, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.”**

I understand that I will be expected to observe him/her in the classroom. I have decided as follows:

**Option A**

I give permission for my child to participate in the research.

Signature:.....

Date: .....

Address:

.....  
.....  
.....

**Option B**

I do not give permission for my child to participate in the research.

My reasons are:

.....  
.....  
.....

Signature:.....Date: .....



## **Appendix I**

### **Interview Schedule**

#### **Biographic questions**

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. What is your age?
3. What are your academic qualifications and what were your major subjects in your qualifications?
4. Is your qualification relevant for teaching in the foundation phase?
5. If yes or no, how does that affect your competence?
6. How many years have you being teaching in your current grade?
7. What are your teaching subjects currently?
8. What is your class size?
9. How has your class size affected your teaching?
10. How many teachers do you have in a phase?
11. How many teachers in a grade?
12. How many class in the school?
13. How many head of departments (HOD)?
14. How many members are there in the school management team (SMT)? What is their rank?
15. Have you attended any workshop on the teaching of reading? Who organized this workshop? When? How long did it take? Who conducted the training?

16. What kind of support do you get from the school management team (SMT) with regards to teaching reading?
17. What kind of support do you get from the curriculum advisor?
18. What type of monitoring is being done at your school? By whom? How often?
19. How often do departmental officials visit your school? What is it that they do?
20. How often does your Head of Department (HOD) check your teaching learning and assessment records?
21. Does the school have regular meetings to discuss the teaching of reading? What is it that you discuss? Who takes part in the meeting? How long does the meeting take? How often?

## **Appendix J**

### **Reading related questions**

1. How is reading promoted in your school?
2. What kinds of resources are available to facilitate the teaching of reading?
3. What kinds of challenges do you experience with the teaching of reading in your school?
4. Are there any other challenges that affect learners' reading? If yes, provide examples.
5. How do these challenges affect learners' in reading?
6. How is reading affected by socio-economic environment?
7. How is reading affected by parental involvement?
8. How does the home language affect reading?
9. Does poverty affects reading? If yes, how?
10. What kinds of barriers do learners in your class experience?
11. How do these barriers affect the teaching of reading?
12. How do you deal with such barriers?
13. What form of support is provided by the department of education (DoE) with regard to the challenges and the barriers experienced in reading?
14. How do you teach reading?
15. Does the DoE provide enough support to address reading challenges? If yes, what kind of support?
16. What are your personal experiences of teaching learners with barriers to reading?

17. How is your overall delivery affected by learners with barriers to reading?
18. Do your methods of teaching reading affect learners' reading? If yes how?
19. Does your method of teaching reading affects your competence and efficiency? How?
20. How do you try to cope teaching learners who cannot read?
21. How do you cope with overcrowding in your classroom?
22. Do learner's barriers to reading give rise to problems pertaining to classroom management and control? How do you cope with such problems?
23. Do planning, preparation and development of lesson plans, affected by reading challenges? If yes how?
24. Do the methods prescribed by the DoE in the curriculum assessment policy statement (CAPS) document have on the way you are expected to teach reading? If yes how?

# Acknowledgment of Language Editing

Date: Friday, 22 September 2017

This is to certify that I have conducted Language Editing on a Master's Dissertation:

*AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES AFFECTING READING IN THE  
FOUNDATION PHASE IN RURAL AREAS OF BOLOBEDU, LIMPOPO PROVINCE*

By

Moore Fridah Mafokwane

*Algraham*

Andrew Graham (BA, MA dist., PhD, University of Keele, UK)\*



**Telephone:** 011 475 6724

**Email:** [happy4andrew@hotmail.com](mailto:happy4andrew@hotmail.com)

\*Former Tutor in Postgraduate Writing Centre and Managing Editor of ISI Accredited Journal

8 Nahoon Valley Place

Nahoon Valley

East London

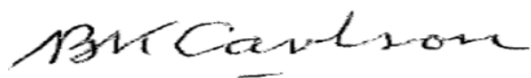
5241

21 May 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have proofread and edited the following master's thesis using the Windows 'Tracking' system to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the student to action:

*An investigation of the challenges affecting reading in the Foundation Phase in rural areas of Bolobedu, Limpopo Province* by Moore Fridah Mafokwane, submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in the subject CURRICULUM STUDIES at the University of South Africa.



Brian Carlson (B.A., M.Ed.)

Professional Editor

Email: [bcarlson521@gmail.com](mailto:bcarlson521@gmail.com)

Cell: 0834596647

Disclaimer: Although I have made comments and suggested corrections, the responsibility for the quality of the final document lies with the student in the first instance and not with myself as the editor.

BK & AJ Carlson Professional Editing Services